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Makro to open B200m store

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET CITY: Cash-and-carry wholesale giant Siam Makro is to open a 200-million-baht store in Phuket in the third quarter of the year.

The President of Siam Makro plc, Suchada Ithijarukul, told the *Gazette* exclusively that the decision to build the store was made in response to the growing tourism market.

"The three to four million tourists [who] visit Phuket each year create demand for a wide variety of services," she said. "A lot of convenience stores and retail shops, local caterers and restaurants, as well as hotels are operating on the island."

"The customers of these businesses are also Makro's target market. Makro's principal business is the operation of cash-and-carry wholesale to registered members. Our policy is to provide food and non-food products, vegetables, fruits, meat and cooking equipment to customers."

"Our target groups are now increasing in Phuket [which has encouraged] us to open a new Makro store on the island. We expect it will also help boost local trade and contribute to the continuing economic development of Phuket," she added.

A budget of about 200 million baht has been allocated to the project, she said. The store will be built on a 14-rai site to the west of Bang Yai Rd – the road running from the bypass road to Wichit Songkhram Rd, behind Big C.

K. Suchada said that Makro was confident the store would be successful despite its



Work has begun on the foundations of the new Makro store on a 14-rai site just outside Phuket City.

close proximity to competitors such as Tesco-Lotus and Big C.

"The nature of Makro's business is to sell low-price wholesale products, serving a number of customers who are engaged in various kinds of businesses. We work with our business alliances to organise promotional campaigns that feature special prices."

Asked for her expectations for the store's financial performance in its first year, she was optimistic. "We certainly expect it to do well," she said. "How well, I can tell you after it is opened."

She added that Makro takes a different approach to the market than the other two major superstores and the soon-to-open Central Festival store.

"Makro operates as a cash-and-carry wholesaler. We sell

low-price products to member customers including retailers, hotels, restaurants, caterers, businesses and entrepreneurs.

"We differentiate ourselves through our high-quality products and [a product range] targeted at the specific needs of local customers to ensure consistent reliability."

Siam Makro recorded net sales in 2003 of more than 39 billion baht, producing a profit of 944 million baht. With 21 outlets, it is the largest operation in the Makro Asia Group, which in turn is part of the SHV Group of the Netherlands.

Apart from its holdings in Makro Asia and a larger Makro chain in South America, SVH is also involved in gas exploration, production and supply; recycling; corporate finance and venture capital.

Airport departure tax set to rise 40pc

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: Departure taxes for international flights from Phuket will be hiked by 40% next year, soaring from the current 500 baht to 700 baht.

Domestic passengers, who currently pay 50 baht a flight, will also face a hefty rate increase. The amount has yet to be set but according to Lt Cdr Boonchart Prompoon, Director of the Airports Authority of Thailand, Phuket, it will be "not more than 100 baht per flight".

Landing and parking fees for aircraft are also set to increase, by around 20%.

Cdr Boonchart said the extra revenue raised by the Airports Authority of Thailand (AAT) will be used to subsidize the construction and running of Bangkok's new Suvarnabhumi International Airport, due to open in October 2005.

Defending the rise, he said, "The airport departure tax has not risen for 10 years." In fact, international departure taxes were last raised in 1998, doubling from 250 baht to the current level.

"This is a small amount of money to pay when compared with the amount they would pay for other activities, such as movie or show tickets," Cdr Boonchart said.

However, Pattanapong Aikwanich, President of the Phuket Tourist Association (PTA) fears that any increase will have a direct negative effect on tourism.

"There is a terrorism crisis in the southern provinces of Thailand and a host of other problems that have affected regional tourism recently," he said.

B255m airport upgrade starts

PHUKET: Work has begun on a 255-million-baht expansion of Phuket International Airport.

A 120-million-baht expansion of the passenger terminal – to be completed early next year – will be augmented by the creation of two additional berths for aircraft, costing another 98 million baht. A further 37 million baht has been allocated for improving cargo facilities.

Lt Cdr Boonchart Prompoon, Director of the Airports Authority of Thailand, Phuket, told the *Gazette* that current facilities are inadequate to handle growing numbers of passengers.

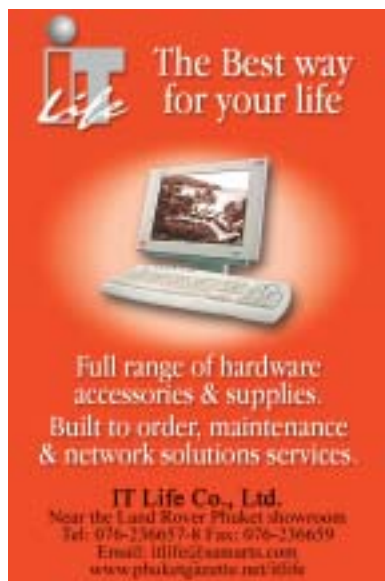
Macintosh Users Group boots up

PATONG: The recently-formed Phuket Mac Users Group (MUG) is to meet at the Tavern On The Hill in Patong at 7 pm on Wednesday, May 5. All users of Apple Macintosh computers and Mac operating systems are welcome, as well as those simply curious about Macs.

The most recent G5 computer will be on display for demonstration, along with the G4 eMac and G4 Powerbook.

The MUG was started “for the mutual assistance and benefit of shared experiences with Apple computers and associated software”, and first met in March.

Dinner and refreshments will be served. For details contact Jim Corti at Tel: 076-296204 or by email to: jcorti@loxinfo.co.th.



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Dog rescued from ‘rapist’

KAMALA: Animal lovers have rescued a small dog from a European man, who raped the animal repeatedly over a period of about six months.

The dog was rescued by a Thai woman after she was told that people had heard it screaming many times.

The rescuer, K. Gaew (who asked that her full name be withheld for fear of reprisal), told the *Gazette*, “People are supposed to be civilized in what they do and think. This man behaved like an brute.”

For legal reasons the perpetrator cannot at present be named.

A veterinarian who examined the animal after the rescue confirmed that she had been

raped repeatedly, and that considerable damage had been done to her internal organs.

The dog’s rescuer handed the animal over to Margot Homberg Park of the Soi Dogs Foundation. She described the animal as “a very sweet dog” who liked people. She renamed her Anwaan (the abuser apparently referred to the dog as “The Rat”).

Local police declined to pursue the matter, saying that there was not enough evidence to convict on a charge of cruelty to an animal, which is in any case a petty offense that carries a maximum penalty of one month in jail or a 1,000-baht fine, or both. Under Thai law bestiality, as such, is not an offense.



Anwaan has now been placed with a loving family and is recovering well from her ordeal.

BoI mulls tax break for IT investors

By Gategaeo Phetsawang

PHUKET CITY: An eight-year tax break for IT investors is among incentives being considered by the Board of Investment (BoI) to kick-start Phuket’s much-desired role as a software development center.

The tax break proposal was revealed by the President of the Software Industry Promotion Agency (Sipa), Manoo Ordeedolchest, when he came to Phuket to exchange views with participants at a public forum.

K. Manoo told about 120 people who gathered at the Thavorn Grand Plaza Hotel in Phuket City on April 25 that if the BoI approved the tax break proposal, it would come into effect immediately for IT firms wishing to invest in Thailand.

That plan, and other practical incentives, including swift processing of work permits and visas, had yet to be confirmed, he said, although he hoped that the full package could be officially announced before July 1.

“Right now, [investors wanting] to set up a company



Sipa President Manoo Ordeedolchest hopes to have the incentives available from July 1.

here have to go through the traditional process,” he said. “Sipa doesn’t have the authority yet for one-stop services.

“Sipa is considering working procedures and regulations for attracting qualified IT workers to whom BoI can offer work permits and visas.

“We hope we can make them effective from July 1. We

will avoid red tape and once we receive complete application documents, we should be able to decide whether a person qualifies within five days at most.”

He said that Phuket was no longer 20 years behind Singapore in IT development. “Phuket can jump forward within the next five years and will be able to compete with Singapore in some areas,” he said.

“Phuket is a good international brand name and if we link technology [with the brand], it will be more competitive in attracting investors,” K. Manoo said.

He added that it had been agreed that, to qualify, foreign knowledge workers must have at least a bachelor’s degree, have three years’ experience in software, or be hired by a local company with registered capital of not less than 30 million baht.

Rattana Wetprasit, Acting Manager of the Sipa office in Phuket, said that the low speed of Internet access and the lack of high-standard English among Thais were the two problems most frequently mentioned by people at the conference.

Rumors of Thaksin plans for Koh Yao denied

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

KOH YAO: Land prices on Koh Yao Noi and Koh Yao Yai islands are soaring, but local officials and residents have dismissed rumors that the boom is the result of speculation that Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is planning a mega-project on the islands.

Koh Yao District Chief Songpol Konkaew told the *Gazette* that many foreign investors have paid deposits for land on the two islands, which have a combined area of 154 square kilometers. The largest single plot sold was around 50 rai, he said.

The district has received an eight-million-baht budget for design and survey work for the construction of a bridge to connect the two islands. There are also plans to build an extensive road system on the islands, he added.

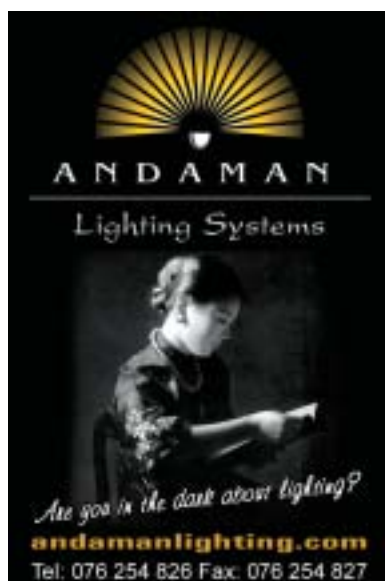
K. Songpol laughed off the suggestion that the development plans were part of a scheme to add the islands’ tourism potential to the growing business empire owned by the PM’s family.

The bridge and road network have been a part of national and provincial plans to develop the islands for tourism for a long time, he said.

Rumors have been circulating in Phuket that PM Thaksin plans to build a casino on the islands, using the proposed Phuket International Conference and Exhibition Center (ICEC) project in Saphan Hin as a jumpoff point.

Some have speculated that several personal visits to Koh Yao by the Prime Minister, coupled with the Government’s otherwise inexplicable support for Saphan Hin as the future ICEC site, indicate that a mega-project is in the works.

Koh Yao Yai Tambon Administration Organization chairman Prayat Srisamut earlier told the *Gazette* that PM Thaksin had made several private visits to the islands in recent years, but said he did not know the purpose of the visits.



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June Bahts

Anchalee's election confirmed

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

PHUKET: The election of Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr as President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) has been confirmed by the Central Election Committee (CEC) in Bangkok, though an official announcement has yet to be made in Phuket.

Dr Prapa Kayee, Chairman of Phuket Election Commission (PEC), told the *Gazette* that the CEC had also confirmed the elections of other members of the *OrBorJor* in polling on March 14. The official announcement will be made soon, she said.

"I have been told that the CEC met and approved K. Anchalee as president of the *OrBorJor*, but we have not yet received confirmation in writing," she said, explaining the delay in the announcement.

K. Anchalee declined to comment on the confirmation of her election until after the official announcement is made.

Her overwhelming election – she is a former Democrat Member of Parliament – put paid to an attempt by the ruling Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party to become a force in local politics on the island.

Dr Prapa said that the results of the Patong Municipality election of February 7 and the Phuket City Municipality election of April 4 had not yet been confirmed. Both are still under investigation, she said, because complaints of misconduct had been filed against winners.

Also still awaiting the completion of investigation are the results of by-elections in four tambons. The by-elections were called after winning candidates in earlier Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) elections were disqualified by the CEC for campaign misdeeds.

The by-elections were called for Moo 7, *OrBorTor* Rawai; Moo 3, *OrBorTor* Wichit; Moo 2, *OrBorTor* Rassada; and Moo 3, *OrBorTor* Koh Kaew.



Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr: Official announcement coming soon.

Owners to be penalised for loaning cars or bikes to no-license drivers

PHUKET CITY: In the latest move to reduce motor mayhem on Phuket, it has been announced that anyone who lends a vehicle to an unlicensed driver will face a fine of 500 baht and seizure of the vehicle.

Pol Lt Col Jeerasak Siam-sak, Inspector of Traffic Police at Phuket City Police Station, told the *Gazette* that although the facility to fine errant vehicle owners as well as drivers already exists in Thai law, it has rarely been enforced – until now.

"[Unlicensed drivers] think that they can drive, but they don't know the traffic laws because they haven't been trained or taken a test at the Provincial Transportation Office (PPTO)," Col Jeerasak said.

One excuse favored by out-of-province motorists pulled over without a license was that they were unable to return to the province in which they were registered to renew their licenses. This is no longer a valid excuse – drivers may now renew their licenses in any province, regardless of where they might be registered.

A crackdown on unlicensed riders earlier this year led to an increase in the number of people taking car and motorcycle tests from 65 a day to around 120.

Rules interpretation baffles Customs

By Dhirarat Boonkongsan

PHUKET: After 10 days of cross-checking and confusion, Customs officials in Bangkok have now confirmed that there is no import tax on motorboats with outboard engines.

Two boat owners wanting to import such boats contacted the *Gazette* after being informed that the 30% import tax still applied to these boats, although tax on leisure boats was supposedly dropped on February 18.

One, Paul Nelson from Australia, forwarded a copy of an email he received from the Customs Department Call Center in Bangkok, supposedly the prime source for customs information.

Mr Nelson contacted the Call Center to ask whether the outboard motors on his boat (not the boat itself) would be liable for import tax. The reply, from an officer signing herself Phakawalee W, was: "There is still duty tax for boat[s] with outboard motors. Rate of duty is 30%."

The Deputy Chief of Customs in Phuket, Teera Paesathithavorn, initially agreed with K. Phakawalee, confirming that motorboats with outboards were still liable to import duty of 30%.

K. Teera also urged anyone with questions "not to hesitate to ask Customs officers ... to explain the regulations."

Further *Gazette* inquiries, however, revealed a deep divide in the Customs Department between those who believed that boats with outboards should be taxed at 30% and those who believed that there should be no duty on them.

The new law on boat import duties divides vessels "for pleasure or sports" into four categories, all subject to zero duty. The categories are: 8903.10, Inflatables; 8903.91, Sailboats, with or without auxiliary motor; 8903.92, Motorboats, other than outboard motorboats; and 8903.99, Other.

Many Customs officials, including K. Phakawalee at the Call Center, appear to have interpreted the wording of 8903.92 to mean that motorboats with outboards were specifically excluded from the benefits of the zero tax.

The oracle on such matters is the Customs Tariff Division (CTD), which interprets the rules for other officers. Teeradej Sirisawaswathana of the CTD explained to the *Gazette* that outboard motorboats, because they were excluded from category 8903.92, fall into the "other" category, 8903.99, and are therefore, like all leisure boats, exempt from import tax.

He added that the CTD had distributed information on the

zero tax to all relevant Customs offices, including the Call Center.

Phatcharee Fakhum, Supervisor of the Call Center, said, "I need to check with the staff member who replied to this particular case. I have to apologize in advance if there was some confusion."

"It may be because of confusion about the goods being imported – motorboat with outboard engine, or outboard engine by itself," she said.

All Customs officials interviewed stressed that while fully-equipped boats may be imported duty-free, there is still duty on components imported separately, including outboard motors.

The CTD is on the 13th floor of the 120 Year Building, Sunthornkosa Rd, Klong Toey, Bangkok 10110. Tel: 667-7299, 667-7195 or 667-7204, email: tariff@customs.go.th.

New plan to tackle youth violence

PHUKET: New tactics are to be tried in an effort to control youth gang violence after police concluded that checkpoints are not the answer.

"We have discussed this matter with the Phuket provincial government and have agreed to coordinate with local community leaders to obtain cooperation from parents," said Provincial Police Commander, Maj Gen Veerayuth Sittimalic.

"Other measures will be to identify where the motorbike gangs gather and to enforce the law that stipulates that parents will be punished if their children are troublemakers."

He said Friday and Saturday nights were the worst for trouble, but Saphan Hin was no longer the only place where the gangs hang out.

"There are about 30 teenagers, aged from 16 to 22, and divided into two gangs," he said. "Whenever one group is out riding and encounters members of the other group, there is fighting."

Phuket policemen seconded to South

PHUKET CITY: Police from Phuket are being sent as reinforcements to three troubled southern provinces to help quell continuing violence and attempt to improve relations between local agitators and law enforcement officers.

A total of 24 Phuket officers are among 335 police being sent from Region 8 to Region 9.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander, Maj Gen Veerayuth Sittimalic told the *Gazette* that the officers going to work in troubled Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces will receive an extra 2,000 baht a month.

Apply early for one-year visas – Immigration

PHUKET: Pol Capt Krissarat Nuesen, the Deputy Inspector of the Phuket Provincial Immigration Office (PPIO), has urged foreigners seeking extensions to one-year permits-to-stay to apply at least a month before their current permits expire.

"We need to receive applications about a month before the

current permit expires to give us enough time to check the documents [submitted with applications]," Capt Krissarat told the *Gazette* on April 26.

"The government is currently very strict [on foreigners] because of the terrorist situation around the world. The PPIO has to ensure that foreigners are in

the system, and documents must be verified as both accurate and reliable."

He noted, "In fact, we can finish checking [an applicant's] documents in 15 minutes, but if there is a problem with any of them, the documents need to be verified by officers in other government departments."

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Queer News

The milkmaid of human kindness

BANGKOK: You won't find many 71-year-old women bragging about their bosoms, but a fortune teller in Bangkok recently invited reporters to squeeze her breasts to prove that they were filled with milk.

And not just any old milk. The woman, whose chest measures an impressive 38 inches, claims to have an abundant supply of "supernatural" milk that can ease pain, cure paralysis and ward off black magic.

The woman, Pissamai Trapsukhorn, is a fortune teller by trade. But rather than read palms, she peers into the future by studying the lines on the soles of her clients' feet. She also encourages them to drink her still-flowing breast milk.

K. Pissamai said that she is a fallen angel who was cast out of heaven for having casual sex with another deity.

She was reborn into the world of mortals in order to redeem mankind's sins, like a Thai version of the character "Q" from *Star Trek Next Generation*.

The foot fortune-teller helps out humanity by offering her magic breast milk to drink,

though it was not reported if the elixir is provided free of charge. When the milk stops flowing her life will surely end, she says.

"I realized that I had supernatural breasts after I had my last child, at age 50, and I continued lactating. I sought the advice of a foreign *dharma* master who I trust, and he explained to me that I had supernatural breasts," K. Pissamai said.

K. Pissamai steeps the leaves of the *sema* plant in boiling water before adding the magic ingredient. She always performs a chanting ritual when she pumps the precious fluid from her bosom. It was not reported if would-be clients were allowed to partake of the milk in undiluted form by suckling.

