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Tourists 'expect big discounts'

By Gategaeo Phetsawang

LAGUNA: Thailand used to be the most popular destination for customers of the Thomas Cook company, but the country has "slipped" because of the tsunami, Joanna Edmunds, Managing Director of Thomas Cook Signature, told local tourism operators on February 11.

The immediate solution, she said, will be to offer "very, very attractive prices".

She warned the meeting, at the Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket, that tourists are expecting "bargains" in the tsunami-hit areas. "We don't like it any more than you do, but that, unfortunately, is the reality."

She added that Phuket was facing tough competition from other long-haul destinations from the UK. Some, including those in the Caribbean, "which you would think would be full after [the tsunami], are offering very, very attractive prices," said Ms Edmunds.

She continued, "We have to move into a new phase to bring customers back. We need to reassure customers and offer very attractive deals to tempt people to come here ... to kick-start the market."

She added, "We're very anxious to help you rebuild your businesses and get back to the top spot."

But, she said, "Customers are still unclear. There has been an enormous amount of coverage of the tsunami in the UK. We need [to provide] education to help them understand what the situation really is."

She added that it may take "a prolonged period of commu-



Hit me with your rhythm stick

A member of the Waikado Yamato Drummers from Japan helps put the boom-boom back in Patong during an open-air concert on the night of February 13. The concert also featured the Harvey Thompson Jazz Band, marking the beginning of a major push to draw Japanese tourists back to Phuket. After the concert, Supote Isarankura na Ayudhaya, Osaka-based Royal Thai Consul-General, told the Gazette that his office had invited hundreds of Japanese media organizations to tour Phuket and report back on the real extent to the damage here.

nication" to persuade British vacationers to return to Phuket.

Ms Edmunds was one of six tour company representatives from the UK and Ireland who came to Phuket to see for themselves the extent of the damage caused by the tsunami and to discuss ways of attracting tourists from Europe back to Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi.

Another of the six, Kuoni Travel Ltd's Product Director Francis Torrilla, said Thailand has for many years been a top destination for his company. In

2004, he said, Thailand was the most popular, ahead of the Maldives, Egypt, Sri Lanka and the US.

Despite the tsunami, he said, Kuoni expects Thailand to remain number 1 in 2005.

However, he noted, "long-haul" trips are becoming more popular with UK vacationers. He suggested, therefore, that Thai Airways International (THAI) could help Phuket compete by operating direct flights between the UK and the island.

Continued on page 2

B2 billion tsunami memorial proposed

By Kamol Pirat

PHUKET CITY: On February 15 the Cabinet was due to consider a proposal to spend up to 2 billion baht on building a memorial to the victims of the December 26 tsunami.

Plodprasop Suraswadi, Adviser to Deputy PM Suwat Liptapanlop, told officials from Phuket and Phang Nga at Phuket Provincial Hall that he would propose a dome with a high-tech "crystal" prism to display the names of known victims.

The dome would be built in the sea off Bang Niang Beach, Khao Lak, next to a 300-rai plot of state land which K. Plodprasop said would be set aside to remember the tsunami.

"We will develop the area from the [stranded] Marine Police boat near the hills down to the sea. The total land area for this project is 300 rai," he said.

Although the proposal had to be submitted to DPM Suwat, for him, in turn, to submit it to Cabinet, K. Plodprasop said he was certain the project would be approved because it is in line with current government policy.

"The government has already earmarked between 1.5 and 2 billion baht to build the memorial," he said.

Along with the tsunami memorial proposal, the Cabinet will also review whether to build the long-awaited Phuket International Convention and Exhibition Center at Nai Yang in Tambon Mai Khao or at Saphan Hin, K. Plodprasop added.

"I will present two suitable sites; one at Mai Khao and another at Saphan Hin. I am confident that Cabinet will make a decision. The budget for this will be about 1.5 to 2 billion baht."

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A traffic ban in the center of town allowed people to wander at will along the old streets.

'Old Phuket' draws big crowds

PHUKET CITY: Thousands of people thronged streets in the old part of Phuket City to celebrate the arrival of the Chinese Year of the Rooster and the 7th Old Phuket Festival.

Thalang Rd and Dibuk Rd in the old quarter of Phuket were filled with the sights and sounds of celebration, as well as the perfume of incense and the aroma of traditional Chinese New Year and Phuketian delicacies.

Many of the well-maintained shop-

houses in the Old Town were opened to visitors keen to see traditional Phuket decorative style.

Phuket Thai Hua School, Krabi Rd, held an exhibition on traditional clothing, customs and dance from the town's past, under the title "Proud of our Old Town".

On February 11, the fourth and last day for traditional celebrations for Chinese New Year, visitors were treated to around 20 shows from China, all free of charge.

Crime rate rising after tsunami

PHUKET CITY: Police are reporting a surge in crime brought about by the downturn in the tourism industry following the tsunami disaster, and are advising residents to take special precautions to protect themselves against opportunistic thieves.

In a press release issued by the Phuket City Police, Superintendent Pol Col Paween Pongsirin said there had been an increase in home and office burglaries, purse snatchings, shoplifting, muggings and other crimes born out of economic desperation.

Many of the crimes have been carried out in and around shopping malls.

Any crime or suspicious behavior should be reported by calling the emergency number 191 or Tel: 076-212129 or 076-212115, ext 403.

Tourist Police number to come back online soon

PHUKET: The 1155 emergency telephone number for tourists should be working properly again by the end of this month, Phuket Tourist Police Inspector Pol Maj Bundit Khaosutham has told the *Gazette*.

Maj Bundit said the line had been damaged during the tsunami. He apologized to anyone who had had problems using the line in recent weeks. He said that until 1155 is functioning properly, the tourist police can be contacted 24 hours a day on 076-254693.

The 1155 number should be back in service by the end of February, along with a new number, 076-355015, added Maj Bundit.

Bringing the tourists back

From page 1

THAI, which was one of the organizers of the meeting, has yet to relaunch any of the international direct services to Phuket that it cut soon after the tsunami.

The TAT's Marketing Director for the UK, Richard Hume, said, "We have to accept that the peak season [for tsunami-affected areas] won't come back in a couple of months, but it will definitely come back.

"We [at the TAT] are working very hard to get those markets back to [Phuket] by mid-year.

"Everything is possible with our market. We have airline capacity ... We are very confident that the UK and Ireland market will return very strongly."

Keith Betton, Head of Corporate Communications for the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), which represents 6,500 travel agents and 850 tour operators, said that, at the moment, the main source of information for people in the UK planning vacations is TV coverage of the tsunami, most of which is negative.

The task now, he said, is to educate potential customers about the real situation in tsunami-affected areas.

US group vows to help boost Phuket tourism

Gategao Phetsawang

PHUKET CITY: A 61-strong group of Americans met Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana on February 10 to deliver a message of hope and friendship, along with US\$1,200 (48,000 baht) for grants for students affected by the tsunami.

The Americans, 42 of whom are from Oregon, are members of the "Flight of Friendship" organization, which was set up to help Thailand, and Phuket in particular, by promoting tourism as well as by supporting education here.

"The objective is to show that Phuket is open and ready for business," said Nicholas Stanley, Thailand's Honorary Consul General in Oregon.

Sho Dozono, the President and CEO of Azumano Travel, said, "For us, it was important to come from the United States to Thailand and especially Phuket and other cities where the extent of the damage was misrepresented [in the media].

"I am in the tour business so I want everyone to understand



The youngest member of the Flight of Friendship, Elaine Daggett, 17 (2nd from right), with local schoolchildren.

that Phuket and all of this area is still open for business. I am unhappy with the media that has painted this horrible picture that is keeping tourists away."

The group also brought US\$267 (10,680 baht) donated by primary school pupils in Oregon, as well as gifts and letters from them for children of a similar age in Phuket.

The youngest member of

the group was 17-year-old Elaine Daggett, of Hood River Valley High School. She told the *Gazette*, "I haven't visited all the beaches yet, but I am going to remember how exciting it has been here. I will surely tell all my friends that this is a wonderful place to visit.

"They will be very happy that we traveled here to give the gifts to children who were affected by the tsunami."

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IN BRIEF

PM to put the boot in for a good cause

PHUKET CITY: Thai Cabinet ministers led by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra will face ambassadors from 38 countries during a friendly soccer match at Surakul Stadium on February 26.

The event is intended to help Phuket recover as a tourist destination after the tsunami.

Admission is free, and the match is due to be broadcast by Thai TV station TV5.

The match will be preceded by a parade of Thais and foreigners who have helped in the relief effort.

Deputy Governor (*Palad*) Vitchan Busapavanich told the *Gazette* there are also plans to hold a beach volleyball competition, featuring Thai men's and women's national teams, at Patong, again as part of attempts to promote Phuket as a tourism destination.

Finnish tourists return to Phuket

PHUKET: Tour operators bringing tourists from Finland to Phuket expect to be running three charter flights a week until April, although the number of vacationers will be only half what they would have been if there had been no tsunami.

A spokesman for Royal Andaman Travel Group, the local partner of travel company Star Tour, said that around 230 Finns are due to arrive in Phuket each week. The bulk of them will be brought to Phuket on charter flights by national carrier Finnair.

The first group arrived on February 14 from Helsinki.

Orient Thai resumes flights from Korea

BANGKOK: Orient Thai Airlines has resumed flights between South Korea and Phuket after suspending them after the tsunami.

Orient Thai Airlines Chairman Udom Tantiprasongchai told the *Gazette* that the service has resumed with two flights a week – on Saturdays and Tuesdays.

New center to boost watch on foreigners

By Dhirarat Boonkongsan

SAPHAN HIN: Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) President Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr on February 9 handed over the new 1.5-million-baht Center of International Crime Information and Immigration Service to the Phuket Immigration Office.

Phuket Immigration Superintendent Pol Col Witawat Buranasporn said the building will be used by officers who will monitor the movements of foreigners in Phuket.

He said more and more foreigners are coming to Phuket, either as tourists or for business. "Unfortunately, some foreigners come here to commit crimes, and we need to have a center for international crime checking to monitor such things in Phuket."

Pol Lt Gen Amarin Niemsukul, Commissioner of the Immigration Bureau for the Royal Thai Police, accepted the building, which is in the grounds of the Marine Vehicles Check-in Division and the Investigation and



Gen Amarin: "Unfortunately, some foreigners come here to commit crimes."

Suppression Division of Phuket Immigration.

He told those present, "To hold information on foreigners is very important for immigration tasks, but it also makes foreign visitors who are here legitimately, for holidays or work, feel more confident."

Gen Amarin said that, as the number of tourists coming to

Phuket increased, so would the chances of international criminals heading for the island, and one of the duties of the Immigration Office was to prevent crime.

He continued, "Fortunately, Thailand has no great enemy, so we don't have terrorists in our country."

Gen Amarin added that information held by Immigration could be linked to data held by other agencies around the world, including the authorities in the US, while officers at Phuket International Airport can now share information on-line with colleagues at the international airports in Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

By the end of 2006, the service should also be able to access information from Interpol about suspect foreigners, and pass this on to every immigration checkpoint in the country, he said.

Sea Gypsies protest 'lack of govt help'

PHUKET: More than 50 Sea Gypsies from Rawai rallied outside the offices of Phuket Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura on February 9 to protest at what they say is a lack of help from the government since the tsunami.

Bangkok has said it would make one-off payments of 2,000 baht to anyone who lost his or her job because of the tsunami. But Sea Gypsy Kwanjit Bangjark said she has not received anything from the government so far.

"I wanted to work in the program for jobless people, which pays 175 baht a day, but the officers told me that if I did that, I wouldn't receive the 2,000 baht. But one month on, I haven't received either," she said.

Tiya Buathong claimed that the only people who have been helped are those who are "close" to government officers. She said

that when she went to claim her cash on January 7, she was told all the money had been already been given away, and that she must wait for more to come through. More than a month later, she is still waiting, having been passed from Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) officers to the Governor's office and back.

Suthep Thertkietkajorn, of Phuket Labour Office (PLO), denied the government was doing nothing to help the Sea Gypsies, pointing out that 116 million has already been paid out to the tsunami jobless nationally, with 26 million of this coming to Phuket.

K. Suthep said the PLO, working with local organizations, had found jobs for 700 people and had paid them 175 baht a day. The work had had to stop because of the general election, but now

that was over, the workers would be re-hired.