Asked to explain the seemingly inexplicable, a doctor at Chulalongkorn Hospital said mammary glands usually stop producing milk two or three years after childbirth. Most women stop lactating altogether sometime in their 40s.

A lactating 71-year-old must have unusual hormones, he concluded.

Source: *ThaiPost*

Striking a cautionary note

BANGKOK: There are few sounds more dreadful than that of a prison door being slammed behind you. But for inmates at Paholyothin Police Station, the slam of the cell door is often followed by the soothing strains of violin music.

At a time when Thailand's police are desperately trying to improve their public image, Pol Lt Col Sakchai Suwannukul is using his musical talents to calm the troubled hearts of those who have fallen foul of the law.

Better known as "Sarawat Tom", the 37-year-old inspector finds violin music a good way to calm down after a hectic day of cops and robbers in the heart of the Thai metropolis.

And he likes to share his talents with others.

His musical gifts aren't limited to the violin, either. Citizens entering the station to file complaints often do so to the sound of relaxing piano music, also courtesy of Sarawat Tom.

"Although police suppress crime vigorously, we also have a softer side and like to relieve people of their distress and suffering," the musical marshal was quoted as saying.

Source: *Kom Chad Luek*

Earlier this year, when former Phuket Town Mayor Phummisak Hongsyok, now the President of the Phuket Real Estate Club, slammed ineffective and obstructive bureaucrats for impeding the rate of development in the Phuket property market, his criticism had heads nodding all over the island.

"The most common questions [the club gets from members] are about the various government offices that are meant to provide clear information, perform administrative functions efficiently, and offer equal treatment to all people," K Phummisak said.

"These offices are making the real estate business very difficult with red tape, unclear information and unnecessary rules. This blocks development, because the real estate business requires organization and accuracy of information."

In response, Suphot Suwanachote, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Land Office (PPLO), said, "We admit that sometimes there are only a few officers who know the information that people want. When those officers are not in the office, people can't get accurate information from the other officers."

"We are improving on this problem by rotating officers every three months to work in different parts of the office, so they learn other, related work."

In addition to his office providing inconsistent information, K. Suphot admitted that often there is inconsistent enforcement of regulations because some officers are "flexible" in administering regulations while others are very strict. In response to this problem, he said, "We are talking to our officers about this matter so they will all operate the same way."

However, while the PPLO is trying to improve the quality of its delivery of information in order to quell the number of complaints and improve its effectiveness, the lack of uniform understanding of laws across different government offices remains a problem.

SECRET

Increasing public irritation with the inefficiency and lack of transparency of the Thai civil service was highlighted recently when a former senior local politician slammed bureaucrats for obstructing development of Phuket's property industry.

The *Gazette's* Dhirarat Boonkongsan and Gategaeo Phetsawang look at the scale of the problem and what is being done to fix it.

In August 2003 a foreign resident wrote to the *Gazette*, asking why the Rawai Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) refused to register him as the owner of his home in Nai Harn.

Although PPLO officer Jarong Ninrat confirmed that foreigners are legally entitled to own buildings but not land, an officer at the Rawai *OrBorTor* said that the foreigner needed to have a work permit in order to be registered as the owner of his home.

Asked about this confusion, Rawai *OrBorTor* President Arun Sorot defended his officer's decision, saying, "We have to consider whether the law allows foreigners to own buildings. I am not sure if they can do that."

So far this year the Damrongtham Center has received 36 complaints about poor service, 18 about unfair treatment by government officers, 11 about "bad behavior" by officers, and eight about corruption.

While the two offices remain at odds in their understanding of the law, the foreigner has persistent difficulty in any matter that involves him providing proof of address.

The house technically has no owner and he cannot produce a lease agreement for the building (the most common proof of address used by foreigners when complying with the mandatory registration of their address with Immigration) because he is not leasing it.

As far as *OrBorTor* President Arun is concerned, the solution is simple. "If people get unclear information or they feel that officers have not been helpful, they should inform me or the Chief Administrative Officer," he said.

"But people should be en-

thusiastic about understanding official information, as well. We usually publicize new information that may be useful for them."

Indeed, informing the public of government policy and regulations is – at least in Bangkok – considered an essential government office function, and is even a criterion used in the independent evaluation of government office effectiveness by the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC).

However, Natinee Songkumarn, the OPDC officer responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of government offices in Phuket, told the *Gazette* that informing the public is rated as a low priority and accounts for only a few marks in the scoring system.

In addition to the low priority given to informing the public, K. Natinee admitted that little is done to gauge how effective the provision of accurate, relevant information has been. The primary indicator used is unsolicited feedback – mostly complaints, she said.

Pol Lt Col Warath Wichien-san, the Director of the Ombudsman's Office of the Official Information Commission, the national office that receives complaints against the government, told the *Gazette* that complaints are lodged for many reasons, including misunderstandings by officers and members of the public, mismanagement of public information records, and corruption.

"If people think that government officers have refrained from disclosing information without suitable reasons, they can file a complaint with us," he said. "We will send the officers in question a letter asking them to explain their decision, to which they must reply within 15 days."

"If the officers fail to reply, the commission will send a letter ordering them to explain to the commission in person. If they still do not reply, we will report them to their superior officers."

Remarkably, Col Warath said that, while he receives about 200 official complaints a year, he has yet to receive a complaint against a government office in Phuket about the poor provision of information.

"I have not received a complaint about official information provided in Phuket, but that's probably because the province

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OF TRANSPARENCY



The thousand-yard stare of a visitor to Immigration confirms that not everyone finds visiting government offices an uplifting experience.

has its own processes or devices that can manage [complaints] efficiently," he said.

At the local level, the number of complaints is staggering. The government-funded Damrongtham Center, the provincial office for receiving complaints against the government, located at the Phuket Provincial Hall in Phuket City, has received 551 complaints since December 1, 2003. Of those, just 55 have been processed.

Wisut Romin, Deputy Secretary of the Phuket Provincial Administrative Office, said that so far this year, the center has received 36 complaints about poor service, 18 about unfair treatment by government officers, 11 about "bad behavior" by officers, and eight about corruption.

One office that has long

been the target of complaints is the Phuket Provincial Immigration Office (PPIO).

Pol Capt Krissarat Nuesen, Deputy Inspector of the PPIO, told the *Gazette*, "We receive a lot of complaints. We understand that problems exist and we know that the immigration laws are very complicated, and that causes problems for foreigners when they misunderstand the information they get from us."

"Sometimes foreigners don't know about regulations that have been updated, so we try to let them know through the *Phuket Gazette*."

He added that, in May, the PPIO will update its website, www.phuketimmigration.com, so that foreigners can search, in English, for the information they need. "They will also be provided

information in English in new brochures, written in simple English, not in legal jargon. This should make it easier for foreigners to understand our regulations."

One government office that stands out from the crowd is the Phuket Provincial Transportation Office (PPTO), which is gaining a reputation for being fast, transparent and effective.

Prasit Amarapan, Chief of the PPTO, explained to the *Gazette* that much of the kudos stems from the PPTO's policy to actively publicize procedures at the PPTO. "We publicize our procedures clearly, step-by-step, along with notes on how to contact officers at the PPTO."

"We also meet regularly to discuss how to improve our service," he added.

Another feature of the PPTO's seemingly unique steps to improve government services on Phuket is the pursuit of feedback from its "clients". "We have a box that is always open for people to let us know their opinions or any comments on how we can improve," K. Prasit said. "We aim to solve any problems immediately."

"Each section in the office also has its own questionnaire asking people if they feel satisfied with our services."

Another step taken to improve PPTO services, K. Prasit said, was the decision to open the office on the first Saturday of

each month and to extend weekday office closing from 4:30 pm to 6 pm.

In addition, PPTO officers are regularly sent to Bangkok for training to improve their skills and to gain an understanding of procedural requirements and regulations so that it is consistent with the understanding of officers in the capital.

The PPTO's services continue to improve and to draw favorable comment, leaving the rest of the island's government offices in a kind of bureaucratic prehistory. On current evidence, it may be a considerable time before they catch up.

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‘It’s important to play with passion, discipline and endurance if you want to master it.’

Piano Man

By Athairat Muangkong

It’s easy to forget that there was a time, not long ago, when being able to enjoy music usually meant being able to play it oneself. But that was before MTV and file sharing – and even before the first vinyl records were pressed.

So in this age of musical consumerism, with digital sampling, computer remastering and boy bands who can’t even tune a guitar, let alone play one, it’s nice to know that there are still people around with a passion for one of music’s classic instruments – the piano.

Phuket’s piano man is 47-year-old Kasame Dulvitanont. In 1989, the native of Yala province opened the Kasame Piano Shop on Mae Luan Rd in Phuket City, where he sells, repairs and tunes pianos as well as teaches others how to play.

K. Kasame’s interest in music goes back to his father, who was also a musician. He also considers the music of Mozart his

greatest inspiration.

“The piano may just look like a row of narrow black and white keys that you press down with your fingers, but it’s important to play with passion, discipline and endurance if you want to master it,” K. Kasame told the *Gazette*.

For 15 years, K. Kasame worked as a professional keyboard player in nightclubs,

‘Piano music has the ability to stir emotions, make people happy, or otherwise inspire them. Everyone can benefit from it, whether or not they know how to play.’

discos and other venues – but as he got older, he began to tire of all the traveling, unsteady income

and lack of security. So he decided to open his piano shop.

“To teach music, one must be proficient in musical notation and music theory, because any student must first master these basics if they are ever to become good players,” he said.

While most Phuket youngsters seem to waste much of their precious youth glued to a TV screen with joystick in hand, it’s encouraging to know that K. Kasame is now teaching more than 20 children how to play. Who knows, maybe Phuket could produce the next Liberace.

Although K. Kasame is also willing to teach adults, most of

his students are children between five and nine years of age. Adults are harder to teach and seldom have enough time and patience to put in the long hours of practice required, he said.

Children start out learning classic songs, using a popular graded coursebook. Like everything in K. Kasame’s shop, the cost of lessons is negotiable and depends on a number of factors.

If you feel like your home is not complete without a piano, but don’t have too much to spend, secondhand pianos start as low as 40,000 baht. K. Kasame brings most of his pianos from Bangkok and admits that the best-quality

pianos manufactured in Germany, Austria and Japan are beyond his price range.

Pianos are also available for rent, which will appeal to tourists who prefer not to bring along a grand piano.

“Piano music has the ability to stir emotions, make people happy, or otherwise inspire them. Everyone can benefit from it, whether or not they know how to play,” he said.

Kasame Piano Shop, 18/29 Mae Luan Rd. For more information contact K. Kasame. Tel: 076-222088; 01-3962011; Fax: 076-234289.



Kasame Dulvitanont at the keyboard: Among his students may be the next Liberace or Jerry Lee Lewis.

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SINGHA NEW LOOK

Milking the medical cash cow

More than one million overseas patients are expected to receive medical treatment at private hospitals in Thailand this year, says Rewat Sirinukul, chairman of a Parliamentary commerce committee.

Most of the overseas patients are expected to come from countries in the region. Of prospective patients at private hospitals, 10% are expected to be Thai, 60% expatriates and 30% from neighboring countries.

The country's private hospitals posted a combined income of two billion baht last year, representing 20% of the total value of medical care in the Asian market, K. Rewat claimed.

However, he also claimed that only five hospitals in Thailand provide medical care to international-standards, and all are located in Bangkok.

Dr Somsri Paosawat, president of the Medical Association of Thailand, said that most overseas patients come to Thailand mostly for heart surgery, plastic surgery, rheumatoid surgery and dentistry.

Why not here? Billboards are becoming an eyesore in Chiang Mai and the city administration wants to do something about it. Chiang Mai Mayor Boonlert Buranuprakorn said that a newly-formed committee was drafting regulations that would see inappropriate and offensive billboards removed.

He added that the size of billboards would be limited to two meters by three meters. Billboards deemed at odds with Thai culture – such as those advertising swimsuits, underwear or alcohol – will be banned.

K. Boonlert said the number of billboards in Chiang Mai grew out of hand because no municipal department had direct control. The new regulations come into effect this month.

Freshly squeezed: Consumers have been warned to avoid buying fruit and vegetable drinks from roadside vendors following reports that the juice could be contaminated.

Dr Somsong Rakphao, Director-General of the Department



HEAVYDUTY BEAUTIES: Contestants in this year's Jumbo Queen Pageant take a ride along Sukhumvit Rd in Bangkok to promote the event, held annually at the Samphran Elephant Zoo.

of Medical Sciences, said that roadside fruit drinks, especially those made from oranges, have been found to be contaminated with insecticides in 25% of cases.

Drinks makers unintentionally passed insecticide residue on to oranges by handling them with their bare hands, he said, adding that alarming levels of bacterial contamination that can cause food poisoning were also detected.

Clean sheets: The Public Health Ministry will introduce set guidelines for health spas and massage parlors across the country this month as part of a plan to promote the business worldwide.

Qualified spas and parlors would be awarded special signs certifying that they passed an annual inspection. The special logo would be promoted in the international market, said Public Health Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan. It was not reported what the logo design would be.

According to the latest surveys, there are 450 spas in the country, employing about 3,000 workers. Narongsakdi Aungkavapala, Director General of the Health Service Support De-

partment, said about 3.3 million people seek spa and massage services every year, generating an annual income of 3.6 billion baht. Most are foreigners, he said.

Cashing in the chips: The Cabinet has announced its support for a Science Ministry project to build a microchip manufacturing

plant to provide chips for the new "smart" ID cards, but will need more details about how the plant can operate at a profit before granting final approval.

The Science Ministry said in its 1.38-billion-baht proposal that the project could help develop Thailand's micro- and nano-electronic industries.

It added that the operation could break even in five years, even if it operated at half capacity, by selling six million microchips a year at 72 baht each. It expects foreign firms to be among the buyers.

Scapegoated: A man locked up for 16 months received 80,984 baht in compensation from the government, the equivalent to 168 baht a day.

"The money is not worth the trouble I have gone through," said 37-year-old Suk Kothada, after the Nakhon Phanom Governor handed him the compensation check.

Police arrested K. Suk in January 2002 on an attempted murder charge, 10 days after two hooded assailants shot one of his neighbors in the arm. On hearing the gunshots, he rushed to his neighbor's house. Some witnesses saw Suk at the house.

The court freed K. Suk last year, after the Law Society of Thailand took up his case. While behind bars, K. Suk believes he met many other victims of wrongful prosecutions. He urged police to stop making wrongful arrests simply to close cases.

Around the Nation news round-up is sourced from the pages of The Nation and Kom Chad Leuk newspapers.

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After much fanfare and an opening ceremony to match, the Thai International Hospital opened on Koh Samui last month. The hospital is on the side road that leads from the island's main ring road to Chaweng, almost opposite the Tesco-Lotus shopping center.

Although it may seem that there are plenty of hospitals on the island – Bandon International Hospital, Samui International Hospital, Nathon Hospital, and now Thai International Hospital – there are certainly enough accidents occurring on Samui to keep them all in prosperous business.

Coco-nuts: The long-lasting Coconut Day festivities, which ran for a week, were held at the recently-opened Samui Night Plaza. The event included many live shows, with music, dance and other forms of stage entertainment.

To celebrate the coconut more specifically, a stupendous amount of products and devices made from coconut husk and copra were on display and for sale. It was certainly educational to see

Much ado about medicine

the diversity of things that one can do with a coconut.

One can survive purely on the liquid and semi-solid sustenance of coconuts for well over two months, and a great many things can be easily made from the inedible bits, such as foot protectors, water containers, fine-strand fire-starters and floats.

Please commit the above to memory for when you are next stranded on a desert island.

Boon tide: The Koh Samui District office released 10,000 fish into Chaweng Lake as

part of the Songkran celebrations. The gesture was meant as a symbolic one, to bring good fortune to the area and to improve its natural qualities.

The fish will also keep the water clean and free of mosquitoes and other insects.

Some local observers suggested that the fish will also help the government test the water. If



GROWING UP GREEN: Nursery, preschool and primary students from Bencaja Education Centre held an art exhibition themed on "Keep Samui Clean" at the Big Buddha Art Gallery. The event was organized to educate the children about environmental issues. It also provided a chance for the parents to see the work produced by their kids and their kids' peers. There were few budding Van Goghs, but it appears to be a good way to ensure that the new generation is more sympathetic to Mother Earth than the current one.

they all start floating to the surface, belly up, then the planned 6-million-baht treatment system would definitely be a good idea.

Charged up: Laem Din was the place to be for the recent rock concert sponsored by energy drink company, M150. Many Thai and farang revelers gathered for the event, which lasted well

into the night and saw performances from the popular Grammy Entertainment-signed bands, Silly Fools and Loso.

Loso concerts are renowned throughout the country for the fistfights that usually go hand-in-hand with their live performances.

However, with only a couple of minor scuffles wit-

nessed, the night turned out to be a surprisingly peaceful one.

Fond farewells: An entertaining farewell party was held at Chez Andy for the outgoing General Manager of Baan Haad Ngam, Fraser Bell.

Fraser is moving to Jakarta, where he will join a larger resort that will present a bigger challenge for him.

To bid Fraser *adieu* in a style befitting a Scot, a friend played the bagpipes.

A reliable source reported that Fraser appreciated the music and had more than a wee dram to drink on the night. Farewell Fraser, all the best.

The General Manager of Central Samui Village, Peter Nilsson, has also left Samui after several years as an islander. Like Fraser, he is also taking up new challenges in the hotel industry in Asia.

He said he feels that "as the world is round and a very small place indeed," he hopes he will have the pleasure of being of service again to many of the people who have stayed at Central Samui Village during his time there.

Cdr Swan is a writer with Koh Samui's community magazine.

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By Commander Sammy Swan

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This week



LEFT: Reigning Miss Thailand Universe Morakot "Aimee" Kittisara (wearing tiara), and James Batt (in hat), Joint Managing Director of Laguna Resorts and Hotels PLC, set their turtles free at annual Sea Turtle Conservation ceremony.

ABOVE: Moritz Cornielje makes his debut in Bangkok with support from proud parents Gerard, founder of Southeast Asia Entertainment Group, and Claire, Director of Music at Dulwich International College.



ABOVE RIGHT: Sitthi Tandavanitj (standing center), recently elected President 2004-2006 of the Thai Hotels Association Southern Chapter, is congratulated by colleagues including Panjit Pissawong, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Commercial office (seated left) and the Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand's Phuket branch, Suwalai Pinpradab (seated center).

RIGHT: Easter meant fun and beach games for children and adults alike at the Phuket Yacht Club Fun Day. A treasure hunt revealed a trove of chocolate for the finders.

ABOVE: Wanida Hongyok (left) accepts an award on behalf of the *Phuket Gazette* from Dr Siriporn Taewseawatanakul, President of the Lions' Club of Phuket, for support given in aid of a recent Lions Club fundraiser for children with autism.



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In The Stars

by Isla Star

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Your moods are subject to sudden change this weekend, which could affect a close friendship. Spend time alone in quiet contemplation – enlightenment is within reach if you are patient. If your birthday is this week, look forward to a profitable year, though financial benefits won't be immediately apparent. Wear jade green.



GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Smooth sailing on the domestic front is forecast this week. You will enjoy a more harmonious atmosphere at home because others will tend to see things your way. On Monday or Tuesday, a shock announcement at work sends out waves of insecurity. This may cause you to take a more realistic look at the future.



CANCER (June 22-July 23): Difficulties only make life more interesting this week. Most Cancerians will appreciate being put to the test. Your common sense proves to be a useful tool, and others will ask for advice. Don't give away too many secrets – it would be wiser to let people work out the answers for themselves.



LEO (July 24-August 22): Leos on the move will receive confirmation that they have made the right decision; the green light will be impossible to miss. A friend is about to set off on a wild goose chase but nothing you can say will stop them.



The number 5 has special meaning this weekend.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): You may not believe in the supernatural but certain events will conspire to change your mind this weekend. May is about to spring many surprises, in both your personal and your working life; go with the flow. Wear citrus shades to sharpen your perception.



LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Communication is subject to cultural misunderstandings this week. You will have to employ all your tact not to upset the mango cart. The outcome should be positive, and could cause you to rethink personal philosophies. As the temperature peaks, look after your wellbeing – a day at the spa will refresh body and mind.



SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): This is not an auspicious week for making the romantic approach you have been building up to. The target of your interest will have other, more pressing, matters to attend to. Love-struck Scorpions should concentrate on work-related issues that should not be ignored any longer. Mid-week, you may receive news of an impending family visit.



SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Life is looking up. You may receive a gift that will take the form of financial gain or worthwhile knowledge. This will not mean you can sit around watching the bamboo grow, but it should certainly pave the way to a brighter future. Those close to you will also benefit from your sunnier mood.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Don't push your luck too far this week. It's very likely that forcing your opinions on someone could backfire. Capricorns who are determined to make their point should tread with caution. As long as you don't put your hoof in your mouth, this month could be one of the most positive of the year.



AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Those involved in a relationship should make sure to give their partner enough space to breathe; a claustrophobic atmosphere could encourage frayed tempers. If you can, plan a surprise romantic escape to cooler climes. This would be a good solution. Otherwise, concentrate on chilling out. Wearing white and light colors will help.



PISCES (February 20-March 20): Your powers of intuition are especially strong this week, and you will be right not to trust every suggestion made to you. Someone would like you to join them in a hare-brained scheme. No matter how authentic their map of Treasure Island seems, it's not. Later this month, you will find fortune independently.



ARIES (March 21-April 20): Focus strongly on your positive qualities to ensure that May opens doors. Forget about what you are not, and what you can't do. None of that matters to the people you need to impress. On the home front, you will receive uplifting news concerning property by the end of the week, so maintain a cool outlook until then.



In Thailand's Ayudhya era, at the court of King Narai, foreign influence rose to extraordinary heights, culminating in the appointment of a Persian as First Minister and, a few years later, the swift elevation to the same post of a Greek-born Englishman, Constantine Phaulkon.

Phaulkon came to a sticky end but he was influential in several major events, not least being the Siamese defeat of an invading army sent by King Louis XIV of France.

Even today, more than 300 years later, the Thai Foreign Ministry website, recounting the events surrounding Phaulkon, concludes, "The lesson which can be drawn from this ... is that Thailand should exercise caution in employing foreigners..."

Manipulative and self-serving Phaulkon may have been, but he was a colorful and fascinating character, which was what drew Axel Aylwen to write a fictionalized account of his life in three volumes.

The first, *The Falcon of Siam*, has just been reprinted and is being distributed in Thailand by Mr Aylwen's company, Falcon Publishing.

Mr Aylwen was inspired to write about Phaulkon, he says, because he felt an affinity with the man through Phaulkon's obvious love of Thailand and his remarkable ability with languages – Mr Aylwen himself speaks 10 languages, seven of them fluently, including Thai.

He was also inspired to write *Falcon* after reading James Clavell's *Shogun*, reasoning that what Clavell had done for Japanese-European history, he could do for Thai-European history.

He already knew the publishing world, having been the representative in Thailand of Oxford University Press for 10 years. It was a business he landed because no one, apparently, had thought of it. He also picked up the representation for a number

THE

By Alasdair Forbes

of other publishers in the US and Europe.

Mr Aylwen got to Thailand by a circuitous route, traveling around the world for three years after finding that following his father (the distinguished Sir George Aylwen – once Lord Mayor of London) into the world of high finance was not for him.

"I graduated from Oxford and then tried the City for six months, and that was enough for me. I went to my father, cap in hand, and he said, 'Well, what do you want to do?' and I said 'I just need to go round the world and find what I want to do.'"

He said, 'In that case, old boy, here's 10 pounds and the best of British luck to you.' I got across the Channel on that.

"I went round the world for three years and then landed in Thailand. I came in through Songkhla and, coming out of Malaysia, everything changed.

"There was a woman selling coconuts on the beach and she had such a radiant smile. There weren't any tourists at all in those days, and she wouldn't let me pay for a coconut. It bowled me over. That was the first thing that made me fall for Thailand."

That was in the mid-1960s, and Mr Aylwen stayed for 10 years until the Americans admitted defeat in the Vietnam War.

"I thought, quite mistakenly, that the domino theory [that one Asian country after another would become communist after the fall of Vietnam] was right, so in 1975, I went to Brazil."

But he had read a great deal while in Thailand, and the character of Phaulkon continued to

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FALCON MAN



Axel Aylwen: Inspired to write about Constantine Phaulkon because of an affinity with the 17th century adventurer.

intrigue him. He immersed himself in research in Lisbon and Amsterdam, which held records of the grand Portuguese and Dutch trading companies in the Far East. Research in Thailand, he knew, would be likely to yield little about Phaulkon because all Siamese records were burned during the Burmese sacking of Ayudhaya in 1767.

In 1988, he finally saw the first book in the trilogy published. ("There was so much about this fellow that you could not tell his story in one book.") The second came out in 1991.

The third was published in 1997 – but only in French and German editions.

He explains: "I got rather hopeful a film was going to be made. People in Hollywood were interested. I thought if a film was made, I could ask for a huge advance for book three. So I held back on the book in England.

"By the time I discovered the film would not be made, the [British] publishers had been bought and sold six times, so it never came out in English. That was my own mistake."

Now he is testing the wa-

ters for republication of all three books in English. Hollywood, again, is partly responsible.

"The strangest thing of all is that Hollywood is always after the latest trend, yet they're always terrified to make a move into anything new – they want the known and tried stuff – and because of the huge success of something that was considered impossible beforehand, a trilogy – the *Lord of the Rings* – trilogies are 'in' in Hollywood."

He already has experience of writing for the screen, having written the screenplay for the 2002 movie *Simon, An English Legionnaire*, based on a book written by a friend, Simon Murray, about his days in the French Foreign Legion.

In the meantime, having gone through an "unpleasant" divorce from his American wife, Mr Aylwen is laying plans for a return to Thailand, at least for six months of the year. He has a son in Bangkok, a hotshot with Siam Commercial Bank, with whom he has been staying, but what he would really like would be a

home near Chumphon. Phuket, he says, is too busy.

It seems unlikely that Mr Aylwen would be satisfied to settle in just one place – he has friends in too many parts of the world. The list of people he knows is a remarkable one.

Australian comedian Barry Humphries, for example, became a pal after Humphries married another friend, Lizzy Spender, daughter of poet Sir Stephen Spender.

"He's an extraordinary wit, Barry Humphries. There was an occasion when there were a lot of house guests [at Mr Aylwen's house] in Scotland. One arrived with a film that had just come out in the States called *Cliffhanger*, with Sylvester Stallone.

"I had this sort of cinema room and after dinner we would all go down there to watch a film. Barry whispered in my ear, 'I've

seen this film and it's dreadful. Would you mind turning the sound off?'"

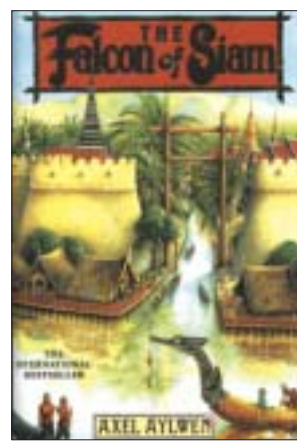
"I was open-mouthed at his incredibly quick mind. He'd seen this movie only once, probably, and he did the whole dialog and it was hilarious. It's not supposed to be a comedy at all, but people were falling out of their chairs."

James Clavell became a lifelong friend, as has novelist Frederick Forsyth. Another old pal is Michael Kadoorie, owner of the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong.

At Oxford he shared a room with David Greenway, who by the end of the Vietnam War was Time-Life bureau chief in Saigon. "He got me a journalist's pass and I saw the Americans being hooked off the roof of the embassy. It was so impressive."

That was shortly before he left for Brazil, and it has taken him nearly 30 years to get back to Thailand. The country is busier than it was before, more hectic, he says, yet still the people are delightful.

Like his hero, Constantine Phaulkon, Axel Aylwen is still clearly in thrall to Thailand.



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Improving Phuket's seascape

By Dominic Stroud

One might argue that it is hard to enhance the natural beauty of Phuket. With rolling hills, stunning beaches and photogenic headlands, one could say it's as good as it gets.

Yet for those who love boats, surely Phuket looks even more spectacular when a superyacht comes to visit.

The superyacht season begins in early December, when the winds and weather have changed post-monsoon. It starts with the Phuket King's Cup Regatta in December, and culminates with the Phuket Invitational Superyacht Meet later that month.

Coupled with the expansion of facilities, including the Boat Lagoon and Yacht Haven marinas, plus the development of Gulu Lalvani's Royal Phuket Marina, it may become a year-long season.

Apart from the obvious glamor these yachts bring to Phuket, they also bring considerable income, through mooring fees, maintenance and supplies.

Among the visiting yachts last year, two were especially

awe-inspiring – *Tatoosh*, owned by Microsoft's Paul Allen, and *Le Grand Bleu*. Both more than 90 meters long, they are among the largest yachts in the world. It would have been hard to imagine that 2004 would top last year, but it has, and then some – not just in size, but also in the sheer number of arrivals.

Topping the lot was the mighty *Pelorus*, the 115-meter Lurssen-built yacht (featured in last month's *Gazette* and, like *Le Grand Bleu*, owned by Britain's wealthiest man, Russian Roman Abramovich, of Chelski fame). But this year has been exciting because of the number of visiting superyachts and their diversity.

Ocean-going sailing yachts and exploration ships, as well as classic luxury motor yachts, have graced island bays and marinas, and cruised Andaman waters.

On the sailing front, we have seen *Anakena*, a 40-meter Royal Huisman, frequent visitor

Yes, you too can now own your very own 65-meter Integrity ocean-going submarine – for the knock-down price of US\$78 million.



The 40-meter Royal Huisman sailing yacht *Anakena* was one of several stunning yachts to stop in Phuket waters during this year's yacht-spotting season.

Yankee Too, a 37-meter Camper and Nicholson, *Alyssa M*, a 36-meter Dutch-built motor sailer, and the most recent arrival, *Blue Leopard*.

Designed in 1966 by Laurent Gilles, *Blue Leopard* is a pioneering yacht, one of the most efficient motor-sailors ever built.

Although large at 55 tons, she is light for her size and with her slim hull, is speedy under sail. That slim hull also means that she is something of a rocket under power, with her twin Rolls-Royce engines easily achieving 15 knots.

But the most impressive of the sailboats are the two fabulous Perini Navi yachts, *Perseus* and *Liberty*.

Founded some 20 years ago by Italian industrialist Fabio Perini, Perini Navi specializes in building blue-water ocean-sailing yachts, with the latest models now averaging 52 meters in length.

The computer controls for the sails and rigging are so sophisticated that it is claimed the yachts can be sailed by one person pushing buttons, or unmanned from the shore by remote control.

Whether any owner has tried this feat is unconfirmed, but I cannot imagine anyone risking playing with US\$25 million like a model yacht on a lake.

Next year, Pernini Navi will launch *Maltese Falcon*, an 87-

meter clipper. The sailing system will be revolutionary, with the three aero-rig masts rotating in their wells to capture the wind optimally. *Liberty's* first owner sailed her around the globe, so she is now on her second circumnavigation in the last couple of years.

So far Perini has built only 30 yachts so it has been a great thrill to see two within a month in Phuket waters.

I have been a yacht spotter all my life but even I was blown away by the following email a friend sent me the other day. He told me to see the web page at www.nauticalniche.com/under-sea/integrity213.htm.

Yes, you too can now own your very own 65-meter Integrity ocean-going submarine – for the knock-down price of US\$78 million. I think I'll have to be content with the 40-minute tour on Phuket's own Yellow Submarine.

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“If there is *paradise* on earth It is *this*, it is *this*, it is *this*.”

Many years have passed since this Persian couplet was inscribed on a wall in the emperor's private chambers in the Red Fort in Delhi. The current state of the city falls a long way short of Utopia.

You don't so much arrive in Delhi, as become submerged in it. No acclimatization period, no pause for breath – one moment you are on the aircraft and the next you are plunged into a

conurbation that seems all chaos and confusion.

Part of the problem is that the Indian capital is not one city but eight, built over many centuries, with a thick layer of modernization on top. Exploring here is akin to tackling an assault course, but it pays dividends for anyone willing to seek out some of the more off-beat attractions of a

place that moves to its own distinctive metronome.

Chandni Chowk is touted as Delhi's most colorful old market but you're so busy watching where to put your feet it's devoid of any real charm.

Less frenetic, Khari Baoli, the street which runs from the Fatehpuri Mosque to the western edge of the old city, is an aromatic wholesale spice market. Redolent with sights and smells, this area has changed over centuries. Outsize sacks of herbs and spices are still trundled to wholesalers on long, narrow barrows and pile upon pile of everything from lentils and rice to giant jars of chutney, pickles, nuts and tea are on offer.

The Red Fort – built by Mogul emperors in the 17th century – forces its way into most

tourist itineraries, with a regular *son-et-lumière* show celebrating the withdrawal of the British and India's independence. But for a real insight into the aftermath of colonial rule, head out to the Coronation Durbar site, marked by a lone obelisk in a desolate field located in open country north of Old Delhi.

Close by, there's a walled garden, complete with a forlorn gallery of marble statues of imperial dignitaries, languishing like discarded playthings away from the public gaze, and dominated by a 15-meter image of George V that rises like an Occidental phantom above the acacia trees.

A key figure in the struggle for independence, pacifist Mahatma Gandhi, was assassinated by one of his fellow countrymen in 1948. A simple black marble memorial marks the spot where he was cremated at Raj Ghat, not far from the banks of the Yamuna

River. Two museums dedicated to Gandhi are nearby and the area is now a beautiful park with labeled trees planted by a such disparate individuals as Queen Elizabeth II and Ho Chi Minh.

Similar patches of green in this overcrowded metropolis can be found in the Shalimar Garden – with its gentle central pavilion, the Shish Mahal – which lies on the fringes of the city, about 10 kilometers north-west of “Old” Delhi.

And from the sublime, to the ridiculous. The Sulabh International Museum of Toilets is – it almost goes without saying – the world's largest, with exhibits from 2,500 BC to the present day.

Despite the sometimes humorous tone of the place, the money raised from the expo goes towards installing waste disposal systems and running an eco-power plant from human waste. Strange to say, this also is not on many travel company itineraries.

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters

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Spot the Difference



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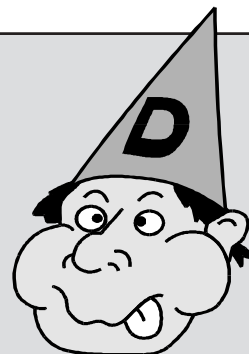
A traveler arrives in a small town and decides he wants to get a haircut. The manager of the hotel where he's staying says there are only two barbershops in town — one on East Street and one on West Street. The traveler checks out both shops. The East Street barbershop is a mess, and the barber has the worst haircut the traveler has ever seen. The West Street shop is neat and clean and the barber's hair looks as good as a movie star's. Which barbershop does the traveler go to for his haircut, and why?

East Street. The traveler figures that since there are only two barbershops in town the East Street barber must have his hair cut by the West Street barber and vice versa.

Answers to last week's Monster Quiz

1. Aglet; 2. Basque; 3. A beard; 4. Gypsy Rose Lee; 5. Spitting into; 6. Haakon VII; 7. In a heart; 8. A salty marsh; 9. Mole; 10. The Buddha; 11. Hail to victory; 12. Make silly faces; 13. A dance; 14. Decorative glass-making; 15. Poland; 16. Hip; 17. Morgan le Fay; 18. Trident and net; 19. Henri Rousseau; 20. Shoeing horses.

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



1. Who composed *Alligator Hop*?
2. What is 3.14159...?
3. What is the correct word for decaying organic matter found on a forest floor?
4. From which language does the word "taboo" derive?
5. By what name was Doris von Kappelhoff better known?
6. Who was assassinated in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914?
7. Farah Pahlavi was empress of which country?
8. In 1921-22, famine claimed 5 million lives in which country?
9. Two US Presidents have been impeached (but acquitted by the Senate). One was Bill Clinton. Who was the other?
10. Where would you find the cannon called Mons Meg?
11. Who won the Wimbledon men's singles in 1993 and 1994?
12. In 1910 Charles Rolls of Rolls-Royce became the first Briton to do what?
13. In Arabic, it is called *Ittihad al-Imarat al Arabiyah*. What is it in English?
14. One baseball player scored more home runs than Babe Ruth. Who?
15. Doris Duke was once known as "the richest girl in the world". What product did her money come from?
16. In 1964, Hasbro launched a new toy. What was it called?
17. Which US state is known as the Show Me State?
18. What did Amadeo P. Giannini found?
19. Name the caricaturist who drew *The Rake's Progress*.
20. In which year did Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis die?

Answers next week.