However, Aroon Soros, the Chairman of Rawai *OrBorTor* said he could do little to help the protestors until he received extra money from the government.

"I've told people they must be patient and wait for the money, but some of them don't understand," he said. – **Kamol Pirat**

Businesses back on the beach – for now

PATONG: Owners of small businesses will be allowed to return to Patong Beach, but only until the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) "improvement" plan is implemented, Kathu District Chief Officer Kantee Sinlapa has stressed.

K. Kantee said the temporary reprieve applies to businesses such as beach umbrella renters, jet-ski operators, vehicle rental firms and drinks vendors.

But, he warned, "When we get the money from Bangkok, the improvement plan will be implemented, and the businesses will just have to go along with it."

The improvement plan allows for just two rows of sunbeds on the beach, and bans them from certain "zones". It also bars vehicle rental businesses from Thaweewong Rd, which runs along the beachfront.

K. Kantee could not say when the plan will be put into operation.

Turkey offers help with warning system

PHUKET: Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on a visit to Phuket on February 8, offered Turkey's help in the effort to protect Andaman Sea countries from future tsunamis.

He continued, "Turkey already has experience with earthquakes and we are ready to join with other countries in this region to look for ways of preventing this problem [tsunamis] in the future."

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Queer News

Bargirl swallows rock

RAWAI: A Patong bargirl swallowed a Frenchman's diamond ring after he refused to pay her and a friend for services rendered after an all-night menage-a-trois in Rawai.

Chalong Police received a complaint from a 62-year-old Frenchman identified as Mr Patrick, who fingered Tawan, a 28-year-old bargirl, as the jewelry-gulping culprit. Mr Patrick told the police that on the evening of February 8 he went to Tai Pan Pub, where he met Tawan and a friend named Rose. Mr Patrick invited the girls to join him for a three-way at his house in Rawai.

All was going well. Tawan reported that the Frenchman ejaculated twice with each of them during the first session – and repeated the performance four hours later.

But when it came time to cough up, the Frenchman's performance was less impressive. He refused to pay the 1,000 baht each he had promised the girls, Tawan told the police.

When the Frenchman went to the bathroom, Tawan searched his drawers and found a diamond ring, which she hid in her bra. The Frenchman immediately discovered the theft and demanded the ring back, searching her intimately for the missing gewgaw. Tawan said that Mr Patrick slapped her, which so enraged her that she swallowed the encrusted annulus while he wasn't looking.

After bringing her to the police station, she began having stomach spasms – diamonds being somewhat harder to digest than *somtam*. This led the police to suspect that she had swallowed the ring. An X-ray at Phuket International Hospital confirmed it. Doctors there gave Tawan laxatives in an attempt to purge the ring, which Mr Patrick said was a family heirloom passed down through generations – and possibly even a few digestive tracts.

Tawan was then apparently released and, for reasons unknown, returned to Mr Patrick's home. The Frenchman stood by with plastic bags at the ready to collect the excrement from over 20 bouts of explosive diarrhea that she experienced – but still no ring.

She became so ill she had to be readmitted to hospital – this time to Wachira Phuket Hospital – where she finally gave birth to a beautiful diamond ring.

Source: *Siang Tai*

A WAVE

Bill Barnett, the Managing Director of East Coast Ocean Villas, believes it would be unrealistic to claim that the tsunami has not affected the property business.

"I've been in the property business here for four years and at this time of year we should be much busier than we are.

"I can't really comment on the situation islandwide, but I can say that we have not seen as many potential buyers as we did this time last year."

Mr Barnett said that expectations were extremely high among developers this year, and described the current situation as "a bit of a let-down."

"We haven't reached the levels we anticipated," he said. "We have more inquiries when the hotels are full. The hotels are not full so, consequently, we haven't had as many inquiries.

"However, we were still able to close some transactions in January – just after the tsunami – at both our Ao Por development and our Ocean Breeze project at Layan Beach."

Mr Barnett said that the target group for his company's

While tourism remains the powerhouse of the island's economy, the property business has become fuel to the furnace.

Pre-tsunami, the market had been booming in all sectors. Low-, medium- and high-end developments were springing up everywhere, particularly in coastal areas.

The tourism industry had been expecting a bumper year, and the property industry was looking forward to enticing some of those tourists into becoming property owners in Phuket. Many of Phuket's property movers and shakers were left wondering how their developments – and sales – would fare following the tsunami.

While the outlook does not appear not as bleak as initially feared, some within the industry – an industry known for its sanguine spiel – are more optimistic than others. The *Gazette's* Sangkhae Leelanaporn sought the opinions of some of the best-known property developers and pundits.

properties – which sell for between 5 million and 7 million baht – are overseas buyers, mostly from Hong Kong or Europe.

These customers, he noted, are people looking at either a property investment or a "lifestyle" investment – using the property for an average of three months a year and letting it out for the remaining months.

"These people are mid-range buyers, and the mid-price market has not been hurt that much by the tsunami.

"Our buyers are educated people. They understand that a tsunami happens once in a lifetime. Yes, I imagine that they have given the matter [of another tsunami] more thought, but they are people who were going to buy anyway.

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OF CAUTION



Songkran Issara believes that the fact that homes in his top-end Sri Panwa development (above) are at least 25 meters above sea level makes buyers feel more comfortable.

"This has not been a serious issue for us," he added.

Phummisak Hongsyok, the President of the Phuket Real Estate Club, was also cautiously optimistic, though he noted that all businesses in Phuket, with the exception of rubber plantations, have been hit by the tsunami.

"I don't think that the property industry will actually go into decline but it could slow down for a time. I have heard that foreign realtors are still receiving inquiries and renting properties," he said.

There are, he estimates, some 3,000 to 4,000 businesses in Phuket that need to be rebuilt, and he suggested that the slow pace of renovations to these prop-

erties and developments – and in consequence tourism – is having a negative effect on the property market.

"Rebuilding is taking too long," he said. "Insurance companies require so much paperwork to finalize claims and are taking advantage of this to delay issuing payments.

"If rebuilding and repairs to businesses and properties in the tourist sector are completed more quickly, then confidence – and tourists – will return," K. Phummisak said.

"The upshot of this – obviously – will be that there will be more tourists [in Phuket] who may become interested in buying property."

The drastic slump in tourists on the island is also having an impact on the low-end property market. "Take, for example, hotel staff. If their hotels are nearly empty and their jobs are on the line, then the banks may be unwilling to lend them money to buy a house."

K. Phummisak suggested that if the promised government "soft loans" come through, allowing businesses to get back on track, then this will help the tourist industry and, in turn, provide a boost for the low-end housing market.

"But at the moment it's only talk and no action on these soft loans," he complained.

He hazarded a vague pre-

diction that Phuket's property market would return to normal "...six months after tourism improves."

Songkran Issara, the Managing Director of Bangkok-based Charn Issara Group, which is building the high-end Sri Panwa Project, told the *Gazette* that he does not believe that the number of buyers will decrease, although he does understand the reluctance of some people to visit the island at the moment.

He anticipates that potential buyers may start to favor different parts of the island for their homes.

"It is possible that [buyers] will start to look at the east coast of Phuket rather than the west coast more than they did before the tsunami. I think that properties in an elevated position – such as hilltops and cliffs – although still with a sea view – will begin to be the buyers' choice.

"People will start to think more about safety, where their home is, the geography of the area," he added.

"Sri Panwa is an expensive high-end development – up to 160 million baht per home. People investing in property this expensive are people who really want to stay in Thailand."

K. Songkran pointed out that Sri Panwa was not damaged by the tsunami. "There were a number of reasons for this: the first is that the lowest parts of the

development are 25 meters above sea level. Some parts of it are as much as 80m above the water.

"In addition – and this goes back to my earlier comment about location – the development is protected by the small islands out in the bay. They acted as a sea wall during the tsunami, deflecting the waves," he said.

The Thai Appraisal Foundation (TAF) is a non-profit organization – administered by the Thai Ministry of the Interior. Its purpose, according to its website – www.thaiappraisal.org – is to promote higher standards of professional practice in the fields of property valuation or appraisal and urban land studies.

The TAF's President, Dr Sopon Pornchokchai, created waves of his own when he predicted, in a January 20 interview with *The Nation*, that land prices could drop by 17.5% following the tsunami.

He has since modified his view, saying that there could be a short-term slowdown in the property market in the region because people are still in shock, but adding, "I don't envisage that people will try to sell property during this initial phase.

"Property values will not increase for the time being and

people will take the decision to sell later when confidence has returned and the market has stabilized. They will not take risks by selling at this time," he said.

"However, I believe that the property market in Phuket will be back to normal within a year or two.

"[The buyers] know that disasters such as a tsunami do not happen very often," he concluded.



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Revving up the relief effort

By Gem Tan

After the tsunami, people around the world were inspired to help get survivors back on their feet. Some donated money, but others were leery about handing over a check to an aid organization without knowing how the money would be spent.

One such person was 40-year-old mechanic Fred Boling, owner of Michigan-based company Professional Metal Works. Arriving in Phuket on January 28 with his co-worker Joshua Carrol, Fred initially had no real idea of what to expect – or how they could help out.

By the time Fred's wife Lisa joined them in Bang Tao about a week later, Fred had identified a need among many fishermen for repairs to longtail boat engines damaged by the tsunami.

By early February they had set up a small repair shop in a building across from the Best Western Premier Bangtao Beach Resort and got to work.

Fred, who sees the team's primary role as one of coordination, said lack of materials and organizational skills were the biggest impediments to getting the fishermen back where they belonged – out at sea catching



GET THE MOTOR RUNNING: Ace mechanic Fred Boling and his wife Lisa are flanked by local mechanic Abdul Archem (left) and colleague Joshua Carrol (right).

fish. He told the *Gazette* that without the right parts and materials, people have a tendency to sit around doing nothing – hardly the best way to recover from the greatest natural disaster in living memory.

There aren't many longtail boats in Michigan, but Fred has been able to draw on his wide knowledge from a wide number

of industries to help get the engines running. Joshua, who has since returned to the US, also pitched in with his considerable welding talents.

"We talk to the fishermen to find out whether their motors have been damaged by the tsunami. We can tell by looking whether they have been damaged by seawater or sand. Then we

determine what parts they need. We clean them, get any water out, change the oil and get them turned over," he said.

When asked whether all of those receiving the free service were bona fide tsunami victims, Fred's reply was pragmatic.

"My attitude is that if I can help 50 people with damaged engines, and four or five of them turn out to be dishonest, then I have still helped 45 people," he said, adding that he was impressed that very few people appeared to be taking advantage of the situation.

When the *Gazette* visited their shop, the team were working on nine small engines. At first, only Fred and Josh were able to repair the engines, but two local mechanics have since joined the team.

Unlike many of the volunteers who made their way to Phuket, this was Fred's first visit to the island.

"I wanted to see if the news reports saying Phuket had been devastated were true," he said, adding that he had received a US\$500 (20,000-baht) grant from giant US engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney to help get the operation started.

When asked about the pos-

sibility of getting more funds from back home to help buy parts, Fred said, "I can't just make phone calls from Phuket to ask for funds because nobody is going to believe what we are doing here. People worry about being scammed. I have to go back and show them what we experienced and how much help the people here need."

He added that his upcoming trip to the US would involve both fundraising and finding a replacement for himself.

"Instead of just asking for money, I'll try to get a good mechanic to come and help so that I don't have to be here all the time. I'm sure Thai mechanics can work on the motors, but I'd like to have [at least] one American mechanic, since we are using some money from back home.

"Lisa will work with the fishermen when I'm away to make sure they get the supplies and make sure things go the way we want ... and to make sure that we help the right people, not people that might bring in motors from a scrap yard," he said.

Fred added that the team was willing to help with motors sent in from other parts of the island, but said that the Bang Tao fishing community was being given priority.

He doesn't know how long the shop will remain open, but said that his team had grown close to the local community.

"We live and work with the local people, so we learn about both the Thai language and the culture. They are such wonderful people," he said, adding that they only wanted a chance to have their engines fixed so that they can get back to work, not asking for anything more.

Fred, a seafood lover, noted that one of the fringe benefits of the charity work has been fresh seafood given to them by the fishermen they have helped put back to work.