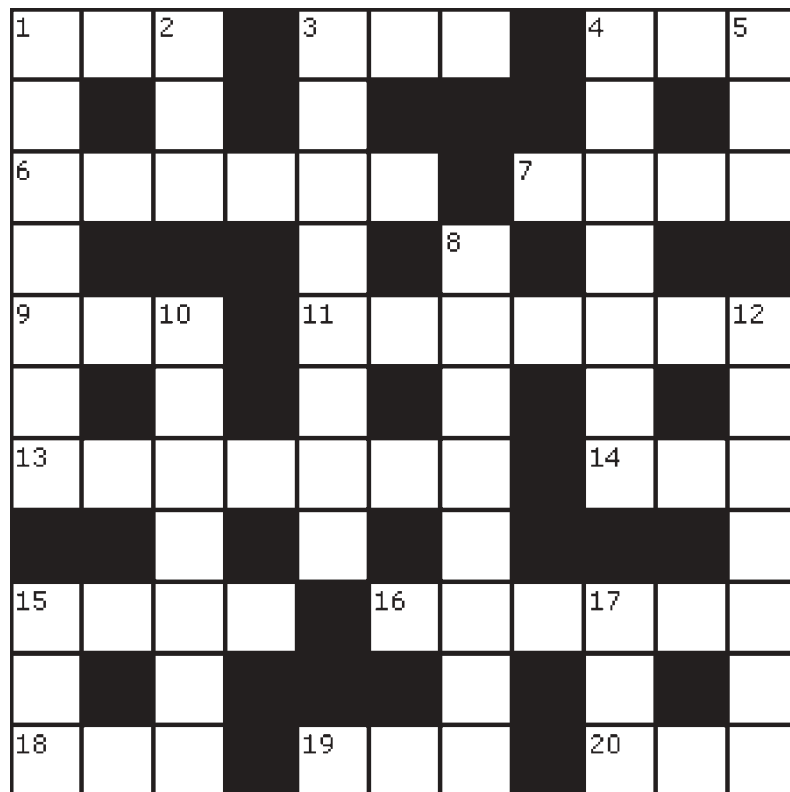
Never a Cross Word!

Across

1. Public transport.
3. Finish.
4. Baby goat.
6. Rip from the ground.
7. Daze.
9. Emergency call.
11. Insanity.
13. Law.
14. *** volatile.
15. It comes before gamma.
16. Long-armed ape.
18. Golf ball support.
19. Not he.
20. The blues in a big way.

Down

1. Black and blue marks.
2. Knight's appellation.
3. Huge.
4. Little cats.



5. Row.
8. Glue.
10. Home of grunge and Microsoft.
12. It's supposedly golden.
15. Wager.
17. Hair decoration.

Solution next week.

Solution to last week's Crossword



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Travel Warning: Motorists will want to bypass the road of that name from September 28, 2005. With three lanes (instead of the current two) merging into one at the "Thainaan intersection", and with Central (and Makro?) opening soon, gridlock is guaranteed.

Kudos for Caveman: At last month's Nation/Gazette seminar on – um, planning and zoning – most of the town folk agreed that drafting of further zoning laws was probably pointless at present.

Until existing rules (on noise, on building, and on land and beach use) are enforced, they reasoned, why diddle around with more?

When the roughly 137 seminar participants were asked why so many laws are impotent in Thailand, cave buff John Gray rose and opined that there were three reasons: "Corruption, corruption and..." [Sure, you got it.]

Roughly 136 seminar participants applauded John wildly. But one, magnificent in brown uniform and gold Rolex, walked out and rode off without a helmet.

Slam-Dunk: Will our casino be housed in the new International Convention & Exhibition Center in beautiful downtown Sapan Hin? Or will it be disguised/euphemised as an "entertainment complex" to be built in another location? Koh Yao islands? Maikhao?

The odds are at least 90:1 that a casino's gonna happen. The only gamble lies in the "where". Who's behind this stuff, anyway...?

Leaking Roofs: Well-known local architect Sombon Lankarua told a meeting of the Phuket Professional Builders' Association last week that scheduling of roof work is always difficult.

"When it's raining, you can't fix 'em. And when it's not, you don't need to," he noted.

Have something useful or irrelevant to tell our readers? If it's truly small, try Smalls@PhuketGazette.Net

Raindrops keep falling on my head

It is May and the rainy season is on its way. In northern latitudes, rain usually results when low pressure systems heading north collide with cold fronts moving south from polar regions.

In Phuket, however, the monsoon rains arrive on southwest winds. It is worth noting that, technically, "monsoon" is the term for the winds, not the rain associated with them.

In Phuket, rains brought by the monsoon usually begin around the end of May. However, in some years the rainy season can begin as early as the last week of April, or as late as mid-July.

In a sense, the monsoon is a two-headed beast that is with us year-round. The southwest monsoon typically lasts from the end of the first week in May until early November. After this comes a transitional phase, sometimes lasting just a few days, during which the northeast monsoon takes over.

Fortunately for tourism in Phuket, this brings dry and sunny weather to the island – just when Europeans and North Americans begin seeking refuge from the winter cold.

There is some rain even during the driest times of the year, but not much compared with the daily deluge of the southwest monsoon season. In general, look for the most spectacular thunderstorms in August and September.

The further south you go in

Thailand, the rainier it tends to be. In Songkhla province, some people joke that there are really only two seasons: "rainy season" and "very rainy season".

Perhaps the most dramatic thunder and lightning I have seen occurred on December 9, 1996. At the time we were renting a house near Jimmy's Lighthouse on Ao Chalong.

We walked to Jimmy's for dinner, as we often did. As we sat facing the bay and enjoying our meal, we watched the gathering storm move in from the south. By the time we had finished dessert and iced coffee, lightning had struck nearby and a few large warning drops of rain were splattering the beach.

We paid quickly and hurried home. No sooner did we get inside than we heard peals of thunder. We went outside and stood under the porch roof to watch the show. Lightning struck a few hundred meters away and thunder bellowed. There was almost constant cloud-to-cloud lightning, as if the clouds were trading charges in a buildup with which to zap the ground.

One of these bright bursts was directly above our house, and because it was so close the thunder crack was simultaneous. No wonder the ancients thought these natural forces were the gods venting their wrath.

Our annual weather patterns are complicated by the El Niño-La Niña phenomena, which run in five-to-eight-year cycles.



EARTH WATCH

By Robert Cogen

As the northeast monsoon begins to blow, trade winds that normally blow westward and pile up the ocean against the coast of Asia slow – and sometimes stop altogether. Without these winds, warm surface water moves eastward and covers the cool water

along the west coast of South America. This is El Niño.

El Niño causes the normal rich upwellings of plankton along the South American west coast to fail, with untold millions of fish and other marine creatures in the eastern Pacific dying of starvation as a result. While unseasonal torrential rains and floods occur on that continent's desert coast, fish and predators migrate north, seeking food and cooler water.

As the water recedes from the coast of Asia, warm surface water from the Andaman Sea surrounds the Malay Peninsula to replace it. Great upwellings of plankton-rich cooler water occur in the Andaman Sea.

This creates a banquet for plankton-eating fish such as whale sharks and many marine mammals, including baleen whales.

El Niño usually lasts one to three years and is often followed by La Niña. During this part of the cycle, water temperatures rise in the Andaman Sea. Corals suffer bleaching and some die.

Many fish and marine mammals migrate away from the warmest areas in search of food. These odd ends of the cycle are usually followed by years of ordinary water temperatures.

Robert Cogen is a well-known California lawyer and a broadly experienced naturalist with a degree in zoology. Email: indepth@asis.com.

Soy protein, not Soi Bangla

What's nutritious and what you like to eat may be quite different. Let's look at some of the options – and why a change in diet may be a wise choice for you.

Soy. Not to be confused with Soi Bangla or Soi Cowboy. A new study shows soy protein contains a little-known molecule called equol, which is showing promise as a powerful blocker of a male hormone involved in pro-

tate cancer, male baldness and even acne.

Carrots. Remember when your mom told you to eat your carrots so your eyesight would be sharp? She was right. Vitamin A helps you see in the dark and promotes healthy eyes in general.

Carrots are incredibly nutritious and can be chopped raw. They also taste great cooked in a range of dishes from stews to baked goodies. Carrots have more vitamin A than any other

food except liver. This is because they are full of beta-carotene, a natural substance that gives carrots their brilliant color, which the body converts into vitamin A.

The body absorbs the beta-carotene in carrots better when they are cooked. The heating process helps break down tough cell membranes, making the vitamin more readily available. Any beta-carotene the body doesn't turn into vitamin A acts as a powerful antioxidant that may help prevent cancer.

Honey. Honey, rather than sugar, can sweeten your favorite food and drinks and may help boost your body's natural defenses. A recent study has shown that a daily dose of honey also raises levels of disease-fighting antioxidants in the blood. Researchers say honey contains polyphenols, which are powerful antioxidants thought to reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer.

Whole Grains. New research shows that when it comes to Type 2 diabetes, not all carbohydrates are created equal. Eating whole-grain foods, especially fiber-rich cereals, appears to improve insulin sensitivity and lower the risk



Fitness FANATIC

By Joe and Pensri Lewis

of the metabolic syndrome – itself a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and the development of Type 2 diabetes.

A general rule of thumb: eat at least three servings a day. Try substituting brown rice for white rice and wholemeal pasta for regular to lift your daily intake.

As for bread, if you don't see the word "whole" on the packaging, then chances it is made from refined grains.

Pensri & Joe Lewis are fitness and equipment consultants at Fitness R Us. Tel: 09-8663736 Email: jlewis@loxinfo.co.th.

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Bleeding heart does Burma

George Fetherling, Canada's candidate for the pantheon of sloppy, self-important writers, is back with a new book, *Three Pagodas Pass* (Asia Books, Bangkok, 2003, 151pp). Subtitled *A Roundabout Journey to Burma*, this is Fetherling's account of his freebie passage aboard a decrepit Greek passenger ship from Athens to Tahiti, where he used his frequent-flier miles to invade Thailand and Burma.

George Fetherling is a blinkered, smug, fatuous West Coast Canadian leftie who should apologize to his readers for going to Burma. Aware of Aung San Suu Kyi's call for a travel boycott, he decides to go anyway.

"The Western Left tends to idealize Suu Kyi as someone like themselves," he writes.

"In fact, she is at the conservative end of the liberal spectrum, favoring the restoration of human and civil rights, certainly, but also Western investment to help rebuild the economy."

Oh the horror! What Burma needs, of course, is more rugged socialist self-reliance, along the lines of North Korea. Or its own "Burmese Road to Socialism", which beggared the richest country in Southeast Asia.

Last year, I reviewed Fetherling's previous book, *Running Away to Sea: Round the World on a Tramp Freighter*. In that book he was running away from marital discord only to find on his return that his wife wanted to divorce him.

My comment was that she was doing the right thing. This time around, his traveling companion is a politically-correct lawyer named Bernadette, who is prone to explosive rages after going cold turkey from her anti-depressant pills.

Fetherling opens with some tiresome pontification about the political situation in Burma. You have to wonder: where does Fetherling get his facts? He calls Burma a "small country". Singapore is a small country. Belgium is a small country. Burma is bigger than Thailand, which is the size of France. Burma is not small.

He talks about the "civil war" in Burma. Spain had a civil war. The US had a civil war.

Burma has a tribal insurgency. It's like calling the current troubles in the deep south of Thailand a civil war.

He says Burma's military dictatorship is "nominally communist" when it is no such thing. He says that an American PR firm came up with the name, State Peace and Development Council, which is not true.

He says there was no such thing as Burma "until the British arrived and unified a strange collection of warring fiefdoms into the Union of Burma." Burma had been a unified kingdom for nearly 1,000 years.

He states that the Chinese "built Rangoon an enormous base in Burmese territory in the Andaman Islands, off India." Actually, the Andaman islands are off Burma, but belong to India, which has a large naval base that was built with the help of the Russians.

All this in just the first 12 pages. I soon realized I was going to enjoy reviewing this book.

But as Fetherling recounts his sea journey from Athens to Tunis, Casablanca, the Canary Islands, Cape Verde, Salvador da Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, the Falklands, Tierra del Fuego, Valparaiso, Easter Island, Pitcairn Islands and Tahiti, he slides back into his boring old travel patter.

He is traveling for free because he's writing a weekly column for the *Vancouver Sun*. What we get is a hodge-podge of Sunday supplement tourism bromides.

Unlike real travel writers like Greene, Waugh, VS Naipaul and Theroux, he never does anything interesting, meets anyone interesting or has interesting conversations.

When he finally arrives in Thailand, he does the usual tourist things, slipping across the Burmese border to the little trading towns. But being the big Bleeding Heart Liberal, he does empty his backpack of jeans, medical kit, toiletries and mosquito net and hands them over to a village headman.

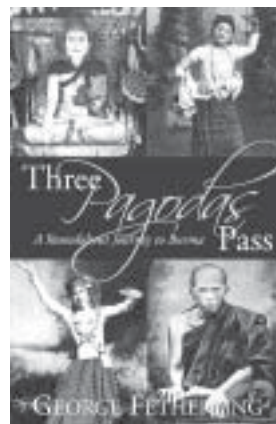
Then he flies to Rangoon and does the usual tourist boat trip up the Irrawaddy. So what?

There is nothing new or exciting here. Why anyone living in Asia would read this book is totally beyond me.



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt



Libations in the warm waters of the gene pool

Under the definition and description of "pheromone" in my dictionary is the following: "Mammals regularly mark their territorial boundaries with pheromones from specialized glands. These odors can be detected at great distances and can alter behavior dramatically." (My italics.)

The reason I note this is because I have never been able to work out why - if I can put this delicately - every raving twit, escaped loony or seriously disturbed ratbag within shouting distance wants to come and talk to me and embrace me like a prized member of their dysfunctional family.

A scientist would probably suggest my pheromones are sending signals that cause crazies to alter behavior dramatically.

A New Age therapist would probably claim that my aura, which can be visible only to the clinically insane and paralytically drunk, is sending out the right sort of celestial vibrations. And all I ever wanted to be was a chick magnet.

Instead, it seems that when the charisma genes were being doled out, they scraped the bottom of the pond and smeared me with a substance that attracts anything and everything - apart from the best looking babes.

If she's got one glass eye and is no taller than a circus midget, you can bet she'll latch onto me. If she was last employed as the "before" photo in a WeightWatchers advertisement, you can lay odds she'll want to come and sit on my lap, or worse.

To illustrate what I mean, consider the following true story. I was sitting, quietly watching the madding crowd on Walking Street, sipping a few tumblers, when a dark shadow suddenly obscured my vision.

Standing over me was a big man, not tall, but wide and solid, and sporting a beard and the sort of grin only worn by people who've consumed a significant quantity of potentially flammable booze. I figured him to have been a wrestler at some point in his youth. Not the Hulk Hogan I-eat-children-for-breakfast type. This guy was more your Greco-Roman grab-you-by-the-crotch-and-let-me-squeeze-your-testicles-until-your-eyes-pop style.

He looked me in the eyes, grinned (I think it was a grin. He may just have been clearing the excess air in his bowels) and said,

"Yitzhak rubbniov potwolimorv. Gweshnerky lubitorkrov notch-yarky."

Well, that's what it sounded like. OK, I thought, in his tanked state he's mistaken me for one of his drinking buddies. Or else, he's been watching reruns of *Deliverance* and is hoping to get me to go back to his hotel, play a little dueling banjo, and try to make me "squeal like a pig, boy."

"Whertisnik bolnius yov-gratskik, lelechopnor vusial." I smiled (mistake number one).



FROM THE STREETS OF PATTAYA

By Duncan Stearn

Then in my best classroom English I said, "I don't understand what you're saying."

Did this discourage him? No way, he was determined to make me understand. Speaking a little more slowly and clearly, he said something like, "Yer tiz norp rakne notchy rubnitznoid." Then he grabbed me and gave me a hug. I fervently hoped he hadn't just proposed marriage.

Pointing to myself I said, "Australia". I figured that even in his inebriated state, it would register I didn't speak Martian, ancient Greek or late-night European drunk.

Instead, he plowed on regardless, although in his next sentence (if that's what it was) he did use the word *Rooshia*.

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"If not NOW, when?"

It has been said, supposedly by some octogenarian upper-class English lady, that "Anyone can understand English if it is spoken slowly and clearly." This Russian, if indeed he were, clearly held a similar belief about his own tortured tongue.

Or maybe he thought that I was as pissed as a newt, too, and we shared the camaraderie of drunks everywhere. It's not the words that matter, just have another tumbler of vodka.

I haven't mentioned my American friend. When the Great Russian Bear made his appearance, my friend - and I use the term loosely - stood up and moved away. Not so far away as to be no longer in the same postcode, but far enough so the Great Russian Bear was oblivious to his existence. In fairness, I think the Bear was oblivious to anything not within hugging distance.

My friend later claimed he was adhering to George Washington's famous dictum, "avoid entangling alliances".

Rather than take the chance that the Great Russian Bear was going to give a first-hand demonstration of alcoholically-charged Greco-Roman wrestling, we paid our bill and I bid my new-found best friend "adieu" (I think that's French for "we're outta here").

As we scurried off into the night, I think the Great Russian Bear was attempting to order a bottle of vodka to take-out from a perplexed serving girl.

He may, of course, have been proposing marriage.

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Time for PM to deliver

In a speech delivered in 2001 to the National Assembly at the beginning of his tenure as Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra stated that his government would be "committed to improving efficiency, creating greater transparency and eliminating corruption in public administration and services."

Sadly, it seems that most of the civil service didn't hear that speech. Inefficiency, lack of transparency and corruption – problems that are very much connected – are still with us. Poor communication, confusion and conflicting information remain the order of the day, as our Inside Story (Pages 4 and 5) demonstrates.

All too commonly, a deep swamp of vagueness, obfuscation and misdirection keeps the man on the street from the information he seeks from government departments.

In many cases – like the confusion over import taxes on motorboats with outboard motors (see news pages) – the problem is one of poorly drafted laws and rules, compounded by inefficiency in communication between government departments.

In other cases, the unwillingness of government officers to provide information or assistance is more sinister. Knowledge, after all, is power. What's the point in having that power and not making a profit from it? Who can make money from transparency?

In most societies, including Thailand, ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it. Citizens should know the law of the land. But when officials either don't know or don't want to divulge the rules, citizens are left at a huge disadvantage. Can they trust the accuracy of the information they are being given?

It took the *Gazette* 10 days to track down an official who could answer the motorboats question definitively. In the meantime, the Customs Department Call Center, supposedly the fount of all wisdom on import duties, had staff giving out erroneous information.

The one government department in Phuket that deserves praise for consistently improving transparency and efficiency is the Transportation Department. Having a driving license renewed is a straightforward procedure, and the time it takes to obtain one has dropped in the past four years from a couple of days to a couple of hours.

Compare that with the sinking feeling that grips most people when they are faced with a trip to a government department, dragging two tons of paperwork with them, and one is driven to the conclusion that the Prime Minister's vow on coming to office needs considerably more commitment.

Perhaps, in the next election, voters should check whether candidates have spent any time with the Transportation Department. If they have, vote for them.

– The Editor



Letters

The *Gazette* is pleased to receive mail from readers. Please write to us at 367/2 Yaowarat Rd, Amphur Muang, Phuket 83000, fax to 076-213971 or send an email to editor@phuketgazette.net with

your views for publication in our next issue. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Pseudonyms are acceptable only if your full name and address are supplied.

The motorcycle law is a real head-case

Hypocrisy is the word that springs to mind every time the police stop me for driving a motorcycle without a helmet.

I receive a ticket costing 300 baht or 500 baht, then I don't need to wear a helmet for the rest of the day.

The law says that only the driver of the motorcycle needs to wear a helmet. What about the safety of the two or three family passengers who are often on the same motorbike?

Aren't their lives worth as much as that of the driver?

Ride hard or stay home
Sweden

Long court road is a pitfall of property

Richard Watson's article, "No downside to full land ownership by foreigners" (*Gazette* April 24), exposed the pitfalls of the much-touted 30-years-with-two-roll-overs lease method of securing land and property.

Mr Watson hits the nail on the head with his statement, "There may be no cooperation from the land owner."

If the owner does not cooperate, then the ex-leaseholder has no option except to go to court and fight a civil action.

This is a messy, expensive and interminable procedure. My Thai lawyer says a case I am involved in will take at least three years to proceed through all three courts. Success is not guaranteed.

Just to get a date for the first hearing takes about three months.

During this period, the landowner holds all the aces and can take over the property and even sell it.

You can set up a Thai company or partnership to hold the land paper, but there are costs and it's my understanding that it's illegal to register a company for the sole purpose of owning your own residence.

"Rich people" can become Elite Cardholders, but it's unclear whose name is actually registered as the owner. There are quite a few conditions on minimum value of construction and resale.

There has been much talk over the years about some relaxation of the land ownership laws to allow a foreigner to purchase a modest plot for a personal residence, but I don't expect to live to see that day.

Alex Malcolm
Patong

Bigger billboards no welcome sight

I read a fine article in the *Nation*, reporting Chiang Mai's intention to place restrictions on advertising that may be offensive to local people.

Not all the proposals would make sense for Phuket, but the notion of restricting the proliferation of billboards and ugly signs is welcome.

The latest offensive sign in Phuket is the ridiculous extra-large one at the Heroines traffic circle, on the main airport road. It involves automobiles and some form of finance package, sponsored by General Electric Credit Corporation.

The circle is emblazoned with Thai flags, beautiful flow-

ers, and the marble structure but is now ringed with the trashiest signs I have seen in a while.

One's focus is driven to the billboards on the perimeter. So much for Thai Culture. That is a real welcome to Phuket, and in a sensitive area.

It was good to see the massive illuminated Shark beverage sign finally come down from the top of the hill on the way to Patong. Phuket is such a beautiful island, and the best welcome is not commercial hammering from billboards.

Jim Corti
Hassip Pee Hill

Checkout cheapie should head home

How many people out there felt like wringing the neck of that miserable so-and-so who complained about being ripped-off for three baht over three years by Big C staff?

I'm talking about Jeffery Deveau (*Issues & Answers*, April 10-16).

Has he nothing better to do than complain about such childish nonsense?

We have had a collection at our local pub-restaurant and we will invite him to join us. We will wai him repeatedly and give him his three baht back.

We will also give him 100 baht for every 100 that he donates to the Big C charity box.

Thailand is one of the safest and most honest countries in the world. You should at least apologize to Big C staff for your pathetic little complaint.

Alexandre Romain
Phuket

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Letters conveying views and suggestions are published here. Those seeking comment from government officials and/or business owners are published in *Issues & Answers* on the facing page.

Murky waters surround cattle boats

Diving in the Similans has changed a great deal. When I first went there about 14 years ago, there was just the one boat going out. We did see one other boat going out, but it belonged to the same operator. It was a beautiful place to dive.

When I first went back last year, I didn't really notice that much how many boats were around. But this year, I was stunned. I think the thing that made me take notice was when a dive operator pulled up near our boat and dropped more than 40 divers in the water.

I call them "cattle boats", the ones that run the day trips out there from Phuket. They fill those boats up with 30 or 40 people, as many as they can. As a diver on board it's awful. I can't imagine that the staff can really keep an eye on everything that's going on when they drop that many people in the water.

I really think that, as the years have gone by, the skill level of the divers has fallen. There is more danger and threat to the coral in that respect. However, I

FIRST PERSON

American marine biologist and underwater photographer Don Gard was certified as a diver in 1964 by the YMCA in Honolulu, before the days of PADI. The survivor of a severe shark attack, Gard has made countless dives in Thailand, Burma, the Philippines, Indonesia and his home of Hawaii. Recently retired from teaching, he now spends most of his time diving around South-east Asia. Returning to the Similans after more than a decade, he gives his view on the islands' emergence as a popular destination.



haven't seen too much coral damage [at the Similans] or evidence of damage from fishing. I didn't see a lot of rubbish or other man-made problems, either.

I do think it's a good idea to give coral reefs a rest, though. I have seen some amazing things happen when you do that. I grew up in Honolulu, and there was a place called Hanama Bay where everyone went with their first speargun and diving equipment, including me.

Before long, you couldn't

even find a puffer fish in there. They later turned it into a reserve. Two years later I went back for a look, and it was amazing. I saw things that I had only ever seen in photographs.

Although I didn't see much man-made damage at the Similans, my gut feeling is that it's better to give some of the reefs a rest and a chance to recuperate, so I think the park's plan to close off certain reefs for a while is probably a good one.

I am lucky that I have been

somewhat ahead of the crowd and able to enjoy places when they were a little less crazy. So maybe I am just going to have to keep doing that. I'll have to keep going to places that are hard to get to.

As for the Similans, the cattle boat operators are in there. If you are unlucky enough to be on a boat that is packed with people, it's going to be unpleasant. And if you happen to be in a place where several cattle boats come up and dump a whole

bunch of divers into the water, then you are going to have a less than pleasant dive. There will just be too many people there, they'll be all over the place. But that's how it is now.

Phi Phi was like that. I went out to Phi Phi last year, after having dived there 14 years earlier. I was stunned at the number of boats. It was phenomenal. And there I did see a lot of rubbish, crap, and man-made garbage floating around.

But Phi Phi is much more crowded than the Similans, even now. Who knows, maybe it will take just another 20-30% more boats going out to the Similans before it becomes trash-laden like Phi Phi.

Perhaps currents carry away debris from the Similans. I was flabbergasted by Phi Phi, I almost didn't go into the water on the second day of the dive.

I still think the Similans is the best place to dive in Thailand, at least, the best that I know of. If there are better places, I'd like to know where they are – and so would all of those cattle boat operators.

No limits on wall height

What is the legal height and distance from land boundaries that an earth-retaining wall can be constructed? If a earth-retaining wall has been built illegally, who can help resolve the issue?

Simon Fielding, Phuket.

Tawee Homhuan, an engineer at the Phuket office of the Public Works and Town and Country Planning Office, replies:

There is no Thai law that specifies how high an earth-retaining wall should be. However, you must first obtain permission to build it from the local authority, such as Phuket City Municipality or the Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) for the area where the wall will be built.

When applying, an engineer's plan must be submitted showing that the wall is safe to build and in accordance with the landscape.

Any wall must be built on your own land. If you want to build a wall along a land boundary, you must first obtain permission from the owner of the adjoining land.

If a wall is deemed illegal by the local authority, they will order you to dismantle it. If you do not, they will dismantle it and charge the expenses to you.

If ordered to dismantle an earth-retaining wall, you must

hire an engineer to plan how it will be done. That plan must be approved by the local authority before proceeding.

Similarly, if you voluntarily want to remove an earth-retaining wall, you must first have an engineer's dismantling plan approved by the local authority.

If you have further questions or need help to resolve a disagreement over an earth-retaining wall, contact your local authority.

How to hook up to phase power

If there are three-phase power lines already in front of your house, can the electricity authority make you buy a big transformer, or can you be connected through a normal three-phase meter?

If you already have a transformer, how much should it cost to connect to the main line?

Bepy, Cherng Talay.

Worawut Thirabenjakul, Customer Service Officer, Phuket Provincial Electricity Authority, replies:

If the three-phase power lines in front of your house are high-voltage lines, you will need a transformer to reduce the voltage be-

fore the lines are hooked up to your three-phase meter. To install such a transformer will cost about 100,000 baht.

To have a three-phase transformer installed, please come to our office and fill out an application form.

If you are a foreigner, you will need to bring your passport and a letter from Immigration confirming your address in Thailand.

If you are Thai, you must bring your *tabien baan* (house registration paper) as well as your ID card.

Issues & ANSWERS

Want to know how to get something done? Can't understand some of the dafter things that seem to go on in Phuket? Want to pitch an idea to Phuket's authorities or institutions? Then this is the forum for you. Submit your queries or suggestions to us and we'll ask the appropriate people to respond to them.

Write to: The Phuket Gazette, 367/2 Yaowarat Rd, Muang, Phuket 83000. Fax 076-213971, or submit your issue at www.phuketgazette.net

Confusion at movies

One Sunday recently, we decided to go to the movies to see *Scooby-Doo 2*. Around noon I checked the movie listings on the *Phuket Gazette* website. English-language screening times were listed as 14:15, 15:45 and 17:30. We decided on the 15:45 screening.

I tried to phone several times to make a reservation but no one answered. When we arrived, the disappointment, especially for the kids, was enormous. The movie had been rescheduled to 18:20 and 19:45.

I was really upset because we had carefully planned our day off with the kids. I asked to see the manager. After 10 minutes, a lady came. She told us that Cineplex sometimes makes changes to the schedule during the afternoon, around 2 pm.

I really don't understand how Cineplex can state on the website that the schedules are "posted online daily at 11 am and that they remain in effect for 24 hours". This is just not true, and this is not the first time we have had this experience.

Andrea Kotas
Phuket

The Phuket Gazette responds: The movie listings have been suspended from the *Gazette* website pending resolution of problems arising from last-minute, unannounced schedule changes at the cinema. We regret the inconvenience to our readers.

Finding the host with the most

Two weeks ago, I wrote about hosting your own domain – staking out a domain name, such as phuketitparadise.com, and making it appear on the Internet.

The process involves two steps. First, you have to register the domain name. Then you have to find a company with computers connected to the Internet who will “host” your domain name, usually for a very reasonable fee.

I mentioned two hosting companies that I know pretty well: godaddy.com, based in the US, and thaihost.com, a Bangkok-based company. Several of you wrote in with other favorite Web hosts that

certainly bear mentioning. (This is more than an academic exercise for me: I’m currently looking for a host for my new Web site, AskWoody.com, which I hope will draw a lot of traffic.)

There’s a bit of a linguistic schism here. Most Web hosting companies conduct business in English – the big hosting companies couldn’t care less where you’re located physically, and it’d be rare indeed to find a tech support person at the big companies who speaks a lick of Thai.

Conversely, some of the Thai Web hosting companies – notably thaihost.com – work almost entirely in Thai. If you don’t speak and read fluent Thai, you’ll

have a hard time understanding the support notices, or getting help of any description.

If the people who work on your Web site are Thai, having Thai-language tech support is a big plus. But if they’re English-speakers, wading through the Thai (and the Thai-lish) can be very frustrating.

Permit me to illustrate. According to webhosting.info, the number one Web host in Thailand is a company called mooburi.com – a catchy name, especially for somebody like me who’s from Americaburi. If you go to the mooburi.com

Web site, you’ll find a simple text page, with no links and no support information – nothing but text. The largest Web host site in Thailand says:

Welcome Mooburi Services! We services available for your need. To contact email mooburi@mooburi.com. Thanks.

There’s more than language at work, of course. Web server farms are highly susceptible to every kind of disruption. If the Bangkok backbone goes down, and your Web site is on a Bangkok server, you’re suddenly cut off from the rest of the world.

Anything less than 100% availability can be deadly for a company that relies on Internet access.

A minor software glitch can



Some of Thailand's most well-known Web site hosting companies, Loxinfo, KSC, and Asianet, are joined by a few virtual strangers.

turn into a major headache in no time at all.

Many Phuket businesses offer Web site design and hosting, with host server farms located in Phuket, Bangkok, other Asian cities, or even North America and Europe.

Ask someone with positive

experience of their Web company for a recommendation. Alternatively, check with Island Technology (islandtechnology.com) ViewShop-Asia (2shoppingasia.com), or Andaman Graphics (andagraf.com). You can also search for “web hosting phuket” through Google.

Some of the largest Web hosts in Phuket are the major Internet Service Providers – Loxinfo, KSC, Asianet, CSCOMS, and the like. All of the major online directories will design, build and host your site for a reasonable fee, including the venerable phuketgazette.net, of course.

If you’re willing (or able) to create your own site, many more options open up. Paul Spring, a consultant for Phuket Island Holdings, has been in the computer business in Phuket for longer than I can remember. He runs an interesting Web hosting service called thaiservers.com.

While the business headquarters sit in Phuket – and guaranteed same-day assistance is readily available 24/7 by mobile phone, email and at nighttime by land-line numbers – the Web servers are physically located in the United States.

The prices caught my attention: Paul’s Thailand Plan runs 600 baht a month for unlimited bandwidth and email addresses, lots of software goodies, and nearly two gigabytes of space on the server – a remarkably hefty combination that’s available only for people and businesses based in Thailand.

Woody Leonhard has written a number of books in the “...for Dummies” series on computing. Readers can contact him at: woody@khunwoody.com

Uncovering an instinct for animal welfare

This time, Making Tracks interviews local animal welfare worker and founder of the Soi Dog Foundation (SDF), Margot Homburg Park, to see what motivates people like her to devote their lives to animals.

Q: One opinion is that the stray animal population could be controlled by mass culling. What do you think?

A: The developed world has already proved that reducing unwanted animal populations by culling does not work. Besides the suffering such policies cause, some animals will survive and continue to breed uncontrollably. A dog and a bitch can produce, on average, 16 puppies in one year. If the puppies breed, the number rises to more than 500 within three years. The US Hu-

mane Society suggests that a pair of breeding cats and their offspring could produce more than 400,000 cats in seven years.

Q: Can the problem of strays ever be brought under control?

A: Yes, absolutely, but it requires a consolidated effort on all fronts, from the government, local veterinarians, the local population – including expats, as well as tourists.

Mass sterilization and vaccination must take place to reduce the population as well as to keep it healthy. This includes not only stray ani-

mals but also – and more importantly – those that are owned and cared for. The government must create legislation to limit the number of animals bred for cash. Most of the breeds are not suited to a sub-tropical climate. Owners do not know how to handle larger breeds or can’t afford to care for them. These animals are being dumped in ever-greater numbers.

Q: I understand that you sit on the new dog pound committee. What is happening with the pound? Will it solve the problem of stray dogs?

A: The committee is not an active one, and the pound is a supposed sanctuary for 500 stray and aggressive dogs. There are plans to segregate the dogs to prevent fighting, but this will not stop injuries and death for many of them.

Food – although there is no budget for it – will be given to the dogs en masse, so only the dominant ones will eat well. The others will starve and endure unspeakable suffering.

The workers will be unskilled and not motivated to care for the animals, and the pound will be seen as just another dumping ground for unwanted animals.

Q: The Atigaro Project, a well-known and respected charity, is now run by the SDF. Will it continue to operate as before, bringing in foreign vets to man mobile sterilization clinics?

A: Yes. The SDF still runs Atigaro field clinics using visiting vets from abroad. Phuket does not have enough vets. Of these, only a couple make an effort to provide their services at reduced rates.

The field clinics relieve these vets, albeit temporarily, of

a heavy workload, and also spare the volunteers the task of driving the animals back and forth to the vets’ clinics.

We also use the field clinics as a means of public education, to explain how the program helps dogs and in fact the community as a whole.

To encourage owners to take responsibility, we always ask them to contribute to the cost of sterilizing their animals.

We also reassure local veterinarians that we are not taking business from them, but are doing something that would otherwise not get done.

Q: What is the greatest challenge facing the SDF?

A: Convincing owners of special breeds, particularly pit bulls, not to see their dogs as cash-producing breeding machines but instead to have them sterilized. Uncontrolled breeding increases the number of strays. Inbreeding, of course, results in health problems.

Sterilization should be made obligatory by law, with exemptions reserved for certain registered breeders who meet exacting standards.

Top Dog is pleased to receive questions from readers. Email: topdog9@myway.com

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On the Move

Sitthi Tandavanitj, 77, a Phuket native, has been re-elected President of the Southern Chapter of the Thai Hotels Association for a second two-year term. K. Sitthi also remains Vice-President of the parent Thai Hotels Association, as well as director of The Metropole hotel, Phuket City.



Tip-Arpa Sapanon, 28, who is Bangkok-born, has been appointed Group Sales Manager of Le Meridien Thailand Resorts. K. Tip-Arpa, who has a degree in mass communication from Ramhamkaeng University, was at Impiana International Hotels and Resorts in Bangkok.



JRD scoots into bike market

By Siripansa Somboon

PHUKET: Motor scooter start-up JRD Bright Motor Industries Co Ltd is attempting to change the balance of Thailand's small motorbike market, dominated for decades by Japanese giants such as Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha and Kawasaki.

JRD Bright Motor Industries Co Ltd stepped into the arena a year ago with its automatic four-speed scooters that are aimed at the urban market.

The scooter parts are imported from Malaysia and assembled at a plant in Songkhla. From there, they are sold through the 200 JRD dealerships around the country.

Patiparn Piamjinda, Managing Director of Andaman Group Auto Sales and Service Co Ltd, the JRD dealer in Phuket, said, "When we entered the Phuket market in March last year, we weren't worried about sales figures, we were just testing the

market – and we were successful.

"We wanted to create a new market segment. We expected to achieve about 2% market share by now, but so far we've managed only about 1.5%. We now have to improve our products to achieve our new target of 2.5% of the market," he said.

About 1,300 JRD scooters have been sold in Phuket, with some 100 scooters leaving the showroom each month. "We hope to sell about 120 a month soon," K. Patiparn said.

To achieve that target, K. Patiparn said, greater consumer awareness of and confidence in JRD scooters is required.

"JRD is a new brand here and the motorbike market in Phuket is very competitive. We have to advertise the main [selling] point of our scooters, which is the automatic gearbox that makes them easy to ride."

Two other factors he identified as critical in improving

consumer confidence were after-sales service and the price and availability of spare parts.

"JRD service is important in getting more customers. We are focusing on after-sales service, and even offer a callout service available anywhere in Phuket."

He also explained that prices for JRD spare parts were in line with the market, and that JRD has plans to build a spare parts warehouse on the island.

Other key factors in attracting customers, he said, were the fashionable colors and styles, the 125cc engine, and the front disc brake with anti-lock brakes.

"People are starting to become more confident in our products but we must keep this popularity growing," he said.

While the major Honda, Suzuki and Kawasaki dealers on the island all claim that JRD's effect on their sales is so small that they have yet to become concerned, Yamaha have put

their campaign to sell more automatic motorbikes into a higher gear.

Anuparph Vachavanichsanong, Managing Director of Yamaha dealership Ruampong Motor Co Ltd, said, "We plan to be the market leader in automatic motorbike sales in the next five years, because people like the improved convenience and comfort, and for motorbikes that means automatic gears."