"People come first. That's why we help them fix the motors. If the fishermen go out fishing, we'll have seafood to eat, though there's no big demand for it at the moment. But we believe that the tourists will come back soon. Phuket is very a beautiful place."



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PM softens Deep South stance

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra did a partial U-turn and refused to rule out policy changes in the Muslim-majority South.

His shift in attitude follows a spate of bombings that have rocked the restive region and forced security agencies to go back to the drawing board to re-think their strategy.

"If it is for the better, then we will change," said PM Thaksin, when asked if the government was prepared to change its policy in the region.

PM Thaksin did not elaborate as to what changes he would consider, nor did he admit that a bomb attack that nearly claimed the life of Narathiwat Governor Pracha Therat had led to his change of tone.

Following his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party's landslide election win, the PM said repeatedly that the government's handling of the troubled region was "on the right course" and vowed to continue with strict enforcement, in spite of the overwhelming disapproval of the government's handling of the situation by locals.

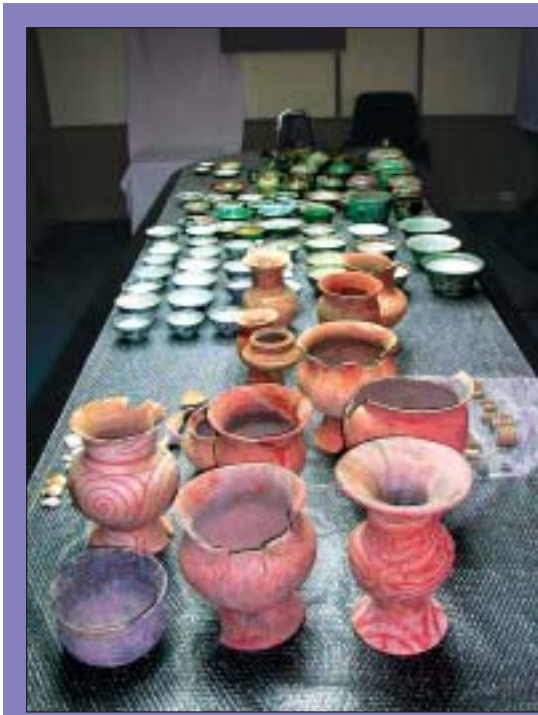
The TRT party failed to win a single seat in the violence-plagued southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.

Defense Minister Samphan Boonyanant said the spate of violence in the region was expected to continue – and that worse was yet to come.

On the watch: The Culture Ministry's Cultural Watch Center said it has received complaints about large billboard advertisements for Jockey brand underwear that depict a couple lounging in their underwear.

The Cultural Watch Center's chief, Ladda Thangsupachai, said that the ad, which includes the slogan, "The next best thing to being naked," might be unsuitable for Thai society and harmful to Thai culture. She appealed to the Consumer Protection Office (CPO) for a ruling.

The CPO said it could not preview or censor any advertisement before its launch. It noted that Article 22 of the Consumer Protection Act, which says that



Pahpirun Ghose, whose father was Thai and mother French, donated 138 ancient artifacts collected by her parents to the National Museum in Bangkok. She believed the pieces, which include Ban Chiang porcelain dating back 4,500 years, would be more useful if they were to become a national asset rather than remaining in her possession

advertising must not promote illegal or immoral behavior or cause cultural damage, can only use existing laws to punish offenders once the ads are placed and reviewed by a committee – which it is now doing.

Dress code: The Ministry of Education will survey teenagers about low-slung trousers to determine whether most agree they are inappropriate and can lead to sex crimes. If the majority agree that they are inappropriate, the ministry may ban the trousers, said Tossaporn Serirak, secretary to the Minister of Education.

K. Tossaporn said he personally thought low-waisted trousers and tight shirts, popular

among young women, aroused sexual desire in men and possibly led to sex crimes. He urged movie stars and singers to show social responsibility by not wearing such clothing in films and music videos.

Lawmakers in the US state of Virginia recently voted against a bill to ban people from wearing their trousers so low that their underwear showed.

Condo spies: Bangkok's Metropolitan Police are training security guards and residents of high-rise buildings to watch out for illegal activities and report them to the police.

"We will train them in what to watch out for and how to alert

police, and tell them about the rewards," Metropolitan Police Chief Lt Gen Pansiri Praphawat said.

Police said they launched the project because many residential buildings have become drug depots and scenes of drug parties due to the inability of police to patrol private properties without concrete evidence or permission from owners.

Depressing development: A one-kilometer-wide sinkhole has appeared along the Kra Buri River in Ranong's Muang District, damaging oyster beds and causing cracks in a nearby house.

Charoon Klinphaka, whose house was damaged, with windows being broken and a wall displaced, said the whole neighborhood was afraid and he was worried that another sinkhole might appear and completely destroy his home.

Lerdsin Raksasakulwong, Director of the Tambon Rai Daeng Geology Office, said that the sinkhole was possibly due to the December 26 earthquake, which triggered the tsunami.

Cockpit closure: In a bid to tackle a bird-flu outbreak in Phitsanulok, officials have ordered the closure of 38 cockpits

until April to prevent the transmission of the disease.

Vice Governor Direk Konkleab said the outbreak is confined mainly to domestic fowl, 70% of which tested positive for the virus. He attributed this to the transport of fighting cocks in the province, which is famous for the sport.

Other measures to control the disease, including culling, are continuing in other parts of Phitsanulok and Suphan Buri.

Pyramid collapse: The Special Investigation Department arrested three people in connection with a Bangkok-based direct sales pyramid scheme operating nationwide that allegedly defrauded about 50,000 people of a total of 900 million baht over several years.

Each member was required to pay a 200-baht entrance fee, buy 18,000 baht worth of electronic appliances and recruit at least 17 new members within one year.

Anyone member who recruited more than 380 new members a year was promised a Mercedes-Benz.

Around the Nation news roundup is sourced from the pages of The Nation and Kom Chad Luek newspapers.



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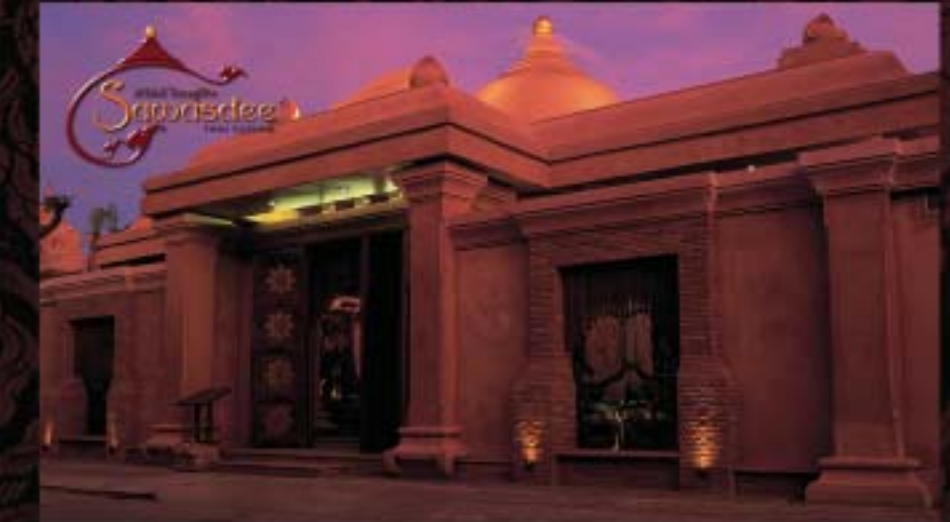
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Rusana Samrong, a prominent local figure and a presenter on Radio Koh Samui, the island's only radio station, claims that the original Samui language or dialect is gradually being lost because of linguistic influences from other parts of the country.

K. Rusana, a native of the island, says that the more mainstream versions of the Thai language are now commonly used and heard all over Koh Samui and she is worried that, unless parents begin to teach their children to speak "Samui Thai", the original language will be lost altogether.

Local Thai phrases, she says, are an important part of the culture of the island and should therefore be preserved, along with other traditions. Some people, however, argue that the local language is in fact more of a "Creole", and can thus only survive orally, passed through the generations.

Food and Tourism: To complement Surat Thani Province's "100 islands" marketing cam-

Local language disappearing

paign, Governor Wichit Widi-jaisan has introduced the "100 Kitchens" concept to promote the region's excellent seafood products, many of which are already exported nationally and internationally.

The annual Surat Thani Food Fair will focus this year specifically on prawns and shellfish, and national expert and respected food critic *Mac Daeng* ("Red Ink"), will be in attendance to provide his respected professional opinion.

Mainland Surat Thani as a whole is already very popular with Thai visitors, and places like the spectacular Ratchaprapa Dam and reservoir, as well as the Khao Sok National Park, have seen a major increase in visitors over the past year.

Apart from domestic Thai tourists, the area is also particularly popular with visitors from the UK, Germany, China and Japan.

FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND



By Commander
Sammy Swan



ROTARY RELIEF: (from left) Cord Biggs, Paul Watson, Rotary event organizer Linda Cartlidge and Brian M Leffler are all smiles after the Rotary Club of Koh Samui's recent Tsunami Aid Concert, which raised 1.2 million baht for tsunami victims.

In fact, according to official reports, many of the guesthouses and hotels in the province enjoy 100% occupancy during peak periods.

Spa certificates: Following discussions last year with national and local spa associations, the Health Department recently began to issue certificates of quality to spas on Samui.

The idea is to encourage cleanliness, service, quality and

professionalism throughout the health spa industry, and to set a benchmark for new establishments to adhere to.

Spas that pass an inspection test and meet the criteria set by the government are issued with signs and logos intended to inform clients that they offer a high standard of service.

This will help customers choose a good spa while they are on Samui, and at the same time add to the distinction between

health centers and massage parlors, a distinction that all the spa associations in Thailand are keen for the government to recognize officially.

Tsunami village: Following a high-level meeting to discuss how best to help victims of the tsunami, Gov Wichit decided to have a special village built to house some of those made homeless by the disaster.

A 29-rai area of public land in Takua Pa, Phang Nga province, was identified as suitable for the project, which will involve constructing 50 houses, all with running water and electricity, and costing around 150,000 baht each to build.

More than 7 million baht has subsequently been collected from local people and businesses for the village fund. Construction of the houses began in January.

The village, formerly known as Baan Kaya, will now be renamed Baan Jai Chao Surat Thani, which roughly translates as "Kindness and Spirit of the Surat Thani People". It is hoped that the dwellings will provide a permanent refuge for at least some of the many homeless.

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



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Pruerk-lawan	112.6	11,850,000	100,000	3,455,000	8,295,000
Pruerk-umpai	157.80	14,480,000	100,000	4,244,000	10,136,000



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Location Map



This week



CEMENTING THAIS: Koson Naboon (left) from Desjoyaux Company delivers cement to Pol Lt Col Phansak Samantararat (2nd from left) Border Police 415 Unit, Ranong, to help with post-tsunami reconstruction work in Ranong Province.



DON'T CALL US... The Commissioner of the Immigration Bureau of the Royal Thai Police, Pol Lt Gen Amarin Niemskul (left) and Phuket *OrBorJor* President Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr released balloons, ironically enough, to mark the opening of the International Crime Information and Immigration Service at Saphan Hin.



SUM TOTAL: Playing a numbers game at Cafe & Restaurant 346 and Galeria 346 in Phuket City are Restaurant Director Jorge Carlos Smith (standing) and (seated from left), Gallery Manager Sukulya Suchittanarak, guest Nash Ladha and Restaurant Manager Densak Cheeplek.

LOVELY LAMONT: (right) Prapassorn Maksin (left), Sales Assistant of Lamont Handmade Designs at The Plaza Surin, with guests at the opening of the new gallery.



SUBTRACTING: Celebrating the move of the atmospheric XVI nightclub to its new Chanacharoen Rd premises are (from right): Kittipong "Thor" Pongsivapri; K. Chompu; K. Ann; Tanate "Rome" Donkumnerd; Wonwin "Koh" Jintaganont; Tawatchai "Tung" Sume Tanont; and Sombut "Ae" Teeraparbpong.



RED CHINA: Celebrating Chinese New Year's Day by coming 1st, 2nd and 3rd in a children's talent contest at Central Festival Phuket are (from right), Kanjanawan Mai-on, Juthamas Tansakul and Pitchaporn Khemglad. The mall's GM, Wilaiporn Pitimana-aree, handed out the goodies.