He explained that Ruampong Motor has been selling automatic motorbikes since 2002.

"On average we sell about 1,000 automatic motorbikes over three months. The Mio is the most popular because it's small and suits Thais, while the bigger Nouvo suits foreigners," he said.

"We are confident that we can become the market leader because our overall sales have increased to move us up from number four to number two in the motorbike market."

Little brother set to make big waves

Regular readers will have noted that the Glanmore Property Fund has frequently been recommended by me. To recap, Glanmore Property Fund is a commercial property fund that holds a portfolio of properties inside Britain.

It does not buy land for development, nor does it buy properties that need restoration. The holdings are entirely in commercial property. It does not have any property shares in the portfolio.

The historical performance figures for this fund are one year, plus 8.94%; two years, plus 14.38%; three years, plus 25.26%; four years, plus 39.91%; five years, plus 63.95% and, since launch in 1997, plus 76.08%.

The one problem, if it can be described as such, was that the fund is open only to Sterling investors. The good news is that there is a solution.

Glanmore has a "younger brother", known as the Acre Property Fund. This fund will probably change names soon to The British Property Fund.

The fund has the same management as Glanmore but is described as being slightly more aggressive. This is due mainly to the fund's gearing (borrowing).

Glanmore works on a ratio of 1:1.22. This means that it borrows £1.22 for every £1 held in investors' funds. The Acre Property Fund has a ratio of 1:2.

Finance is provided by two of Britain's largest financial groups, the Royal Bank of Scotland and HBOS – the Halifax Bank of Scotland.

Next month, Acre is expected to announce a name change and introduce two new

currency classes, the US dollar and the euro. There has been demand for this for quite some time.

The Acre Property Fund, due mainly to its gearing, has returned even better results over the past year, beating its elder brother by almost 1 percentage point.

A question that will be on investors' minds will be the effect that rising British interest rates will have on the fund's performance. The question has already been put to the fund's managers and the response was that they expected rates to rise to 4.5% to 4.75% (they are currently 4%), and that this will be manageable.

Only if interest rates rise much above 6% will there be much of an impact.

This is in stark contrast to the experience of the residential housing market, where returns from letting property have fallen to 2%-3%. An example was given of a recent purchase in



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

Newcastle of two properties, both let to British Telecom, with a purchase basis yield of 7.25%. This shows that commercial property yields remain highly attractive.

Commercial property contrasts with the British residential property market. The residential market has seen huge rises in values, fueled by two factors.

First, the British stock-market suffered the same downturn as most other world markets. This led to a rush of investors' capital seeking a different asset class. Second, by late 2002, interest rates had reached lows not seen for 45 years.

Britain's central bank, the Bank of England, is not sitting idly by, watching a major bubble

appear in the housing market – a bubble compounded by massively increased debt owed by consumers who have been spending as if there is no tomorrow.

The British are also accessing the equity they hold in their homes to help finance the spending binge. The Bank of England has already raised interest rates twice in recent months and probably will lift them again in May.

The central bank is in an unenviable position. It has targeted the free-spending British consumer as its first priority but it is also aware that interest rate increases do not have an immediate effect. There is always a time lag.

In Britain, some 92% of mortgages are on an adjustable basis. This means that home owners are affected by rising interest rates.

Consumer behavior does not change overnight. However, as people start to realize that they have less disposable cash and

higher commitments, the penny will drop. The Bank of England will keep raising interest rates until consumer behavior changes.

The British public is carrying the highest debt burden in history. It is at unhealthy levels.

Normally, central banks raise interest rates to "cool" an economy that is overheating, and that is likely to suffer from rising inflation. The Bank of England is raising rates to "cool" the consumer but this also has the effect of raising the value of Sterling against other currencies.

The Bank of England would actually like to reduce interest rates because inflation is low, currently 1.1%, and Sterling is already 10%-15% overvalued against both euro and dollar. But taming the consumer comes first.

Richard Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial planning service. He can be reached at Tel and Fax: 076-381997, Mobile: 01-0814611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th.

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Time running out for Surakul Stadium

By Rittiwat Suwannarattaphum

PHUKET CITY: Phuket is still waiting for Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to approve a 38-million-baht budget proposal for extensive renovation work at Surakul Stadium.

The work is needed if Phuket is to host matches in the final round of the Fifa Under-19 Women's World Soccer Championship 2004 in November. Teams representing 32 countries will compete in the tourney, with Thailand automatically qualifying for the final round as host nation. The tournament is now in the qualifying rounds.

The international soccer governing body, Fifa, has approved Surakul Stadium as one five host venues, on condition that it is first improved to international standard.

Fifa initially recommended a 20-point improvement plan, but has since advised officials that it would allow play if just five main tasks were carried out. The budget proposal addresses these points, among them improve-

ments to lighting, seating and locker room facilities.

The other sites for matches in the tournament are the National Stadium, Thammasat University Stadium and Rajamangala University Stadium, all in Bangkok; and Chiang Mai's "700-Year-Old" Stadium.

The Football Association of Thailand told the *Gazette* that a seven-member Fifa team will arrive in Thailand on June 6 to inspect all five stadiums for readiness.

It is unlikely they will be impressed if they see Surakul Stadium in its present state, however. Currently, there are no seats in the stadium. Spectators enjoy play while sitting on concrete steps.

Songsak Kitakarnkul, head of Phuket office of the Sport Authority of Thailand, told the *Gazette* that a committee has been set up to ensure transparency in awarding the renovation contract – if it is approved.

The panel includes members of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*Or-*

BorJor), which owns the stadium; the Sport Authority of Thailand's Phuket office; the Phuket Office of Sports and Recreation Development; and non-government organizations such as the Phuket Sports Association.

K. Songsak said that locker rooms have already been upgraded under a 3.4-million-baht *OrBorJor* budget, with the Sports Authority providing technical guidance to ensure the improvements meet Fifa requirements.

Kiatdee Attavatanon, head of the Phuket Office of Sports and Recreation Development, confirmed that work is still needed in many areas, including to the scoreboard, lighting, seating, and the pitch itself.

"As I understand it, the new lighting alone could cost as much as 19 million baht," he told the *Gazette*.

"I contacted the Bureau of the Budget in Bangkok and they told me they had already passed the budget proposal to the Prime Minister's Office, where it is only awaiting his signature."



All Phuket City's Surakul Stadium needs for a 38-million-baht upgrade is a few pen strokes by the Prime Minister. But time is running out if Phuket is to host matches in the Under-19 Women's World Cup, to be played next November 9-27.

Prasong Manogarn, an official at the *OrBorJor* Public Works and Maintenance Department, told the *Gazette* that installing 3,000 seats in the covered section of the stadium, as required by Fifa, would require about 5 million baht of the total 38 million.

With just over a month to go before the Fifa inspection team arrives, local officials are well aware that the budget needs to be approved soon if Phuket is to host the tournament.

Even if the funds are made available, completing all the

renovation work before November will be touch-and-go.

Eam Thavornvongwongse, Deputy Chairman of Phuket Sports Association, remains optimistic, however.

He told the *Gazette* that if the budget is turned down, it might be possible to raise the necessary funds through other channels, such as donations. However, he was less positive about sports in Phuket in general.

"Phuket now has a load of problems and no one really pays attention to sport development here," he said.

Wedding bells take their toll on Ao Chalong race day

AO CHALONG: The fourth race day in the Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC) 2004 Keelboat and Multihull Race Series saw a handful of yachts take to the bay to complete a shortened course rounding Koh Lone.

The reason for the small turnout was a good one – most of the regular racers were at the wedding of Steve Anderson from Power Snorkel, and his bride Orh.

Despite being uncontested in the racing class, David Lindhal's *La Samudra*, captained by Tony Knight, got off to a flying spinnaker start and set a blistering pace in the light 6-7 knot winds.

Al Boone on *Blue Moon* also made a fine start to lead the

cruising class, with *Fidji* hot on his heels. As winds lightened, John Fenn's *Four Winds* had difficulty keeping up. So did Brian Ritchie on *Beyond Rotto*, bringing up the rear.

As the boats rounded Koh Lone, it became a race against the elements, with disappearing wind and a strengthening current slowing the pace. *Blue Moon* proved quicker in the light conditions and won the class – but only just. *Fidji* took second place, finishing only a minute behind.

Four Winds and *Beyond Rotto* failed to round the island before the wind dropped off entirely, leaving a beautiful glass-like finish on the water and no forward movement, regardless of how much liquid ballast both

crews took on board. Neither completed the course.

The next ACYC race day will be May 9. For more information, call Scott Duncanson at Tel: 01-8924992.

– Chris Husted



A team of Thai entertainment stars down from Bangkok took on a squad representing Patong in a match to mark the opening of Star Club on April 24. When the dust had settled, the Patong squad had won the friendly match 5-3.

Patong Darts League Table

PATONG: After week five of play, the aptly-named Champs Bar is at the top of the table, with the narrowest of leads over In-Between Bar.

1. Champs (12pts)
2. In-Between (11pts)
3. Amigos (8pts)
4. Didi's (7pts)
4. Piccadilly (7pts)
4. Valhalla (7pts)
7. Football Crazy (6pts)
7. Off Shore (6pts)
9. Happy Days (4pts)
9. Shakers (4pts)

(Note: Happy Days and Didi's each have one game in hand).

Results for April 20: Amigos* Bar 7, Happy Days 2; Didi's 5, Shakers* 4; Football Crazy* 4, Champs 5; In-Between 5, Off Shore* 4; Piccadilly 5, Valhalla* 4 (* = winner of beer leg).

May 4 match-ups: Amigos v Didi's; Champs v Off Shore; Football Crazy v In-Between; Piccadilly v Shakers; Valhalla v Happy Days.

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Do Not Drink Tap Water!

Phuket pair qualify in striking shootout

By Rittiwat Suwannarattaphum

PHUKET CITY: The hunt for the best young soccer players in the country led 167 junior athletes from Phuket and neighboring provinces to compete in an official try-out at Surakul Stadium on April 23.

Four spots were up for grabs among a nationwide total of 24 in the Best Soccer Striker Project 2004, but only three footballers managed to qualify, two of them from Phuket.

Piyapong Piew-on, one of Thailand's all-time great goal-scorers, led the selection team "This project will identify talented strikers," he said. "They will probably become the replacements for the Thai national football team's aging players."

All the youngsters were required to complete five tests that included dribbling skills, shooting a ball to a designated spot in the goal, ball-possession skills, and using head and both feet to score. Each received marks out of a possible maximum of 100.



Piyapong Piew-on (blue shirt) poses with Phuket competition winners Nattaphong Bou-shay (left), Apimuk Yuttitam and Nattavut Sagulsan (sitting).

In the 12-14 years age group, Nattavut Sagulsan, 13, from Phang Nga, ended in first place with 80.5 points. He was the only player chosen in his age group.

In the 15-18 years age bracket, Nattaphong Bou-shay,

18, and Apimuk "Pond" Yuttitam, 16, both from Phuket, won trips to Bangkok with 83.5 and 81.5 points respectively.

K. Pond said that he'd prepared for about two months. "I normally study at Suphan Buri sports school and have competed in several football competitions," he said. "This advantage probably won me second place here."

He added that he will improve his head-scoring skills for the final round in Bangkok. "In this section, I was really poor and felt uneasy," he said, noting that all players selected to go to Bangkok also have the chance to study at the Ian Rush Academy in Liverpool.

K. Piyapong noted that young footballers in Bangkok, Suphan Buri and Chon Buri had recorded higher scores than those in Phuket.

Scoring skills were what mattered, he said. "This is the most important thing in football – how to get a goal. If you play dramatically but don't score, it means nothing."

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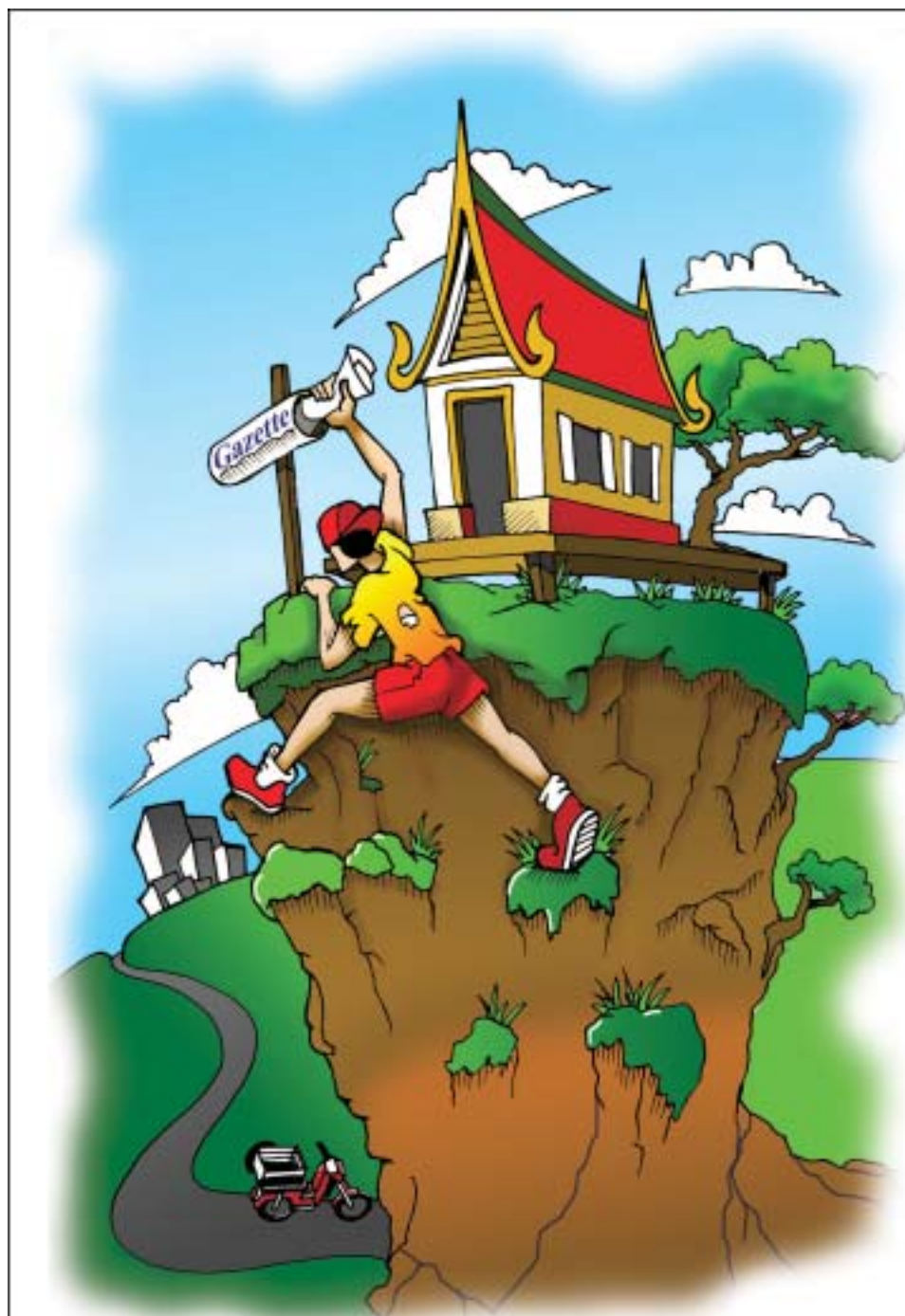
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The Hon C S Rolls first met Henry Royce, a crane maker, in Manchester's Midland Hotel on May 4, 1904. It was not an accidental meeting but one that had been arranged by Henry Edmunds, a trader who made frequent trips between London and Manchester.

In the dining car on the train up to Manchester, Rolls confessed that it was his desire to have his name associated with a motor car. The young aristocrat had heard of an unusual machine built by Henry Royce and decided to see for himself.

Rolls had a dislike of two-cylinder engines, believing them to be harsh and prone to vibration. But after he drove Royce's 10-horse-power two-cylinder machine, he signed an agreement to take all the cars built by Royce Limited.

Frederick Henry Royce was



By Jeff Heselwood

born in 1863 in the village of Alwalton, Cambridgeshire. At 14 he was apprenticed to the Great Northern Railway works in Peterborough. However, financial woes prevented Royce from completing his apprenticeship and he went to work as a tool-maker.

After a period of mundane employment, Royce eventually set up his own company, F H Royce & Co, in Manchester in 1884, making various electrical



items, including generators and lighting installations. By 1897, the expanding business began making electric cranes.

Charles Stewart Rolls was born in Berkeley Square, London, on August 27, 1877, into a wealthy family that owned property in several parts of the country.

As an adult, Rolls indulged in every imaginable form of motor sport as well as flying competitions (he was later to become the first Englishman to die in a flying accident), and as the third son of a peer of the realm, Rolls mixed in high society, to whom

he supplied his motorized carriages.

In 1903, Henry Royce decided to build a motor car: he actually produced three, all two-cylinder machines based on the French Decauville.

It was this design which contributed much to Royce's first true motor car. While similar in concept, the Royce cars were far more reliable and offered exceptionally smooth rides.

Following their historic meeting at the Midland in May, an agreement was reached, and it was formalized in December, 1904.

The agreement called for Royce & Co. to build motor cars that would be exclusively marketed by C S Rolls & Co.

Later, the two men formed the Rolls-Royce Distributing Company, and by that time, the two-cylinder vehicles were becoming known as Rolls-Royce motor cars.

They had the distinctive radiator grille that made the marque famous, but they had no badge as such, only a small plaque on the grille.

The first true Rolls-Royce did not arrive until 1907, when the company produced the superb 40/50, which was nicknamed the "Silver Ghost" because of its amazingly silent running and silver fittings.

A Silver Ghost managed a 15,000-mile reliability run around the British Isles, the equivalent of three years' normal motoring, an unheard of feat in those times.

Demand for the 40/50 was such that soon four cars a week were leaving the factory, and new premises had to be found. These were established in Derby where Rolls-Royce Motor Cars remained until 1945, when it found a new home at Crewe, Cheshire.

Over the years, Rolls-Royce became known as the "world's best motor car", a well-deserved cachet.

Some memorable machines emerged from Crewe as well as Derby, but later, lack of investment resulted in little change in the brand or its products.

Rolls-Royce motor cars were built at Crewe until 1998, when the factory was acquired by Volkswagen, along with the rights to Bentley, which had been owned by Rolls-Royce since 1931.

The Rolls-Royce name, logo and Spirit of Ecstasy bonnet symbol, however, passed to BMW, who subsequently built a new, greenfield production facility at Goodwood, in the south of England, to assemble the magnificent new Phantom.

Henry Royce's legend lives on, of that there is no doubt. As he once said, "Strive for perfection in everything you do. Take the best that exists and make it better. And, if it does not exist, design it."

That says it all, really.

Jeff Heselwood may be contacted by email at jhc@netvigator.com.

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Beefing up the menu

One of the high points of Maurice Deveney's colorful cooking career was preparing a meal for the Queen Mother in England. "I was working at a gentlemen's club in London," says Maurice. "The Queen Mother requested roast saddle of lamb, and I think she enjoyed it."

Maurice is a firm promoter of traditional British cooking. "As far as I'm concerned, fusion-style cooking only means confusion," he explains. "I'm a simple meat and potatoes guy at heart."

Guest chef

By Jenna Wise

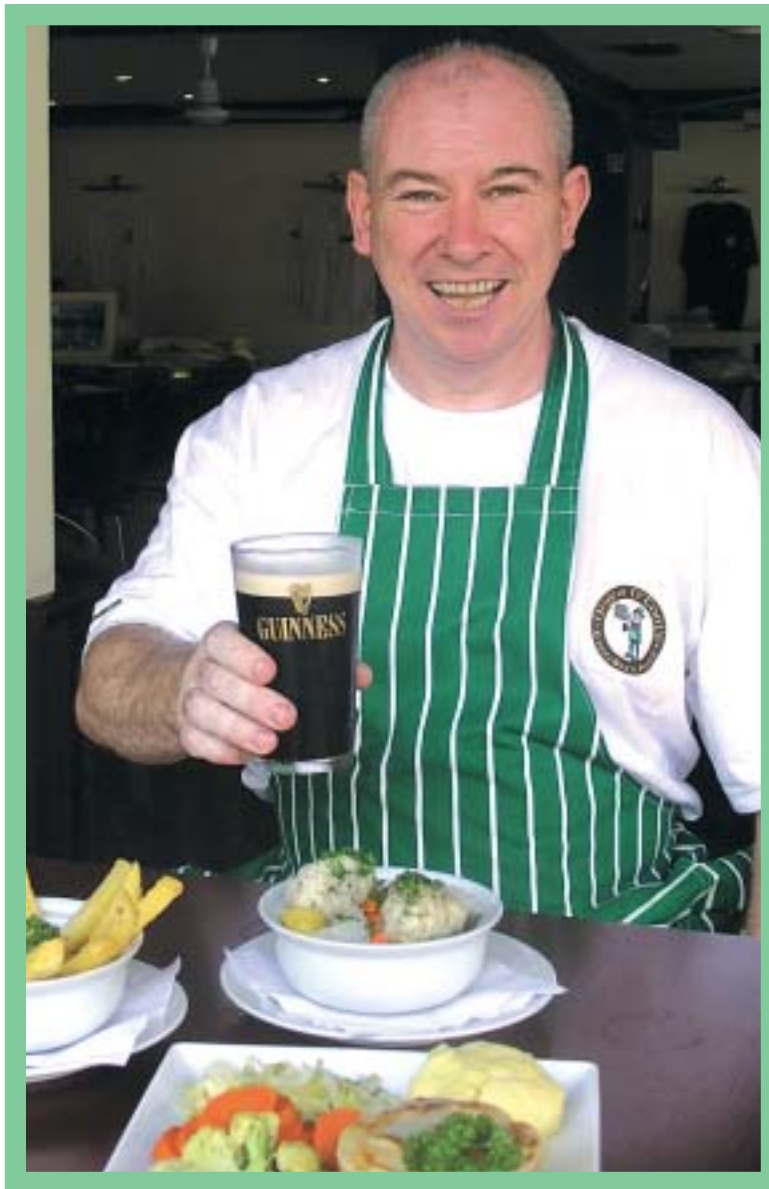
Plain home cooking is proving a great attraction at Angus O'Tool's Irish Pub in Karon, where Maurice has been restaurant manager and chef since the opening at Christmas.

The menu is gradually being extended to include requests by regular Western customers who miss being able to enjoy a non-spicy hearty meal. Dark Irish Guinness is a popular accompaniment to various dishes. At present it's available only in cans, but Maurice and his business partners are working hard to have the draft variety installed.

Apart from lunches and dinners, there's also an all-day breakfast menu. Guests can build their own breakfast, choosing from all the ingredients that constitute a filling British start to the day.

"We're taking our time to get the balance right," Maurice explains. "Apart from the regular menu and daily specials, we've also started having theme days. For example, every Tuesday we have different Indian curries on offer."

Angus O'Tool's Irish Pub Restaurant and Guesthouse, 516/20 Patak Rd, Soi Islandia, Karon. Tel: 076-398262. Restaurant Manager-Chef: Maurice Deveney. Open daily, 11 am to midnight.



Guinness Beef For 6 people

Ingredients:

3.3 lbs rump steak, diced ½-inch thick;
1 can of Guinness (400ml);
Pinch of thyme;
2 bay leaves;
2 oz butter;
2 oz flour;
8 oz onion;
8 oz carrot;
8 oz white radish;
8 oz potatoes;
1 oz butter;
Salt to taste.

For the dumplings:

1½ lb plain flour;

4 oz suet (or grated frozen shortening);
6 tablespoons chopped parsley.

Method:

Braise the rump steak for about two hours. Stir in the Guinness, thyme and a bay leaf. Remove the meat from the pan and thicken the liquid with 1 oz butter and flour. Put the meat back into the pan and leave overnight.

The next day, cut the veg-

etables about ½-inch thick and boil with a bay leaf until cooked, pinch of salt and 1 oz butter. Remove and drain.

To prepare the dumplings, mix the flour and suet or shortening together with just enough water to bind the mixture. Roll into 12 balls and boil these in the vegetable cooking water for about 30 minutes. Reheat the beef and the vegetables. Put into each serving bowl some beef and vegetables and two dumplings, with chopped parsley on top.

Hale and hearty ...
chef
Maurice
Deveney.

Lamb and Stilton Pie For 6 pies

Ingredients for the pastry:

5 oz bacon fat, lard or shortening (Maurice saves the bacon fat from cooked breakfasts to use for a richer pastry);
8 oz plain flour;
½ pint cold water;
Pinch of salt;
1 teaspoon dried thyme;
1 teaspoon dried sage.

For the filling:

1½ lbs diced leg or shoulder of lamb;
1½ lbs potatoes, peeled, cut and diced about ½-inch thick;
1½ oz Stilton (or blue) cheese.

For the sauce:
2 oz plain flour;
2 oz butter.

6 individual pie tins about 4½ inches diameter and 2½ inches high, greased.

Method:

Heat a little oil in a large pan and cook the lamb slowly for about 45 minutes. Parboil the potatoes and drain well. To make the pastry, sift the flour, herbs and salt together. Boil the fat and water together briefly and mix in well with the dry ingredients. Leave on one side to cool. Roll out the pastry, leaving it fairly thick and line the pie tins. Blind bake these in a pre-heated oven at 180-200° for 15-20 minutes. To prepare the sauce, put the cooking juices from the meat into a pan and heat slowly, stirring in the flour and butter. Fill the pastry cases with lamb and potatoes, then cover with hot sauce and spread crumbled Stilton or blue cheese on top. Then put a pastry lid on each pie and place under a medium-hot grill until browned (about 5 minutes). Serve with hot sauce and vegetables of your choice.

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Home of the Week

Ao Yon

Ocean-view living on Cape Panwa

This imposing 18-month-old Thai-style villa, built on three levels, is at Ao Yon, near the tip of Cape Panwa. On a hillside, it commands views across the sea.

The approach is up a steep driveway, with room to park two cars under a carport. Behind and to one side is the maid's room and separate bathroom. To the other side is a large storeroom and a spacious laundry room.

Wide steps lead to the second level and the teak front door, which opens into a reception area. The large Western kitchen to the left is fitted with quality Smeg appliances and includes a large American-style fridge, a double-sink, a microwave and a five-ring gas cooker with extractor hood.

There is a central breakfast bar, with granite top, and a terracotta tile floor.

To the right of the front door is the spacious dining room, which is open on three sides, with teak doors leading to the covered terrace and barbecue area. The



45-square-meter infinity-edge swimming pool is to one side, terraced on three sides, and the far end of the terrace looks out to sea.

Behind the swimming pool are two main bedrooms, including the 49sqm master bedroom with walk-in teak closet and a



bathroom with sunken bath, shower unit, twin basins and toilet. The black-tiled floor contrasts with white-tiled walls.

The stairs, with frosted windows, lead to the third floor, which has a living room of 54sqm with a 270-degree view, en-suite bathroom and sala.

The internal area is 300 sqm and the land area is 790 sqm. The title is *Nor Sor 3 Gor*. The decor and build quality are exceptional, with an insulated roof and guttering all round.

There is an internal termite sprinkler system, a pump room with a chlorinator and filter system, electronic security with motion detectors. Window frames and doors are all solid teak. There is air conditioning,

fans and tinted glass throughout.

The utilities include two telephone lines, UBC TV, three-phase electrical supply, a septic tank, and well water for the garden sprinkler system.

The gardens are mature and include cashew trees and palms.

This home is being offered furnished for 22 million baht or unfurnished for 21 million.

The house guarantees a peaceful lifestyle, and yet it is only 15 minutes from Phuket City.

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Decor Source

By Siripansa Somboon

It's possible to save the fare of a trip north to buy products from Thailand's northern hill tribes by paying a visit instead to Siam Handicraft in Karon.

And if your email just happens to be brimming with messages saying that bigger is better, then this shop will definitely prove that what's best of all is an appropriately-sized piece.

It should be said, though, that small, medium and large versions are available of many of the items on offer.

About 90% of the array of goods in Siam Handicraft come from the north of Thailand and proprietor Wattana "X" Tantiwongphaisan is proud of the quality of the woodcarvings that make up a sizeable proportion of his stock.

"Most of the goods we sell are reproduction woodcarvings, resin products, pottery, silver or bronze ornaments, or cloth dolls," X said.

Talking of large things, finely-crafted carvings of elephants are available, reproduced in great detail. According to X, elephant carvings are the most popular purchases among tourists.

"Many people believe a pair of elephant statues in the house will help those who live there to be strong and have long, contented lives," he said.

Much of the paint on the wood comes from different kinds of fruit, a tradition of the North.

The handicrafts on offer range in size from small pieces about the size of a hand up to lifesize, in the case of the Buddha images, which are carved and decorated and often finished with gold leaf.

Traditional Thai puppets and models of dancers are popular, along with small mirrors set in wooden frames.

Other souvenirs come in brass, silver or tin, but the price for those is a little steeper.

X says that he enjoys his work because he was once an artist himself so he tries to selected the best of handicrafts.

Most of his customers come from Scandinavia, Germany, and Britain, and they seem to enjoy the diversity of the shop so much that many make a return visit.

"It's not a big shop but the quality is good and there's a lot

X marks the spot for art of all sizes



Wattana "X" Tantiwongphaisan with some of the glittering artifacts to be found in his small shop in Karon.

to choose from," he said. "We can also ship larger items for customers."

When it comes to the size of the price tags, there's also a lot of diversity. If you want to spend 100 baht, that's fine. Or if you have designs on something

larger, it's quite easy to spend 10,000 baht.

Siam Handicraft, Patak Rd, Karon Beach (near the Islandia Park Resort). Open daily 2 pm to 11 pm. Tel: 01-8939674. Email: siamhandicraft@hotmail.com

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Beer belly blossoms

Sting has always been one of my favorite singers, from The Police days with *Message in a Bottle*. One of his more recent successes was actually a song about a plant. So there is a connection between Sting and gardening, then.

His gardening song, as I like to call it, was *Desert Rose*. I'm sure that gardening cynics will argue that he was thinking of some gorgeous, dusky Arabian maiden at the time he sat down and penned the song, but for now, I'm sticking with the gardening theory.

The desert rose, or adenium as it's properly known, is called the *chuan-chom* in Thai. Infact, it's a member of the same family as the frangipani, and even looks like a dwarf version of its cousin. It's so similar that it's sometimes referred to as the Japanese frangipani.

Sting obviously knew what he was singing about, because the desert rose originally came from East Africa and Arabia. Whether it's dusky maidens or a plant, at least we both agree on the geography of the desert rose.

The adenium is a succulent member of the oleander family. Succulent simply means that it has thick fleshy leaves and stems that store water. But this species mainly stores water in its pale gray trunk.

Like all oleanders, the adenium contains poisonous sap. This is more than compensated for by the beautiful bell-shaped blossoms it produces almost continually.

Most have a white center with pink edges and lines in the throat. Its shiny green leaves are often covered underneath with pale down. Most varieties grow to about a meter high with a spread of about 40-50 centimeters, and the flowers of most species can grow to about 12cm across.

Even though it's not particularly tall, the desert rose produces a massive stem when it gets a bit older, a bit like the middle-aged beer belly I'm currently working on. It should start blooming when it's quite young, at around 15cm tall.

Don't be alarmed if the leaves suddenly decide to drop

Put this in an expensive, thin-walled ceramic pot and you'll regret it, as it will quickly burst through.



The adenium, also known as the desert rose, will happily grow and continually bloom in Phuket.

off the adenium. That's what it does when it decides to become dormant. In other parts of the world, it does that in winter when temperatures drop. Here in Phuket, the climate isn't known for dramatic decreases in temperature, so the poor old adenium becomes a bit confused.

I can only assume that it drops its leaves when it gets bored, and perhaps gets a little depressed over the beer belly it knows it will eventually develop.

The adenium should be watered in a similar way to a cactus, allowing the plant to dry between waterings. Often the base of the stem will get a bit soft when it feels that it's ready for a bit more water.

Increase the amount of water when the plants are in flower or actively growing. Over-water it, and it will inevitably drop its leaves, again becoming a bit in-

trospective. Perhaps this is another plant with "issues".

Given the speed at which most potted plants grow here, it is often tempting to keep moving potted plants around. This is not just because we get bored seeing the same plant in the same corner all the time, but also to encourage even growth.

Plants will always grow towards maximum light, so rearranging helps to stop everything shooting off to one side.

The adenium isn't forgiving in this regard, so you should really keep the plant in the same spot, facing the same way consistently. If the pot is rotated, intense sun can severely burn the formerly shady sides of the stems.

The adenium also needs plenty of root-space, so they should be repotted frequently until they get as big as you want

them. Without root space the growth rate will slow down, no matter how well they're looked after otherwise.

Put this in an expensive, thin-walled ceramic pot and you'll regret it, as it will quickly burst through.

If anyone knows Sting, or anything about his songwriting, perhaps they could contact me and solve the dusky maiden/gardening debate once and for all.

On reflection, I'll probably go for the sun-bronzed beauty option – at least it stops me thinking about my beer belly.

Want to know more about a plant in your garden?

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Property Gazette

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wanted. English/Thai family needs a house with 3 - 4 bedrooms, swimming pool, aircon, kitchen, satellite TV, and hot/cold water in the bathroom. We will need it for a one-month holiday mid-July to mid-August 2004. Should be near ocean, preferably walking distance and in the Patong area. Pls mail with photo and prices. Email: arlhome@netvigator.com

LOOKING 4 A HOUSE

I'm looking for a nice detached house in Rawai. 2 bedrooms, bathroom, phone line, furnished or not. I'll return to Phuket in September and I am looking to lease a place long-term. Please email details to: richardtekram@hotmail.com

HOUSE OR APT

for family. Our family of 4 (2 kids: 3yrs, 5yrs) is looking for a nice house/apartment to rent during our visit to Phuket from May 27 to June 20. Must have aircon, parking and preferably a pool. Only quiet locations, distant from traffic noise or nightlife wanted. We are also interested in car rental and daytime sailing/fishing trips and excursions to beautiful beaches and other islands. Email: noreng@directbox.com

HOUSE WANTED

in Kamala. 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, 1 large living room, kitchenette and private garden/swimming pool. Rental 20,000-30,000 baht/month. Tel: 076-325000. Fax: 076-325886. Or email to: jk@surinbeachresort.com

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All your home furnishing needs - curtains and blinds, furniture and carpets - supplied with prompt service. Tel: 01-903-5622.

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Large beautiful folding bookshelf: 800 baht. 2 Hitari adjustable fans: 500 baht each. Samsung refrigerator 289L w/ separte freezer: 6,000 baht. 2- or 3-man kayak: 6,000 baht. New 20" TV w/Sony Hi-Fi VCR, plays all videos: 6,000 baht. Large futon mattress, 2.5m x 1.8m (8ft x 5'5"): 3,000 baht. Extensive TEFL manual, teaching guide & curriculum: 2,000 baht. 2 shelves with 90-degree brackets: 400 baht. 24" x 48" finished granite counter: 600 baht. Tanin 3-speed blender: 600 baht. Also plates, dishes, kitchen stuff. Tel: 01-2715049.

90CM BUILT-IN OVEN

Stainless steel, universal oven, electronic clock, easy-clean system, all-glass door, liner, removable accessory rack, 2 side-mounted halogen lighting tubes, cooling fan, stainless steel front. Tel: 01-8157440.

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Would you like to keep up on what's happening in Phuket - the good, the bad and the bizarre?
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Events Calendar

it probably isn't one.

List **YOUR** event now - **It's free of charge.**

phuketgazette.com/calendar

Island Job Mart



www.lagunaphuket.com

The largest hotel and resort group in Phuket, and a listed company on the Stock Exchange of Thailand, is currently seeking qualified candidate to fill the below position.

COMPUTER TRAINING OFFICER

1 Position

- ▶ Bachelor's degree in Computer or related field
- ▶ Excellent command of English would be advantage
- ▶ Excellent communication, creative, service-minded
- ▶ Outgoing personality, well organized, motivated, positive attitude
- ▶ Knowledge of Microsoft Office, HTML, PHP, and other application would be advantage
- ▶ Experience in computer training would be advantage

Applicants are invited to send a full detailed English resumé stating current and expected salary together with recent photo to:

The Group Director of Human Resources Laguna Resorts & Hotels Public Co., Ltd.

390/1 Moo 1, Srisoonthorn Road, Cherngtalay, Talang, Phuket 83110
Tel. 076-324416-7 Fax. 076-325002 Email: sunisas@lagunaphuket.com



This is your chance to be a valuable member of a resort opening team.

A fantastic career opportunity awaits you in our new 122 villa, Park Plaza Resort & Spa, currently under construction on Nakha Yai Island, Phuket.

We are seeking passionate and dedicated Thai professionals for the following positions:

- Director of Food and Beverage
- Human Resources Manager
- Financial Controller
- Executive Chef
- Front Office Manager
- Executive Housekeeper
- Purchasing Manager
- Spa Manager
- Chief Engineer
- Secretary

You will be required to work closely with a team of like-minded colleagues to establish and maintain international product standards, and achieve key performance indicators and revenue goals.

The successful candidate will have:

- At least 3 years' experience in a similar role in the resort industry.
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- Demonstrate a proven track record of management skills.

We will provide a competitive remuneration package and the professional support of one of the largest hotel chains in the world.