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As tsunami waves were pounding the Patong shoreline, two brave jet-skiers forsook their own safety by jumping onto jet-skis and speeding about plucking to safety some 60 survivors caught in the deluge.

The two jet-ski heroes were 36-year-old Pranom Lamkaew and Patong City Council representative Weerapong Tonghome, 32, who has since been dubbed *SorTor Hero* ("Hero councillor"). K. Weerapong, a Phuket native, was a jet-ski operator before he got caught up in topsy-turvy world of Patong politics.

K. Weerapong was repairing his longtail boat on the beach near Loma Park and hanging out with friends as usual. "I saw the water quickly recede, moving further and further from the shore. Many people ran down to

Heroism gives jet-ski

Mafia. Disturbers of the peace. Shoreline menaces. Few people in Phuket get more negative press than jet-ski operators, and in many cases, deservedly.

But the courageous actions of some these people during and immediately after the tsunami may well give critics pause for reflection.

The *Gazette's* Gategaeo Phetsawang reports.

the seabed to catch fish and crabs stranded there," he remembered.

His friend K. Pranom heard some Japanese tourists screaming "Tsunami! Tsunami!" and making a desperate attempt to clear the shoreline.

But for most it was too late. The first wave came, surging over the dunes and reaching about waist height where K. Pranom and his friends had taken refuge behind the concrete buildings along Loma Park.

"We saw people clinging to trees, but we couldn't do anything because the current was too strong. Soon after that the second wave hit. It was higher than the first and we found ourselves neck-deep in water.

"We knew we couldn't swim [against the strong current] and help people at the same time, and that's what made me think of the jet-skis," he said.

There were jet-skis everywhere, some floating upside down, others smashed, so they quickly took the two nearest ones and fired up the engines.

"I roped a banana boat around my waist and lifted

people onto it. There was also a fiberglass dinghy that we used to pull survivors to safety," he said.

"We saved about 60 people by picking them up and delivering them to safety on the roof of the concrete building. At least four more waves hit the shore while we were pulling people from the water," he added.

Asked if they were afraid, K. Weerapong said, "We were all really scared because we had no idea when the next wave was going to hit, or how big it would be. Since it could come at any time, we had to keep on eye out to sea while we continued rescuing people."

K. Pranom said that he was just as afraid as everybody else, but that he couldn't just sit there and watch people die knowing that he might be able help them.

Again using the jet-skis, the pair then moved injured survivors up Sawatdirak Rd to the Sai Nam Yen School, where waiting ambulances took them to Patong Hospital.

"Our jet-skis couldn't go further than the school [at the corner of Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd], which was the nearest point from



Beach guard Somchai Roobsoong (left) was injured trying to pull people from the water. Pranom Lamkaew (right) admits he was afraid, but 'couldn't just sit there and watch people die'.

the beach that hadn't been inundated," he said.

K. Pranom and K. Weerapong were by no means the only heroes on the day. Another was 38-year-old Songkhla native Somchai Roobsoong, 38, one of the 11 members of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization's Beach Guard, who was on duty that morning.

Having worked the beach for 14 years, K. Somchai probably thought he had seen just

about everything the sea had to offer. He hadn't.

"At around 9:50 am, I knew something very strange was going on when the water began receding much more quickly than I had ever seen. I realized that something terrible was going to happen, so I and the other lifeguards started blowing our whistles to get people to come off the beach," he said, estimating that it took about five minutes for his prediction to come true.

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men new image

"I am a lifeguard, and I have been in high seas and big waves – but none of that prepared me for the massive wall of water as it came bearing down on us.

"But I remembered I was a lifeguard and put the fear aside. How could I just run to save myself with so many others at risk? It's my duty, just as it was for the other 11 members of the beach guard, who all worked hard pulling people from the water.

"I saw a French lady with her daughter, about three years old. She was separated from her mother by the first wave. I told my friend K. Pranom to take the kid [using the jet-ski] to a safe place, while I helped get her mother back to the beach road.

"She was extremely worried about her daughter. I explained that K. Pranom was helping her daughter and that it would be better for her to wait in a safe place, but as I was doing so the second wave struck.

"At first she was clinging to a tree and I tried to grab her, but then the third wave came. It was really violent and it swept us both away. I had no idea where she went, but at that point I could do nothing to get myself out of the fast-moving water.

"The water carried me to a construction area, where my leg was ripped open. I took myself to Patong Hospital while my friends, who are lifeguards and jet-ski operators, continued to search for survivors.



Patong City Council representative and former jet-ski operator Weerapong Tonghome is now better known as *SorTor Hero* ("Councillor Hero") after helping to rescue 60 people.

"While I was at the hospital a friend told me that the French lady and her daughter were both safe. There were a lot of people at the hospital who were more badly injured than me, so the doctors gave them priority. I got to the hospital at noon, and had to wait 10 hours before I got the 29 stitches I needed to close my wound," he said.

When asked what they think when people call them names like "Beach Mafia", K. Somchai replied, "What we do is just another occupation to earn a living. People may like or dislike what we do. But mafia?

"We just operate water-sports businesses. If tourists didn't enjoy them, there wouldn't be any jet-skis here. We know that we need to have good manners, otherwise it will ruin the good image among tourists that is the base of our livelihoods."

K. Weerapong said too many people rush to judge the jet-ski operators based on appearances alone.

"People look at us from the outside and see our tattoos and the way we dress and act. Why don't they see people from the inside? Jet-ski operators and other beach operators are just running their businesses. It is the government's responsibility to ensure they conduct their business according to regulations."

K. Pranom pointed out that all of the lifeguards are also jet-ski operators, and that some rent out beach chairs as well.

"We rescue at least 20 people a year. We also help people when there are water accidents. There are both good and bad people in every group, but it's not fair to stereotype all jet-ski operators as bad," he said.

The government plans to rid Phuket of jet-skis within seven years. While most tourists seemed, before the tsunami, to agree that this was a good idea, it's unlikely that a certain French tourist, her little girl, and about 60 others who were saved by the "jet-ski mafia" on December 26 are now counted among them.

The heritage of Relaxation.

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For anyone wanting to see the direction Asian style may take in the next few years, a recent fashion show at Phuket City's upmarket Baan Klung Jinda restaurant would have been a good place to look.

The show was held to mark the establishment of a Phuket admissions office of the Raffles Design Institute (RDI), and it was a showcase for the talent of new graduates of the Bangkok-based design school.

The theme of the show was "Raffles Grand Finale" and it featured outfits in a dazzling array

of jewel-like colors, modeled on a set intended to resemble an evening sky.

The set was designed by RDI lecturer Ekarat Warinsatien, a graduate of the RDI's sister school, the Raffles Lazan Institute in Singapore. K. Ekarat was also involved in designing costumes for the recently-released movie *Phantom of the Opera*.

The RDI, which is a member of a global partnership of schools, offers a range of courses from fashion design to multimedia design to fashion marketing and management.

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In the aftermath of the December 26 tsunami, people around the world looked deep inside themselves and found a need to help their fellow man. For foreigners living abroad, in their new chosen land and among their new neighbors, perhaps the need to help struck a deeper chord.

Patti Seery, Captain Neil Wilton and the crew of the 50-meter *Silolona* were no exceptions.

Silolona, a luxury re-creation of a traditional wooden Phinisi schooner, survived the tsunami unscathed while off Phuket, where she spent late December

for the King's Cup Regatta and the 5th Phuket Invitational Superyacht event.

Silolona was built specifically to sail Indonesian waters, so after the tsunami hit, owner Patti and her crew headed for Banda Aceh, Indonesia, stopping at Langkawi to take on board a Sikh medical team and to load the yacht's staterooms with emergency supplies.

They put into port at Sabang, just north of Banda Aceh and spent the next three days speaking to government and military officers as well as interna-

When conscience calls

tional relief volunteers to determine the state of surviving populations in northern Sumatra and to pinpoint suitable locations to land the medical team.

At midnight, January 11, *Silolona* headed out to sea again, leaving behind the stench of death that reached a kilometer from the shore, and set course for the town of Calang.

In darkness just off the northern tip of Sumatra, however, *Silolona* was hit by heavy waves, some crashing spectacularly over the bow.

She lurched wildly and the violent reeling snapped the fore top-mast, bringing it down, and leaving the gaff and rigging swinging dangerously across the mid-deck. The crew lashed down the swinging timbers and then the yacht turned back for the calmer waters off Sabang.

While in port, all on board considered their options. It was thought too risky to try again to take the medical team out in rough seas to a west-coast location, as no one knew if they could



Patti Seery (above), of the 50-meter luxury superyacht *Silolona* (top right), speaks to villagers on Sumatra to determine which survivors need aid and how it can best be delivered.

dock the boat for offloading or drop off the medical team in a place where the doctors and nurses could find shelter and help survivors.

A further consideration was that the team, with only limited supplies, might be stranded in a place that might be too difficult to resupply.

In the end, the medical team decided to remain in Sabang to work in the local refugee camps,

where survivors from surrounding islands had been gathered. The crew dismantled the tangle of broken wood and twisted cables and brought both top-masts down for safety.

Moved by the extent of devastation at Banda Aceh and the desperation of those whose families were still buried under the rubble, Patti, Capt Neil and the crew decided to stay on to help.

All on board knew that many survivors in the area had yet to be contacted and that *Silolona*, with her shallow draft and ample storage space, was ideally suited for reaching both

upriver and navigating coastal shoals to deliver aid.

John Everingham, one of those aboard, said, "All on board – Patti foremost among us – believed that to have backed away from the front line and failed to help at such a catastrophic moment in history would have been a failing of conscience that we could not have lived with."

At the time of going to press, *Silolona*, with two local captains on board, was navigating the western coast of Sumatra, providing relief organizations with vital reports of surviving villages and the extent of help needed, and mapping coastal areas to allow other relief boats to drop anchor safely.

The information in this article was provided by John Everingham. Photos courtesy of ARTASIA Press.

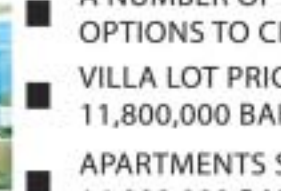


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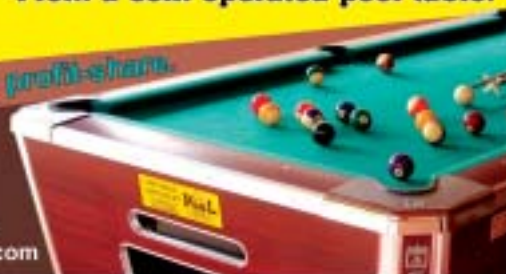
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THE FUN PAGE



FOR ALL

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Spot the Difference



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Brain Buster!!

Five athletes were crossing the finishing line of a cross-country race. Chai came third and Eric placed second. From the following information, can you tell how the other three, Arthit, Boom, and Dee, placed in the race?


Arthit was not last. Arthit came in after Eric. Dee was not first.

Since Chai was third and Eric was second, Arthit could only be first or fourth. Since Arthit was behind Eric, he could not be first, so he must be fourth. Dee could not be first, second, third, or fourth, so she must be fifth. If Dee is fifth, Arthit must be first, then Boom must be first, then Boom must be first, then Boom must be first.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S MONSTER QUIZ

1. Fastnet Rock; 2. Between the Sheets; 3. Ronan Keating; 4. Love; 5. No. 14; 6. Charlie's Angels; 7. Abraham Lincoln; 8. Kill Bill: Vol. 1 & Vol. 2; 9. Rice; 10. pyromania; 11. Edvard Munch's The Scream; 12. Robert Miles; 13. Mesopotamia; 14. Iraq; 15. Karen Blixen; 16. Chisinau; 17. Dalasi; 18. South Africa; 19. Christina Ricci; 20. Loire.

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



1. Why has Briton Ellen MacArthur been in the news recently?

2. "Quite hale fan" is an anagram of which female rapper's name?