Please forward your detailed CV to cnewton@parkplaza.com

Carlson Hotels Asia Pacific encompasses Regent International Hotels, Radisson Hotels & Resorts, Park Plaza, Country Inns & Suites by Carlson and Park Inn brands across the Asia Pacific region. The organization is incorporated within Carlson Hotels Worldwide, one of the world's leading hotel companies, with more than 850 hotels in over 60 countries.



Thavorn Hotels & Resorts Phuket

Owners of Thavorn Hotel in Phuket Town, Thavorn Grand Plaza in Phuket Town, Thavorn Palm Beach Resort on Karon Beach, Thavorn Beach Village & Spa on Nakalay Bay, near Patong Beach and The Nakalay Junk, is currently looking for :

- General Managers
- Resident Managers / Hotel Managers / Executive Assistant Managers (Rooms / F&B)
- Food & Beverage Directors / Managers / Restaurant Managers / Asst. Managers
- Executive Chefs (expat) / Executive Sous Chefs (expat or Thai) / Chefs
- Rooms Division Manager / Front Office Managers / Asst. Managers
- Director of Marketing / Director of Sales / Sales Managers (Bangkok & Phuket offices)
- Programmers - (php, html, MySQL, JavaScript)
- Web Designers - (Dreamweaver, Flash, Photoshop, Illustrator)
- Text Editors for E-Commerce Department
- Chief Accountants / Accountants
- Spa Manager / Asst. Spa Managers
- Training Manager / English Language Instructor
- Admin. Manager / Executive Secretary / Secretaries (for Marketing Communications and Research & Development Department)
- Receptionists / Guest Relations Officers / Managers
 - ▶ Thavorn Beach Village & Spa - salary starts Baht 12,000 excluding service charge
 - ▶ Thavorn Palm Beach Resort - salary starts Baht 10,000 excluding service charge
 - ▶ Thavorn Grand Plaza Hotel - salary starts Baht 8,000 excluding service charge
- Many Junior and Middle Management Admin. & Service Staff / Managers
 - ▶ The ideal candidates for professional positions MUST possess several years experience in a similar capacity with 4-5 stars hotels and resorts.
 - ▶ First time candidates for the hotel industry are most welcome. Ideally, new candidates for management positions MUST possess a degree, preferably master degree, from recognized universities.
 - ▶ We offer a good salary and excellent benefits to the right candidates.

Thavorn Group is looking for young, energetic, committed, result-oriented and self-motivated Thais and expatriates to join our team. Interested candidates should send their applications with CVs and two recent photos to :

Group Human Resources Director Thavorn Hotels & Resorts Phuket c/o Thavorn Grand Plaza Hotel

40/5 Chana-Charoen Road, Muang, Phuket 83000
Email: recruitment@thavorngroup.com

*** All applications will be treated with strictest confidence. Only shortlisted candidates will be notified for an interview. ***

HEALTH CLUB SALES

Club Asia Fitness, situated on the third floor of the Royal Phuket City Hotel, Phuket City, is the premier health and fitness club in Phuket. We are now looking for smart, confident membership sales people for the following positions: Experienced Sales Manager and Sales Staff. We offer good salaries, commission, a medical plan and long-term prospects. Please send your CV to Khun Am. Tel: 076-233 333. Email: clubasia@asianwind.biz

ACCOUNTANT

An accountant with good written and spoken English and experience of SME business is required. Knowledge of QuickBooks is a must. Please email your application to apply. Tel: 01-8926930. Email: philippe@thaimarine.com

COOK WANTED

The Yorkshire Inn Hotel is looking to employ a good Cook with experience in Thai and European food. Tel: 076-340904.

The Phuket Gazette

the island's English-language newspaper

The *Phuket Gazette* seeks to fill the following positions:

Desk Editor. The successful candidate will be a computer-savvy, native English-speaker with high-quality writing skills and a passion for clear, accurate English. The job entails editing, laying out and proof-reading editorial, classifieds and display advertisements.

Reporter. The successful candidate will be a Thai national with initiative, an outgoing personality and plenty of curiosity about the world and how it works. Also essential are the ability to communicate in English, both spoken and written, and a car driver's license.

Applications should be submitted by email to alasdair@phuketgazette.net

Administration Assistant. The successful candidate will be a Thai national with an outgoing personality. Also essential are experience in sales and/or administration, a good command of written and spoken English, good management and organizational skills, skills in PageMaker and Office software programs.

Applications should be submitted by email to mem@phuketgazette.net
Tel: 076-236555. Fax: 076-213971.



SilkAir, a fast growing airline, seeks qualified individuals for the following post for our Thailand operations based in Phuket

CUSTOMER SERVICES ASSISTANT

Qualifications:

- Thai citizen, preferably not over 27 years of age;
- Good command of spoken and written English;
- A bachelor's degree and computer literacy;
- Able to work irregular hours and to travel when required; and
- Good communication/social skills will be advantage.

Please submit your application with complete resumé, contact telephone number, expected starting salary and recent photo to:

Manager Thailand

SilkAir (Singapore) Private Limited
183/103 Phang Nga Road, Taladyai, Muang, Phuket 83000
Tel: 076210849-51 ext. 131

All applications should reach SilkAir by 5 May 2004
(Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interview)



KATATHANI
PHUKET BEACH RESORTS

Katathani Phuket Beach Resorts is currently seeking a highly qualified professional with relevant experience for the following position:

Local Sales Manager

Qualification:

- Male or female, minimum age of 25
- 2-3 years experience in hotel sales and marketing
- Bachelor's Degree or higher
- Fluent in written and spoken English, other languages will be an advantage
- Applicant with personal vehicle is preferred
- Good personality and being proactive

Please contact Personnel Department
14 Katanoi Road, Karon, Muang, Phuket 83100
Tel: 076-330124-6, E-Mail: personnel@katathani.com

SALES STAFF

Female required, must speak English and have experience in sales. Tel: 01-9795624. Email: tom@bootlegonline.com

ELECTRICIANS

2 positions for experienced Electricians, and a Foreman and Accountant (Quick Books Pro necessary) available. Tel: 076-254752.



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Full-time Thai receptionist required for an international law office in Patong. Must have good English skills and be computer literate. Must also be smart and professional in appearance and possess a friendly and warm personality. Salary offered between 10,000 baht and 12,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-296255, 09-7725077. Fax: 076-296-255. Email: desandanna@hotmail.com

HOLIDAY RESORT

Staff wanted to fill the following positions: Assistant to the General Manager, and Sales staff to work for local chain resorts on Koh Yao Noi in Phang Nga, Chiang Mai, Cha-am and Ayudhaya. Please contact to apply or for further information. Tel: 02-7115997-8 (ext 21, 34).

SALES STAFF

Real estate company needs to employ Thai sales staff with good English-language skills. Must have own transport. Good basic salary and commission. For more details, see our website at www.siamrealestate.com. Tel: 076-280805 or 01-2710496. Email: rlusted@siamrealestate.com

REAL ESTATE

Property Scout. Thai person with good English skills required to find property and land for sale. Own transport necessary. Good salary and commission paid. For further details, see our website at www.siamrealestate.com. Tel: 076-280805 or 01-2710496. Email: rlusted@siamrealestate.com

SECURITY GUARDS

Wanted: 2 security guards for guesthouse and bar. Working hours: from 6 pm to 10 am. Contact Khun Ole for more details. Tel: 09-5943209. Email: olebay_th@yahoo.co.uk

RESTAURANT STAFF

Head chef and all staff required for Rock Fish (previously known as The Balcony) in Kamala. Must have experience, a good attitude and the desire to learn. Rock Fish offers modern healthy cuisine amidst oceanfront surroundings with a fun attitude. Tel: 09-2873161. Email: kamalarestaurant@hotmail.com

ESTIMATOR AND CAD/CAM

Wanted: construction estimator and CAD/CAM operator for plumbing and water infrastructure construction projects at our Phuket office. Email CV or call for details. Tel: 076-354870, 01-6334279. Fax: 076-354871. Email: espckt@phuket.ksc.co.th

OFFICE SECRETARY

Thai national, fluent in written and spoken English, wanted for position as Office Secretary. Only experienced persons should apply. Please email or fax resume for interview. Fax: 076-238974. Email: charter@thaimarine.com

THAI MARINE LEISURE

Authorized agents for QBE insurance as well as a yacht broker is looking for a male Thai national with a good command of English, own vehicle, love of meeting people and a passion for hard work. Experience in the marketing field is an advantage. Please send your CV by fax or email to apply. Tel: 01-7970835. Fax: 076-238974. Email: insurance@thaimarine.com

ADMIN & SALES

Assistant. English-speaking Thai female required for part-time and possible full-time employment. Must be active and willing to learn new things. Please send CV by fax or email to apply or call for more details. Tel: 076-355040. Fax: 076-355039. Email: cj@searaspports.com

ENGLISH TEACHERS

ECC has positions for native English speakers in government primary schools in Phuket City. Start date: May 10. Please send CV by fax or email or to apply. Fax: 076-214498. Email: eccphuket@ecc.ac.th

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Fagor's European kitchen appliances distributor requires a Sales Executive and a Technician to join our team. Male or female, age over 23 and holding vocational certificate or higher. Good command of English and computer skills. Experience in similar positions will be an advantage. Please contact for more information and to apply. Tel: 076-234695, 01-8091386. Fax: 076-234240. Email: fagorpk@phuket.ksc.co.th

MARKETING MANAGER

WiredDestinations, located in Phuket, Thailand, provides online hotel reservation services for over 5,000 hotels in 26 countries. We are now seeking a Marketing Manager. WiredDestinations relies on three sources for customer acquisition: its own web presence; those of its partners; and those of its suppliers. The successful applicant will be responsible for establishing and maintaining relationships with partners and clients; will conduct product promotions; plan, initiate and co-ordinate marketing initiatives with our Inventory and Reservation department. Previous experience in the hospitality industry a definite advantage. Must be performance/result oriented and have excellent English skills (written and spoken); good telephone manners and keyboard/computer skills; excellent communication skills; understanding of e-commerce is an advantage. He/she must be able to work independently. We provide excellent salaries and great career opportunities for the right candidates. Please send your CV with a recent photograph and salary expectation for application. For further details, please see our website at www.world-hotelguide.com or Tel: 076-254766. To apply, please Fax: 076-254-960 or Email: jobs.wired@wd-travel.com

MAID REQUIRED

for Kathu residence. Daily 1-2 hours' cleaning and ironing duties in Anuphas Golf Ville. Tel: 076-346142, 01-7881466. Email: richard_melen@hotmail.com

HEAD HOUSEKEEPER

wanted for the Yorkshire Inn Hotel, Patong. Must have experience, be able to manage and motivate staff, and speak some English. Good salary and conditions. Tel: 076-340904 or 076-345258.

TRAINEE HOUSEKEEPER

wanted to work in Kathu area. Must speak some English, be able to ride a motorbike, and willing to learn. Good wages and conditions. Tel: 076-323-214, 018540061.

Employment Wanted

QUALIFIED ENGLISH

teacher with an academic background in English, teaching, training and psychology urgently seeks employment in Phuket. Tel: 09-7252423. Email: malinc79@hotmail.com

Tout, Trader & Trumpet

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RESTAURANT

equipment for sale. Intercool double-door fridge, restaurant tables and chairs and many more items. Tel: 06-5969553, 09-7284856. Email: gerrybfoster@hotmail.com

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Future semi cut-away acoustic guitar for sale. Big sound. Nice tone and low action fretboard. Carry bag included. Price: 3,000 baht. Tel: 06-2953965. Email: robinsbum@hotmail.com

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This is a beautiful Trek mountain bike in excellent condition, fitted with RockShox, Shimano gears. Comes with helmet, pump and tools. Price: 11,950 baht. Tel: 06-2725078. Email: sk2max@hotmail.com

HOUSEHOLD

appliances for sale. Phillips food blender, sandwich maker, toaster, oven, crockery, cutlery, pots, pans, lounge rug, top-quality quilt. Come along and have a look. Tel: 07-8894927. Email: colin_henry@hotmail.com

32" SONY TV

and home theater for sale. This is a huge Sony Trinitron SRS 32" TV with surround sound. Bought about 18 months ago for 50,000 baht. Will sell for 26,500 baht. Also have matching Sony home theater with DVD/CD player and VCR, 6 speakers. Please contact for more details. Tel: 06-2725078. Email: sk2max@hotmail.com

GENERATOR 4 SALE

A new 5.5hp generator. Paid 13,000 baht for it, but will sell for 10,000 baht. Will throw in a set of halogen lights. Please contact me for more info. Tel: 07-8868938. Email: adamhalushka@hotmail.com

LAWNMOWER

Self-propelled lawn mower (no engine, you push it). Works very well. Used for one season. Cost 3,000 baht, but will sell for 1,200 baht. Tel: 06-2725078. Email: sk2max@hotmail.com

SURFBOARD

Never ridden, 6'4" x 18" x 2 3/8" single-to-double concave Piranha surfboard. Rounded-square tail, FCS fins. Made for Phuket surf. Price: 11,999 baht. Contact Tel: 076-270549. Email: saltwater_dreaming@hotmail.com

NIKONOS CAMERA

Nikonos IV underwater camera for sale. Price: 12,000 baht. Flooded but in excellent condition. Traffic accident forces immediate sale. Email: maxskii@thailand.com

Articles Wanted

TREADMILL

A quality treadmill, running machine wanted in a good condition. Must be robust and in perfect working order. Tel: 09-2167220. Email: julianburgess@myway.com

CAMERA CASE

Sony Cybershot P7 underwater case wanted. Tel: 09-2875933. Email: sipos@hawaii.edu

SECONDHAND FLUTE

Looking for a secondhand flute in good condition (for intermediate musician). If you have one, or if you know where to buy in Phuket or Bangkok, please contact me. Email: elsbellon@hotmail.com

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Are you moving? Then sell us your stuff for our empty apartment. We are looking to buy: luxury-quality mattress or bed, and stuffed sofa; coffee table; end tables; table lamps; cooking utensils; and even a cappuccino machine. Tel: 01-7408526. Email: morganlanbin@yahoo.com

PLAYSTATION 2

Looking to buy a secondhand Sony Playstation 2. Please contact with info. Email: gabrielle5712@hotmail.com

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SPORTFISHING BOAT
Thai 40-foot sport fishing boat with a 300hp Hino diesel, Thai registered for charter, CB radio, color fish-finder. For sale 400,000 baht ono. Tel: 09-8661009. Please contact for more info. Email: thaihino_7@hotmail.com

Bulletins

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION PHUKET

A chapter of the Surfrider Foundation is now under establishment in Phuket. Former president of the Hawaii chapter is setting up a marine conservation group, Adopt-a-beach programs, water testing, coral reef conservation, reef clean-up programs, No-butts-in-the-sand programs, etc. Please contact me for more information. Tel: 07-2701387. Email: phuketmarbella@yahoo.com

Business Opportunities

RESTAURANT 4 SALE
35-seat, fully-equipped restaurant in Patong for sale, ready to work. 4 motorcycles for rent and 6 computers with Internet access. Tel: 07-048-6254, 01-9496092. Email: pillar@loxinfo.co.th

SPORTS BAR
and restaurant. Great location in central Bangla area. Max 1 pool table, darts area, stereo/DVD/satellite radio, 3 (UBC) TV sets, 3 aircons, modern kitchen, living area upstairs. Upmarket bar with long lease. Tel: 09-8677969. Email: bangla_04@yahoo.com

OWN BUSINESS
Own a business with work permits in Thailand. Please contact for further information. Tel: 07-2719664. Email: lester_lougan@yahoo.ca



GUESTHOUSE FOR SALE

12-room guesthouse for sale overlooking large lake and private swimming pool located near Loch Palm Golf Course. Also, 9 rai for sale with water and pool. Tel: 06-9757268.

PRIME LOCATION

shop for sale. Build your future with your own shop. For further information, please see our website at: www.rangrong.com or Tel: 01-6893194. Email: 2810@mail.austria.com

HOTEL PROPERTY FOR SALE

Would you like to own a hotel, restaurant and rental shop on Karon Beach? Easy foreign ownership, rapid company transfer. Please contact us for further information or see our website at: www.geocities.com/hotelinparadise or call Tel: 01-6931136, or email: hotelinparadise@yahoo.com

PATONG BUSINESS

Bars, shops, rooms or combination of all three for sale or lease. 300 meters to beach. 7,000 baht/month. Tel: 07-2738944. Email: thesonapt_2536@hotmail.com

PHANG NGA

3-story, 14-room guesthouse is for sale. Convenient for James Bond Island, banks, market, restaurants and bus station, and popular with both guests and guidebooks. Clean, aircon, fully furnished. A steal at 6 million baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 07-6411963.

MLM LEADERS

US\$4 billion healthcare company seeks frontline leaders for launch in Thailand. Contact for details. Tel: 02-7269918, 06-3418781. Fax: 02-7269917. Email: makelifegood@aol.com

RESTAURANT 4 RENT

Restaurant with equipment in Chalong with seaview, close to main road. Rent: 7,000 baht/month. Tel: 076-288613, 01-8942558. Email: somthawin_pw@hotmail.com

BEACH SHOP

Beach shop for rent from May to September. Perfect for surfboards. Tel: 09-8749147.

SURIN BEACH SHOP

for rent at a prime location at Surin Beach. Contact Khun Tud. Tel: 01-7978952; 01-7977624. Email: susieyoga@hotmail.com

GERMAN RESTAURANT

A well-established German restaurant with firm clientele at the best location now offered for sale. Please see our website at: www.phuketcon.com/lomarest/sale/english Tel: 076-280455, 01-2738160. Email: ppe@loxinfo.co.th

RESTAURANT

Fully-equipped restaurant for sale at 900,000 baht, or rent at 75,000 baht/month plus 2 months' deposit. Tel: 076-355233. Email: circlecafe@hotmail.com

Business Services

PIANO TUNER

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Thai Bondall co., Ltd. is a young Thai company who import proven quality Australian products for both the domestic and the commercial Thailand market.

Our Bondall Australia range of products have been a highly acclaimed for over 50 years both in Australia and New Zealand. In addition these product have successfully being market in "Singapore, Hongkong Malaysia, Burma etc."

Bondall Australia like most Australian companies, pride themselves in the quality of the goods they supply to the international market as well as the after service that comes with the sale of the product. It was a natural progression for the company to become quality accredited to AS/ISO 9002, to ensure that they remained highly competitive internationally. They obtained their accreditation in 1993 and have maintained it since that time..

Our products are environmentally and user friendly but most importantly these products are specifically targeted at helping to improve and extend the life cycle of many finish building materials like clay & concrete pavers and bricks. One such range in particular is the Total Concrete Care Range which is mentioned in our Product Range included clear paving sealer, natural finish waterproofing sealer, natural stone sealer, aquabite, Bondall epoxy prep surface conditioner, pondtite, Wapal roof clear sealer, Wapal roof glaze, bondcrete, moss & mould eliminator, tyre rubber & tar remover, driveway degreaser, terratite.

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