3. Gwen Stefani is the glamorous singer with which band?

4. Thomas Edison patented what on February 19, 1878?

5. Pop star Maria Mena is from which country?

6. Who created the first website and, as a result, the World Wide Web?

7. What was the first website?

8. How many people live in the Vatican City?

9. On February 19, 1986, the US Senate approved a treaty banning what?

10. How long did it deliberate before signing the treaty?

11. What is the highest point of Namibia?

12. Who is the all-time highest scorer for Italian Serie A football team Fiorentina?

13. How many goals did he score in the 1991-1999 seasons?

14. Who wrote the classic science-fiction story Time is the traitor?

15. Who was the 2004 World Rally Champion?

16. Which element has the atomic number 74 and the symbol W?

17. What was this element previously called?

18. Which actor plays Count Olaf in Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events?

19. Who wrote the books upon which the movie was based?

20. Which six nations play in the Rugby Union Six Nations Championships?

Answers next week

Never a Cross Word!

Across

1. Footwear.

3. Timepieces.

8. Mr Sullivan's partner.

9. You can get this at the beach.

10. The first odd number.

11. Type of fuel.

14. Seaborne robber.

15. Part of a circle.

18. Useful computer key.

19. Tasteless.

20. Omani ruler.

21. Blood vessel.

Down

1. Long and heroic tale.

2. Shaped like a soup can.

4. Country south of Estonia.

5. Major disaster.

1		2			3	4		5		6
				7						
8								9		
	10				11					
12				13						
14							15			
							16			17
18				19						
20								21		

6. Gone ga-ga from age.
7. Wager.
12. Goes faster than the limit.
13. Notorious leader of the Huns.
16. It goes faster than sound.
17. Boss of the Norse gods.

Solution next week

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

J	E	A	N	S	A	B	O	V	E
M		O	H	M		I			
L	U	C	Y		Q		E	P	I
U	A		R			R		H	
L	A	M	P	O	O	N		O	U
L	P		S			P		L	
A	L	I		S	C	R	O	O	G
B	N		O			S		A	
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The bridge to isolation

The landmass we now know as the Malay Peninsula was not always a peninsula; it was once part of a great landbridge connecting Asia to Australia that allowed for a great migration of species, including man.

Not all of these ancient migrants were landlubbers. Various species of fish and marine invertebrates that prefer shallow water were able to move along the coast when the landbridge was intact, naturally seeking out habitats with less competition for space, more food and fewer predators.

At the moment, the former landbridge extends only to Malaysia. Indonesia is now an archipelago, the eastern half of which sits on a shelf connected to Australia with only shallow waters in between.

The western half of the archipelago is separated from it by a trench of deeper water that runs between Bali and Lombok and continues up between Borneo and Sulawesi. This is known as the Wallace Line. Associated with a fault zone, this is the great cutoff point between Asiatic and Australian species. Islands to the west of the line connect to the Malay Peninsula with only shallow seas between them.

Both seismic activity and global sea level play a part in determining when the landbridge can appear. Earthquakes not only shake up the crust, but also move land around. Geologists estimate that the December 26 quake off Sumatra moved the tectonic plate there some 30 centimeters, and that Phuket was jolted 15cm to the southwest. Parts of Sumatra were found to have been uplifted more than a meter.

This may not seem like much on a global scale, but the cumulative effect of thousands of such quakes over eons will help determine whether the landbridge will again be exposed.

During periods when much of the Malay Peninsula was just



EARTH WATCH

By Robert Cogen

an island chain, populations of terrestrial animals and plants became isolated. In-breeding within such island ecosystems inevitably produce inherited characteristics peculiar to that community and to those on any other islands to which it may have spread.

Over time, such new characteristics accumulate to produce populations that can no longer successfully interbreed with the species from which they originally evolved – and a new species is born. Darwin's Finches on the Galapagos Islands are a textbook example of this process, known as "divergent evolution".

Many species, ranging from monitor lizards to coconuts, can traverse the shallows between islands by swimming or floating. Other species take to wing or float along on the wind.

But most amphibians, including all frogs and toads, will perish after only a short period

of immersion in saltwater. They must wait for the landbridge to rise from the ocean so that they can move across previously submerged areas.

Freshwater fish and invertebrates with low tolerance to saline environments must also wait for dry land and sufficient rainfall before moving on.

During the Mesozoic Era, dinosaurs moved down the landbridge to Australia. They were followed by the first mammals, the egg-laying monotremes. Thanks to Australia's subsequent isolation, the only three known remaining species of monotremes – the duck-billed platypus and two species of spiny anteater – are found in Australia or outlying islands.

Marsupials, whose babies develop partly *in utero* and then in the mother's pouch, arrived a few million years later. While marsupials are found throughout the world, nowhere have they been as successful as in Australia.

The variety of marsupial species there provides an excellent example of "evolutionary convergence", the phenomenon of two species that are not closely related developing similar physical characteristics due to the selective pressures of evolution.

Most marsupials have a mammalian counterpart, ranging from tiny mice-like critters to ones that resemble tigers. Only kangaroos and wallabies are without placental parallels and are found only in and around Australia.

The isolation down under is also responsible for the only surviving species of an ancient order of reptiles known as the *Sphenodontia*, which were very successful during the age of the dinosaurs.

This animal, the tuatara, has remained almost unchanged in its New Zealand habitat for more than 225 million years, but is now listed as an endangered species there – despite having no natural predators.

The last time the landbridge opened was during the last great ice age, about 20,000 years ago. With water frozen in the polar icecaps, the sea level lowered and once again exposed the great corridor.

Modern man and more primitive hominids such as *Homo erectus* used the opportunity to head down under, probably for the first time.

It is thought that the ensuing submersion of the landbridge, and subsequent isolation, resulted in the evolution from *Homo erectus* of a formerly unknown hominid species known as *H. floresensis*, whose remains and tools were found in a cave in the western part of Flores Island in Indonesia last August.

These remains indicate that this one-meter-tall hominid, quickly dubbed the Hobbit by the popular press, lived there from 18,000 to 13,000 years ago, a period when humans were previously thought to have the sole claim to humanity.

Contemporaneous bones of a miniature elephant, *Stegodon*, and the giant Flores rat are evidence of the food Flores Man ate. It had been thought, before this discovery, that modern man was the only hominid left after the extinction of the Neanderthals some 25,000 years ago.

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

It is often said that out of everything bad something good always comes, or that every cloud has a silver lining. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami and all the death and destruction it brought with it, finding anything positive would have stretched the imagination of the most optimistic of optimists.

Six weeks on, as I reflect on what I have seen as I have toured the region, I realize I have witnessed many things that I hope can only have long-term benefits for the community as a whole.

These include the selfless generosity and spirit of the great majority of Thai people, many of whom suffered great personal loss themselves, but who gave their time, resources, not to mention their hearts, to help the stricken families of foreign visitors and residents alike.

Then there were the expatriates and overseas volunteers who worked, indeed, continue to work, with local people, particularly around Bang Tao and Kamala, and further afield in the fishing villages north of Khao Lak, to help rebuild local Thai homes and businesses.

In the animal world, with the lack of tourists, and therefore income, I worry about the local elephant population, and many of the island's unfortunate unwanted strays are also struggling for food. Even many dogs and cats with owners will suffer as financial hardship bites.

Wildlife has also been affected. Edwin Wiek of the Wildlife Friends of Thailand estimates that the tsunami has destroyed the majority of this year's turtle eggs along the entire Andaman coast.

There is, however, some good news here, too. Animal charities struggle continuously to raise funds and recruit volunteers to keep their work going. As a result of the tsunami, many individuals and foundations have do-

In The Stars

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Patient Pisceans will know that what is meant to happen will come to pass in its own good time. Those who feel that they've put in enough effort for results to be forthcoming immediately will need to remember that tropical time moves at a slower pace. You are certain to succeed in the end. Romance receives an astral spark; Sunday night is best for an intimate date.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): A burning issue regarding property remains your top priority during the coming week. Events should reach a satisfactory conclusion by the end of this month, so don't despair if you encounter one or two hitches in the meantime. Arians are advised to maintain their cool midweek, when someone appears determined to ruffle your feathers. Wear shades of cinnamon and vanilla to help you keep emotional distance. The number 4 is particularly lucky on Tuesday.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): A romantic introduction spices up your week. Taureans tired of facing the world alone could be about to embark on an exciting trip down sweetheart lane. You are advised to keep track of personal ambitions in the midst of all this distraction; success is looming on the horizon, but you need to keep your nose to the ground. The color apple green encourages fresh energy.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Networking is recommended this week. Get out and about to meet people in different circles now if you seriously want to expand your options for this year. You will be especially inspired by the appearance of a mysterious Capricorn on Sunday, but you should play a cautious game. Where finances are concerned, your bargaining skills are strongest on Wednesday; provided that stand your ground and refuse to back down, you should achieve your goal.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): Unwelcome chores occupy much of your time this week, but by Friday you will be glad you made the effort. You can look forward to next weekend bringing many sizzling social opportunities. Valuable friendships can be made at the end of this month, so put all your energy into tying up loose ends on the home and business front during the coming days. The number 9 is auspicious on Thursday.

LEO (July 24-August 22): The atmosphere in the jungle could become a little unsettled this week when a leopard changes its spots. Those Leos who had put trust in someone who subsequently let them down should view this experience as a useful lesson and move swiftly on. Business negotiations continue to brew quietly in the background – there's no need for you to burn the midnight oil; let others do their fair share of the ground-work.

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Miserable in the pound: one of the dogs rescued from Koh Phra Tong. The animal's owners are dead, and it badly needs a loving new home.

Finding the silver lining

nated to animal welfare work as well as to the human relief effort.

Pet food firms such as Nestlé, Purina and Royal Canin have donated generous amounts of food which, as well as supporting the stray animals immediately affected, is also being used to feed the dogs in the Phuket pound.

Probably the most unusual donation was made by a fish importing business in Khok Kloi, which supplies many of the luxury hotels throughout Thailand. The Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) received 300 kilos of prime tuna steaks, which my wife advises me would have a retail value in the UK of around £5,000 – about 350,000 baht.

As a result of the additional funding, SDF has been able to

expand its work. It has set up a network of volunteers along the entire west coast who will monitor and feed the stray dog and cat populations. A permanently-manned central phone number, 09-8167853 (Thai and English), has been set up to respond to emergency calls and reports of unsterilized animals.

In addition, large numbers of volunteer vets have arrived, and continue to arrive, accelerating the work of the foundation in controlling the stray population.

For the first time, vets from the US, Japan, South Africa and Israel are working with SDF throughout the region, in addition to the volunteer vets from Europe and Australasia who visit regularly.

Some of these vets were

recently operating a clinic in Baan Nam Khem, north of Khao Lak. They spent their day off back in Phuket raiding stores to buy toys to distribute to local children, who had lost everything. One team will shortly set up on the Phi Phi Islands to treat the remaining cats.

The director of operations of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), Phillip Russell MBE, has paid two visits to Phuket, and also had a long meeting with a senior politician in Bangkok.

He was so impressed by what he witnessed here that WSPA is preparing to make substantial funds available to the local animal charities here to further their work. This would be a significant investment over two years.

The aim is to make Phuket an example for the rest of Asia in terms of stray animal control. An experienced WSPA team is currently in Phuket, assessing how this can be set up.

As usual, there are a lot of laws and regulations that will have to be satisfied before this can happen, so we must wait and see whether this ambitious plan comes to fruition. But whatever the result, the work will continue.

Meanwhile, readers should be aware of the large number of dogs in the pound that desperately need new homes. Many of these animals are there now because their owners were killed in the tsunami. They are hopelessly out of place in this environment.

Nothing can undo what has happened, but maybe they, and we, can look forward to a more positive future here.

by Isla Star

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): If you've been desperately hoping for something to happen in your private life, there should be reason for celebration this week. Those Virgoans who had just about given up expecting to see this particular dream come true will now be motivated to consider what their next target might be. On Tuesday you have the opportunity to call a truce with someone; don't let pride stand in the way of this golden chance.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Escaping from the rat race is uppermost in your mind this week. Librans who are truly tired of finding ways to make ends meet will be thinking about how to live more frugally. It could be that escaping for a few days from all the pressures will be sufficient to dissolve the stress you are feeling. Make plans to take a soothing break before the end of this month – you won't regret doing so.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): You are advised to take things more slowly this week. You have been rushing around since the beginning of the year and should now sit back and watch the bamboo grow for a while. Communications with others are likely to be cloudy until Wednesday, so there is nothing to be gained by trying to get clear answers. Leo has an interesting proposition on Sunday.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): An unexpected job offer knocks you sideways early this week. Even Sagittarians who are quite content in their present occupation will be tempted to leave it all behind. If your partner is less than impressed by this sudden change of direction, make a list of all the benefits; convincing them shouldn't be too much of a challenge. You will need to exercise patience this weekend when what you thought was a simple task takes on mammoth proportions.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): There is a danger you will be diverted this week, but you are advised to focus on your goals. If these involve other people's help you will need to motivate someone who is finding it hard to get out of their hammock. Try dangling some juicy bait to induce action. Romance is progressing smoothly and single goats could be about to make a serious commitment. Wear light green for harmony and hope.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Financial opportunities are well-starred for Aquarians this week and continue to be until the end of the month. Make sure that agreements are finalized by then, as March will involve some ups and downs regarding money. You should also concentrate on long-term goals; seeds sown now will produce a fruitful harvest later in the year. Aries is admiring you from a distance and needs a little encouragement to move closer.

Misery is relative

There is a Thai guy who walks shirtless and barefoot up and down Yaowarat Rd day in and day out, asking the good people of Samkong – sometimes rather menacingly – for handouts. He is invariably barefoot and often dressed only in a red loin cloth – though I have seen him dressed in the type of jacket Elvis Presley used to wear. I have also seen him carrying an acoustic guitar, but I have never seen him play it.

The other day I saw him rifling through a garbage can in the afternoon sun. Out he came with a cigarette butt of the type someone trying to kick the habit might toss away – there was a lot of tobacco left in it.

Sparking it up, with a borrowed cigarette lighter of course, he puffed away with a huge smile.

Watching him reminded me of something I tend to forget: misery is relative. Yes, we are down at the moment, but things could be worse, a lot worse. Just look at Banda Aceh.

There is every reason for optimism. It's easy to look down desolate stretches of the beach road and think, "Where is everyone?". But Patong's rise to greatness – some would say infamy – was hardly built on a base of concrete and rebar.

It was built on what may well be this country's most sustainable resource – and we all know what that is. That's why the tourists will be back – only an asteroid impact could keep them away for long.

Acoustica jams: Although I had to miss the Tsunami International Jams Aid concert held at Central Festival Phuket on January 20, a word of praise has to go out to its organizer, Capt Patt of Rockin' Angels Bar on Yaowarat Rd, just north of the fountain.

Capt Patt (like Stoolie, a

refugee from Haad Yai) underwent a real crash course in how to organize a charity event, but succeeded in raising some 108,000 baht for tsunami victims. All the money was handed over to Maneephan Usawarakura who, as the wife of the Governor, heads the Phuket branch of the Thai Red Cross Society, which will distribute the funds.



Miss Phuket Bike Week was among the many kind-hearted people who took part in the Tsunami International Jams Aid concert.

The concert featured a truly international band led by Patt's "blues brother" Eric and other musicians from Germany, England, America, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Also key to the fundraising was the help of Singaporean Eddy Keng of the Singaporean biker

club Team 27. Eddy organized bikers clubs from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore – and the Porsche Motorsport Club – to raise funds.

Providing more entertainment were performers from Simon Cabaret and Fantasia, along with the beauty queens of Phuket Bike Week. Biker chicks, chopper chicks and chicks with er, where is Dr Seuss when you need him? Anyway, whoever helps out for worthy cause like this is a star in Stoolie's book.

Capt Patt got so worked up organizing the event that he even forgot about his visa, and ended up having to make an emergency trip down to Penang to keep himself in good graces with the boys in brown – how's that for a selfless effort?

Those wanting to order concert T-shirts, with all profits going to tsunami survivors, can stop by his pub, give him a call on Tel: 09-6549654, or send an email to either tsunami-aid@rockinangels.com or cafe@rockinangels.com

Send comments, queries and criticisms to stoolie@phuketgazette.net



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State aid is a tangled mess

The news that commercial banks in Phuket and surrounding provinces have been lending billions of baht to businesses and individuals affected by the tsunami (see page 21) – and also restructuring existing loans for others so that they have a chance of recovering from the disaster – is heartening.

What is far less encouraging is the continuing criticism of the government and the bureaucracy by people who have been promised help but who have yet to receive it.

As reported in last week's *Gazette*, the *Baan Man Kong* initiative to provide homes for people made homeless by the tsunami is faltering badly. One interviewee commented, "Ordinary *farang* have helped me more – someone walked in and gave me 2,000 baht."

That a cash donation of 2,000 baht should be thought of as being more helpful than anything the government has done is a sad commentary indeed on the current state of affairs.

What is true of homes is also true of boats. Small fishing villages all along the Andaman coast are living in a limbo of handouts because they cannot afford to replace the boats, nets and crab traps that allowed them to make a living.

Again, there are government promises but precious little by way of delivery – most of the help these communities are receiving is coming from private individuals.

There seem to be two reasons why this aid is not forthcoming. The first is plain old-fashioned corruption. The government's solution to reported exaggeration by officials of victims' needs has been to cut back the amount of aid it plans to allocate. So now victims will receive even less, once the sticky-fingered bureaucrats and local community "leaders" have taken their slice.

The other reason is ironic: the delay is due in great part to rules introduced to prevent corruption. These have resulted in a complex maze of red tape, checks and counter-checks that victims must navigate before, perhaps, getting a couple of hundred baht. The next day they must navigate this maze all over again.

The *Gazette* has received many requests from people overseas who want to help victims, but who stress that they do not want their money to go anywhere near the so-called civil servants. What a shameful indictment.

During his previous term, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra attempted to straighten out the bureaucracy. He failed. Now that he has such an overwhelming mandate, one can only hope that he will try again to flush out this Augean stable so that those in need receive the full and prompt support they need and deserve.

– The Editor

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Now all you have to do is jump through these hoops and the 100 baht in aid is yours!



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.

Plans to limit the number and location of beach chairs on Phuket's shores (see News pages), as well as umbrellas and massage ladies, appear to fall foul of tourist opinion.

Of all the letters received by the *Gazette* on the subject, not one expressed favor for the plans. Correspondents were unanimous that the beaches – Patong in particular – should have the old facilities restored. The letters below are typical of readers' opinions.

Thoughts – and thanks – from Norway

I'm a Norwegian sitting safely at home in Norway, witnessing the daily news of the tsunami disaster (I have never been to Thailand).

As Norwegian survivors return home, most of them from Phuket and Khao Lak, many of them battered and shaken, and having lost friends, wives, children and other relatives, all of them say the same thing: that the helpfulness and empathy of the local Thai people was enormous.

Imagine that. In their deepest sorrow, they cannot speak highly enough about the help they got from the Thais immediately after the disaster.

I think this information should be shared with the local people. We think of you with much warmth and our thoughts are very much with you in these days, and will always be so after this.

Eivind Sevilhaug
Kristiansand
Norway

they must now get work permits (impossible to achieve for unofficial private helpers) or face fines and punishment for their efforts really is an insult.

I do hope that Ricky Martin, Martina Hingis, Chester Bennington and all the other celebrities who come here are all treated the same as the tireless volunteers who are still working "in the trenches", rather than being fawned over by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and other people of influence.

Was that a paintbrush in Chester's hand [*Gazette*, February 12, 2005]? Quick! Lock him up, fine and deport him!

While the government can afford to concentrate on providing a centER specifically for monitoring "foreign" criminals, it seems unable to deliver the financial assistance already promised to victims of the tsunami.

Clearly xenophobic policies and tendencies such as this, and the power games over who gets to do forensic work, just show how power, control and face are so much more important here than getting the job done and achieving the required goals.

Name and address supplied

Xenophobic policies

After all the good will, effort and hard work of the overseas non-governmental organizations and normal civilians who have given their time, money, effort and energy to assist in the aftermath of the tsunami, for them to be told

Trees axed, but why?

The lagoon near Nai Harn Beach used to be an attractive place, surrounded by many flowering trees, including bauhinias, flamboyants and others.

I am curious to know why it was necessary to fell all these trees, leaving a muddy wasteland.

The trees were, apparently, in good health and flowered regularly, and they were not of a size to cause an obstruction for road-users.

This appears to be an act of municipal vandalism, all the less justifiable in view of Thailand's dearth of trees, the lack of which is at least partly responsible for the droughts much of the country has suffered in recent years.

With all the current development and building in Phuket, I fear we may not have any trees left in a few years.

Theresa Greene
Chalong

Disappointed at THAI service cancellations

I was disappointed to be advised by Thai Airways International (THAI) that they have canceled their daily Chiang Mai-Phuket direct flight.

With a large delegation of colleagues and friends arriving to tour Thailand, I had insisted on bringing them to Phuket following a northern excursion – citing the non-stop flight.

One must now connect to Phuket from Chiang Mai via Bangkok. It is now more convenient to get from Don Muang Airport to Pattaya than it is to transit and fly to Phuket.

Letters conveying views and suggestions are published here. Those seeking comment from government officials or business owners are currently published only online, at www.phuketgazette.net/issuesanswers/

Three-wheelers: triple trouble

FIRST PERSON

Purpose-built motor-tricycles were once legal – the tax was about 150 baht and the vehicle would have a number plate with a “P” on it. I remember seeing soldiers, about 40 years ago, riding round on motorcycles with sidecars, made by BMW and Triumph.

Purpose-built motor-tricycles are still made commercially today, by companies like Harley-Davidson, and they are big, solid bikes, and the designers have considered the safety aspects, the braking system and balance, things like that, things that locally-made tricycles usually don't have.

But nobody imports purpose-built motor-tricycles to Thailand anymore. A few years ago, the Tiger Motorbike Company started to make motor-tricycles in Thailand, but they weren't really up to standard, although the bikes were improved enough for the company to receive a PPTO licence in 1999.

Now, however, there isn't a single company making a serious attempt to produce a legal motor-tricycle, or anyone willing to risk investing in one – though, if there were, they would have the full support of the PPTO.

So, for the moment, there are no factory-produced motor-tricycles in Thailand. Instead, motor-tricycles are cobbled together for vendors by local engineers, who don't really consider standards or safety.

That, of course, means that the motor-tricycle and accompanying sidecars distributed re-

At the beginning of December the *Gazette* reported that the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) had given free “mobile minimart” food carts to 100 of the island's mobile food vendors.

However, the *OrBorJor*'s minimarts are, technically, illegal, as are practically all of the other motor tricycles on Phuket's roads.

Teerayuth Prasertphol, the Chief Technical Officer of Phuket Provincial Transportation Office (PPTO), is aware of this fact, and he wants the situation to change. The only problem, as he explains here, is how to achieve this.

cently by the *OrBorJor* are illegal.

None of the *OrBorJor*'s 100 “mobile minimarts” can be registered because they have not passed engineers' tests or been approved by the PPTO.

I had a meeting with the *OrBorJor* about them. My job at that meeting was simply to lecture the vendors about traffic regulations, although I did point out to the *OrBorJor*, and the vendors, that the motor-tricycles are illegal.

I'm also concerned that each motor-tricycle should have lights, such as taillights and indicators, and lights on the sides, so people can see the vehicle has three wheels rather than two.

Without those lights, at night, it's easy for other road users to assume it is an ordinary motorcycle, and that leads to accidents.

We have tried publicity campaigns, telling drivers about the need to have proper brakes and lights, and advising them on road safety.

There are too many motor-tricycles in Phuket. Most of them belong to poor vendors, who live hand-to-mouth, and if we arrest them for having an illegal motor-tricycle, we take away their livelihood.

The *OrBorJor*'s mobile minimarts, aimed at helping poor people make a better living, are technically illegal.



sibly – the ones who carry ice, for example, who have to deliver it before it melts.

Then there are people who carry gas bottles, and the ones who overload their tricycles, so they are dangerously heavy, or the stuff is piled so high they can't see the gutter to the left of them, so they ride in the middle of the road, slowly. They block the traffic, especially in the narrow streets in Phuket City, where they can cause traffic jams.

We cannot use the law against them, because this concerns their livelihoods, and if they were punished severely, it would have serious ramifications for them. That said, we will arrest drivers who

have no licence or drive dangerously.

I want to work with Phuket police to organize training for the vendors, so they can learn about safety and using the road properly.

I'd say the bulk of the motorcycle acci-

dents on Phuket aren't down to speeding, but are the result of carelessness, or a lack of respect for the rules of the road. Another problem is motorcyclists riding on the wrong side of the road, into oncoming traffic.

In the absence of any better solution to these problems, we should get the riders to come and talk it through with us.

This is not the support that THAI promised to give Phuket.

Michael Litorice
By email

Open letter to the people of Thailand

This is an open letter to the Thai people, especially the staff of Tai Muang Hospital, in Phang Nga, and the countless others who helped us.

We thank you for your efforts in aiding us after the tsunami, and for taking care of us at the hospital, treating our wounds both physical and mental.

You gave us medical care, food and shelter, but most of all you gave us – stranded visitors from far away – your sympathy.

We may forget the tsunami but we will never forget the warmth and kindness of the Thai people. You gave us the feeling that you really cared. Even those who had lost loved ones offered care and what little food and water – and clothes – they had.

We must also thank the manager of the Andaburi Resort in Khao Lak who spent every hour after the tsunami searching for his guests, making sure they were well and had shelter.

We mourn for every victim. We were right in the middle of the tsunami and we know that many were not as lucky as we were. We saw them on the beach before the waves came and we did not see them again, not one.

We mourn with the entire Thai people for the loss of a member of the Thai Royal Family. We feel for everyone who survived but lost loved ones.

But today our best wishes go to you as does our hope that the entire region will recover from the catastrophe in no time.

The ceaseless efforts of the Thai people will realize our hope very soon.

Thank you, to all of you.

Tobias Grybat & Kathrin Witt
Germany

ADSL – A Darn Sight Longer than expected

In response to your Issues & Answers question headlined, “How long will it take for ADSL?” [*Gazette* Online, December 17, 2004], I have been waiting three months now for installation by TOT and have yet to receive any correspondence of any kind.

I called them yesterday to find out what was happening and

they told me: “Next week for Soi Sansabai”. This was pretty much what they said in early December, after I had already waited for 4 weeks.

I assume the phone lines are OK since I neither received notification saying they needed replacing nor any schedule for when they are going to replace lines.

Since ADSL uses bandwidth on existing telephone lines, I do not understand why I am told that Soi Sansabai is due to be installed next week as it is my understanding that all the work for hooking up ADSL is done at the exchange, not at the consumer end.

I didn't do too much chasing as I went to the UK for two months just before Christmas. I presumptuously assumed that I would return to find I had a lightning-fast connection and was boyishly eager to try out my new Internet telephony. I was sadly disappointed.

Ironically, it was a good job that my dial-up ISP totally ignored three letters of cancellation I sent them, or I should have been totally in the Internet wilderness.

It would be slightly more professional if notification were sent out with some sort of sched-

ule date (and a follow-up explanation if that date cannot be met), instead of leaving people hanging wondering if anything is ever going to happen. Bad news is more helpful than no news!

As a footnote, I would like to mention that I am not unaware that priorities have changed since December 26, and if my extended waiting period is due directly or indirectly to the tragedy, please do not take my frustrations to heart; I can wait in paradise a little longer if necessary.

Michael Devine
Patong

Why are ‘curative’ products banned?

I'm writing in response to the Issues and Answers question [*Gazette* January 1, 2005] about the correspondence between the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) about vitamins/herbs/health giving substances and the man whose goods had been confiscated.

The FDA said it refused to allow these non-toxic natural compounds to be imported “to protect the Thai people”. But it is also mentioned that these banned substances have “cura-

tive powers”. These two statements contradict each other. If they are “curative”, why are they banned?

If the FDA really wished to protect the health of the Thai people, it should ban, for example, cigarettes, which are habit-forming ... and the cause of 100,000 deaths a year in Thailand, and alcohol, toxic to the liver and brain and the cause of car accidents and many diseases.

Doesn't this begin to arouse one's suspicions? Does this not suggest to any sensible person that the FDA in Thailand comprises mainly ex-pharmaceutical executives, whose main purpose is to protect that industry?

Heath expert
Kamala

No pat on the back for these postmen

I noted the picture recently in the paper of the opening ceremony for the Phuket Post Office Museum (*Gazette*, January 1, 2005).

I assume we can go there and see for ourselves all the undelivered mail. Totally disgraceful and disreputable service.

Derek Priest
Phuket

When the runtime is a waste of time

Q When I'm accessing a website, why does a little blue box with the words: "A Runtime Error has occurred" sometimes appear (and refuse to go away)? How do I stop this from happening? And when it asks me do I want to "Debug", should I click "Yes" or "No"?

A The runtime error message appears when your browser can't interpret what is on the webpage, but 99 times out of 100 it doesn't mean anything serious is awry.

Having your browser ask you whether you want to debug a misbehaving webpage is kind of like your refrigerator asking if you want to recharge the coolant every time you leave the door open too long. Just click "No" and forget about it.

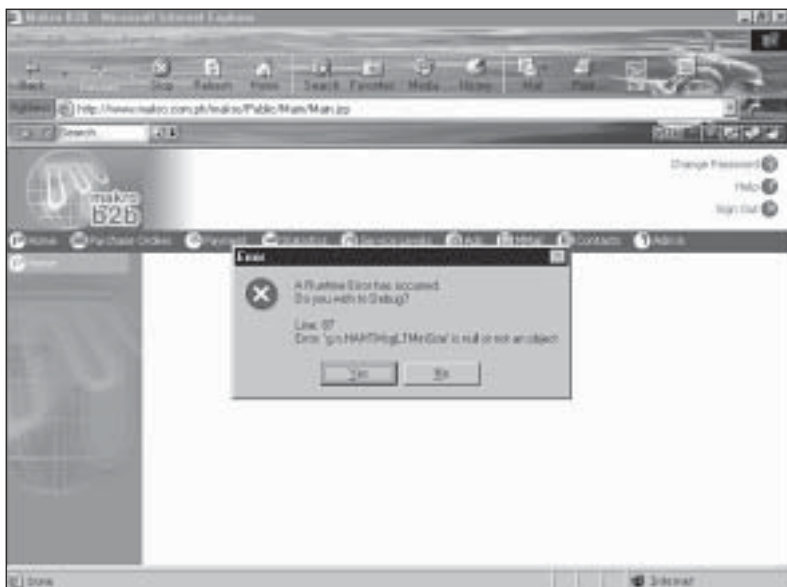
To stop receiving stupid runtime error messages, my first recommendation is to get Firefox (www.mozilla.com) and throw away Internet Explorer.

If you want to keep IE, start it, click Tools | Internet Options, check the box marked Disable Script Debugging (Internet Explorer), click OK, and the debug messages won't appear again.

Q Sometimes, when I have finished using my USB flash drive, and I close the Explorer window, click on the green arrow that appears by the clock, and I select "safely remove USB mass storage device - Drive (F)", I get a message that "The device cannot be stopped right now; try again later."

Sometimes I've left the device for five minutes and I have still received the message that it's not yet safe to remove the flash drive. How long should I wait until removing it, and what happens if I remove it without being "given permission" to do so by the computer?

A The short answer is, I have no idea why your USB flash drive is refusing to disconnect when Windows XP tells it



Stop receiving annoying Runtime Error messages when trying to load a webpage by simply switching them off in Options panel.

COMPUTER Q&A

By Woody Leonhard

to, but you may be able to find the answer yourself, using a little-known (and well-hidden!) feature called the System Events Log.

Windows programs keep a running log of what they're doing, or at least what they're trying to do. That file - the System Events Log - should have entries for inserting the USB drive, for Windows' attempts to "unmount" the drive, and possibly for the drive's insistence on staying mounted. I'll refrain from comment on the archaic computer terminology.

To see your System Events Log, and possibly gather some insight into your specific problem, click Start, right-click on My Computer and pick Manage. That brings up an obscure program called the Microsoft Management Console, which includes all sorts of detailed information about your system's innards.

On the left, under System Tools, double-click Event Viewer, then double-click on System. That opens up the Windows XP System Events Log, and lets you

look at the droppings left behind by all well-behaved Windows programs.

You should find entries for plugging in the USB drive, and your attempts to remove the drive. Double-click on any suspicious looking entry for more details. While this is far from a foolproof method for tracking down weird problems with your PC, sometimes the System Events Log coughs up details you can't find anywhere else.

Back to your specific question, when a "device" (which is Microsoft-speak for a piece of hardware that you plug into your computer) isn't working right, the first culprit worth investigating is the driver. You should go to the manufacturer's website, and download and install the latest driver. Even if you think you already have the latest driver, it doesn't hurt to install it again.

My guess is that you're experiencing some sort of glitch in the driver, and it may not be patched yet. You might send a message to the manufacturer and complain loudly. Include information about your operating system - such as if you're using Windows XP Service Pack 2 (which you are, right?) - and the model number of your aberrant device.

In the final analysis, though, you aren't risking much by simply ripping the drive out of the socket and telling Windows to stuff it.

The USB removal routine in Windows is designed to avoid power spikes generated when USB devices are removed unexpectedly. The chances of generating a power spike when you unplug a USB drive are nearly zero, unless you're drying your hair when you pull it out.

So, make sure all of your data is on the USB drive before you cut the cord, then yank it out.

- Woody Leonhard
woody@khunwoody.com

Grinning with Gill

Good on the Brits! They've finally come up with somebody as funny as American humorist PJ O'Rourke.

His name is AA Gill and he even takes the mick out of his own name: "AA Gill sounds like a rural rambles, pipe-jabbing, pencil-stub-licking, hairy-eared sort of a bloke with a Tupperware box of cheese sandwiches, a trusty pocketknife and a penchant for showing small boys disgusting things under leaf mould. Mind you, Adrian Anthony sounds like an ageing Florida interior designer who once did Rock Hudson's pool out as a Tiki-Tiki wet bar. Anyway, I'm stuck with it and we all grow into our own names."

His fifth book, *AA Gill is Away* (Phoenix, 2003, London, 322pp), is the funniest travel book since O'Rourke's *Holidays in Hell*. A correspondent for *The Times*, Gill travels to Sudan, the Kalahari desert, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Bethlehem, the Aral Sea, Kaliningrad, India, Tokyo, California, Cuba, Argentina, Milan, Germany, Iceland, Monaco, and his native Britain.

He has strong likes and dislikes and it's a sheer delight to hear him vent them. He likes Africans, Indians and Americans; he dislikes Germans, Russians and Japanese.

Of the Indians, he writes: "India is a poor place but only in economic terms. On any other scale you care to think of, it's rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Any fool country can have democracy and freedom of speech and a rudimentary social security system when they've got the cash, but to achieve these things when you don't is humbling. India is that most miraculous of all modern states, a secular democratic theocracy. And if we measure wealth in terms of any of the things that really matter - family, spirituality, manners, inquisitiveness, inventiveness, dexterity, culture, history and food - then India would be hosting the next G7 conference and sending charity workers to California."

On the other hand, he feels no PC compunctions about loathing the Japanese.

Contemplating the famous Kyoto rock garden, he writes: "Look, I'm sorry but this is the emperor's new garden, an impractical joke. It's medieval builders' rubbish. Oh, but then, silly me, of course I don't understand. I'm constantly being

patronised for my coarse sensibilities and told that naturally I couldn't comprehend the subtlety, the aesthetic bat-squeak of Japanese culture. No country hides itself behind the paper screen of cultural élitism like Japan, which, considering they've bought their entire civilisation from other people's hand-me-downs, is a bit of a liberty. When it comes to Japanese civilisation, it's mostly eyewash. Kabuki theatre is only just preferable to amateur root-canal work. The three-

stringed guitar is a sad waste of cat. Japanese flower-arranging is just arranging flowers. Their architecture is Chinese, as are their clothes, chopsticks, writing, etc. The samurai were thugs in frocks with stupid haircuts, and haiku poems are limericks that don't make you laugh."

Like PJ O'Rourke, Gill is capable of high moral dudgeon. He travels with the non-governmental organization Doctors Without Borders to a famine camp in southern Sudan, to a sleeping sickness clinic in Uganda, and to the disease-laden environmental disaster of the Aral Sea.

He castigates African dictators for starving their own people, greedy Western drug corporations for ignoring a sick continent, and Russian Communism for draining the Aral Sea and leaving behind a toxic wasteland.

But beyond the humor and the anger, Gill eloquently expresses his awe at the natural wonders of the African bush, the Argentine pampas, the Icelandic wilderness.

Let me leave you with his description of the Kalahari:

"The great thing about the Kalahari desert is that it hates you. It doesn't have a welcome mat or a lei to drape over your shoulders or a glass of complimentary sangria. It doesn't have a hospitable grin or an information centre or translation earphones or a scenic walk. Between you, me and the vultures, the Kalahari loathes us. It makes no bones about it, or, rather, it does make bones about it. It is not generic, you understand, it's personal."

"It wants you dead. In the Kalahari the only good tourist is an ex-tourist and there are plenty of good old boys that could do a lot with your corpse."

I now want to read everything that Gill has ever written.

Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt



Siam International
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B18bn lent to tsunami victims – so far

By Gategeo Phetsawang

PHUKET: By the end of January the island's commercial banks had lent 18 billion baht to 660 Phuket individuals and businesses hit by the tsunami, the President of the Banks of Phuket Association, Somchai Pikulthong, has told the *Gazette*.

After the tsunami, the Bank of Thailand set aside 37 billion baht to allow commercial banks to provide soft loans to tsunami victims.

The Bank of Thailand will charge the borrowing banks 0.01% interest, and they will not be allowed to charge borrowers more than 2%.

The commercial banks each consider different criteria when determining applications, said K. Somchai, although some applicants will be given priority.

He explained, "Business operators directly affected by the tsunami will be helped surely and



Removing wreckage was only the first step. Rebuilding businesses in the depressed post-tsunami economy is the greatest difficulty.

immediately. However, the banks will consider applications case by case. They can be flexible about the regulations."

He added that it is too early for the banks to predict how many of the soft loans will turn out to be non-performing loans (NPLs) – those where the borrower defaults.

Making new loans to new customers is only one way a bank can help alleviate difficulties caused by the tsunami, according to Somboon Lertlamyong of Siam Commercial Bank's Patong branch.

Banks are also trying to ease financial worries by restructuring existing loans, by, for example, enabling borrowers to pay smaller amounts for a longer period of time, or by postponing repayment.

K. Somboon said his bank had dealt, so far, with at least 10 customers who have lost their sole source of income because of the tsunami; these included tour agencies, speedboat operators, hotel staff and souvenir shop owners.

He added that those seeking a soft loan or debt restructuring have until the end of this month to apply to their bank; after this time, they will be too late to qualify for the special conditions, although the bank may consider extending this deadline for existing borrowers.

In Phuket City, the Chao Fa Rd head office of the Siam Commercial Bank has received 2 billion baht from the Bank of Thailand, which it is currently allocating, at 2% interest, to 49 borrowers affected by the tsunami.

"Of that 2 billion baht, borrowers are using 1.3 billion baht to refinance existing debts, and the rest to repair and rebuild their business after the tsunami," said Manager Pisanu Rujipak.

"They've applied for loans of 100, 200 or 300 million baht, depending on the damage and the size of their business.

"There are also 60 other businesses that weren't directly affected by the tsunami but which

are feeling the effects now – such as hotels which weren't hit by the water at all, but are struggling now because they have fewer guests – and we are lending a total of 880 million baht to them."

In addition to supporting existing customers, the bank is currently considering applications for soft loans from at least 10 new would-be borrowers.

K. Pisanu expects that it will be next high season before borrowers – new or existing – will have sufficient cash flow again to start paying off their loans.

The Government Savings (Omsin) Bank, Phuket Branch, is lending money to tsunami victims at an interest rate of just 0.5% a year.

Manager Wanpen Yomna said many people had applied to the bank for one of the "Bank for People" loans; many of them are hotel staff, she said.

In addition to lending at this very low rate, the bank is also allowing borrowers to form co-operatives to act as guarantors for one other.

"Three people can get together to act as guarantors for

each other," K. Wanpen explained. "The first loan will be a maximum of 30,000 baht and the next loan won't be over 50,000 baht.

"There is 0% interest for a year and the debtor must repay the loan entirely within three years – but it's at a very low rate of interest."

K. Wanpen said the bank has already approved 119 of the 178 "Bank for People" applications it had received so far, committing itself to loans totaling 2.5 million baht.

The bank is also offering another type of soft loan for business, and has already approved 42 applications, worth a total of about 3.8 million baht, added K. Wanpen.

The Government Housing Bank, Phuket branch, has received 750 applications for help, and has already approved 560 of these, involving some 300 million baht.

Many existing borrowers

need help in rebuilding or repairing their homes, and the bank has been restructuring their loans, according to manager Wittaya Sanpakdi.

"We've reduced the interest rate for our existing borrowers to only 1% for a year, and in some cases, if debtors still can't afford to pay, we will give them a nine-month break from repaying," said K. Wittaya.

Wichian Aritayapong, the manager of Krungthai Bank's head office in Phuket, said the bank was currently looking at applications for loans totaling 390 million baht.

In addition to 10 applications for soft loans, the bank is also ready to restructure loans for 160 existing borrowers in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi, allowing them a one-year repayment moratorium, reducing the interest rate or allowing borrowers to pay only the interest for a year, said K. Wichian.

ON THE MOVE

Marriott International has promoted Phuket-based **Lee Sutton** to the newly-created post of Director of Public Relations for Asia and Australia. Ms Sutton's previous position was Director of Public Relations Thailand, was responsible for international media relations for the JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa and the JW Marriott Bangkok. She will continue to be based in Phuket.



Le Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club has appointed **Sirikorn Johnstone** as its Spa Manager.



A nurse by training, K. Sirikorn joined the Yacht Club from Bangkok Samui Hospital, where she was Nurse Manager.

The new Senior Marketing Communications Manager of the Bangkok Phuket Hospital is **Piyanooch Ananpakdee**, 42, of Nonthaburi. The holder of a master's degree in mass communications from Arkansas State University in the US, K. Piyanooch was previously Marketing Manager at Samitivej Hospital, Bangkok.



Been promoted? Made a career change? Know someone who has? Let us know by email to onthemove@phuketgazette.net.

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Stiff winds for skiffs

AO YON: Although no Skiff Asia Sunday Dinghy Regatta was scheduled to be held on February 13 – it was the last day of the Phang Nga Bay Regatta – strong winds gusting up to 20 knots proved too enticing for the c2Byte sailors to ignore.

The first race started around 9:30 am when the boats headed to the right of the course, further out into Chalong Bay, for fresh breeze. A persistent left-hand shift at the top mark rewarded those who kept to the inside of the course.

Robert Warnes and Russell Huebschle were neck-and-neck around the course in a close battle for first place. Huebschle surfed across the finish line first with Warnes only seconds behind.

In Race 2, Huebschle took an early lead, but Warnes rounded the top mark in a column of fresh breeze that pushed him

down the left side of the course and past his rival, who had stayed in the middle. Although Huebschle's mast sustained visible damage from the strong gusts, he continued racing.

In Race 3, Richard Buckminster also began the race well, but capsized in the first tack, striking Huebschle in the head with his carbon-fiber mast. Huebschle, uninjured from the "mast swat", struggled to get upwind with his kinked mast and rounded the mark second.

The fleet compressed by the finish, but Warnes managed to cross the line first, closely followed by Huebschle, Buckminster and Michael Hallager.

Results for the day's racing were: 1. Robert Warnes; 2. Russell Huebschle; 3. Richard Buckminster; 4. Michael Hallager.

For information on upcoming races, call Tel: 06-9541915.

Something wicket this way comes

PHUKET: The Phuket Cricket Union (PCU) will hold an 11-a-side limited-overs match at the Karon Municipal Stadium on February 19.

Players should be at the stadium for an 11 am start. The fee per player, not yet confirmed, is expected to be around 700 baht.

Mark "Scarfy" Whetton of the PCU said that the match will provide a useful opportunity for cricketers to get back into the game following a lengthy gap since the last match in June 2004.

"It's only around eight weeks until the 2nd Phuket International Cricket Sixes Tournament and we all need to get some practice," said Mr Whetton.

Players interested in taking part, whether experienced or complete novices, should contact him at Tel: 076-263086 or 06-1208346, or by email to: scarfy@loxinfo.co.th

Michael "Cat" Maher, the

chairman of the Asian Cricket Sixes Tour (ACST) and ACST partners Mark Burns and Brad Tarr were due to arrive in Phuket on February 16 to inspect facilities and to meet the PCU.

Mr Maher expects that as many as 25 teams will take part in this year's event, to be held April 7 to 10.

"In total, we will be playing a for five days this year, up from two days last year. We intend to hold a full 11-a-side game on the day before the Sixes start, just to kick things off with a bang," said Mr Maher.

"The Sixes will help lift the morale of those in Phuket – expatriates and local Thais alike – following the dreadful events of December 26.

"For us [cricketers] to go to Phuket, spend our money and to enjoy the island is the best way to assist the rejuvenation of Phuket," he added.

Anyone interested in playing or providing sponsorship for the Sixes should contact Mr Maher at Tel: +61-40-7385481 or by email to: mmaher.padmira@bigpond.com

Full details of the ACST 2005 program can be found at www.cricketsixes.com

Patong Darts League

February 8 results: Amigos 5* Happy Days 4; Champs* 7 Piccadilly 2; Didi's 4 Pickles 5*; Nag's Head 5 Shakers 4*; OffShore 4* Queen Mary 5; Valhalla 4* Two Black Sheep 5. (* beer leg winners)

February 22 matches: Amigos v Piccadilly; Champs v Queen Mary; Didi's v Two Black Sheep; Nag's Head v Pickles; OffShore v Happy Days; Valhalla v Shakers (Home teams first).

Standings after February 8: 1. Amigos (8pts); 2.= Queen Mary, Pickles, Happy Days (5); 5.= Didi's, OffShore (4); 7.= Piccadilly, Valhalla, Two Black Sheep, Shakers; Champs (3); 12. Nag's Head (2).

Inauspicious start for Green Fins project

Despite all the recent talk of large amounts of money being poured into making Phuket a more beautiful tourist destination, it seems that preserving the island's existing natural beauty gets overlooked by developers and politicians, such is their hurry to erect even bigger and better hotels and buildings.

This is often the cause of direct and indirect damage to the marine environment, and all in the name of tourism.

Fortunately (and this started before the tsunami), the United Nations, together with Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) and others, had developed a plan to protect the existing natural beauty of the reefs around Phuket, as well as other places in Southeast Asia.

One of the people driving

this initiative is one of Phuket's best-known coral experts, Nipphon Phongsuwan, a biologist who has worked at the PMBC for 20 years.

When K. Nipphon joined the PMBC, he studied the effect on the coral reefs of the mining industry and the sediment it created. Now, the threat to the reefs comes from tourism, over-development and the diving industry.

K. Nipphon is in charge of the Phuket chapter of the Green Fins program. Supported and funded by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), Green Fins is a new program being implemented

by the PMBC and the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources. The long-term plan is for Green Fins to become a worldwide project, but it is being launched in Thailand, Indonesia and The Philippines.

The Thailand efforts will begin in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi, and K. Nipphon has the arduous task of getting the dive shop operators to cooperate.

In December, the Dive Operators Club of Thailand (DOCT) hosted a presentation by K. Nipphon about Green Fins. Fewer than 20 dive operators showed up, and these included the usual environmentally-friendly dive operators, including Dive Master, Santana, Dive Asia, Ocean Rover-Fantasea Divers, Sea Bees, Genesis Liveaboards, Armin's Dive Team and Bubble Blue.

K. Nipphon said that, of the 60 or 70 dive shops he contacted, only around 10 replied. This is disconcerting, considering that the livelihoods of all dive operators depend on preserving the region's reefs.

According to its mission statement, the aim of Green Fins is "to protect and conserve coral reefs by implementing environmentally-friendly guidelines to promote a sustainable diving tourism industry", with tourists, guides and tour boat operators all being targeted.

This includes providing education about the environmental impacts of anchor damage, inadequate diving and snorkeling safety provisions, littering, and collection of reef organisms, including shells.

For starters, it's important to be clear about existing laws, regulations and national park boundaries. The Similan Islands and Surin Islands are both well-known as national parks. Many of the other dives sites fall under the classification of "dive sanctuaries".

This includes the popular local dive spot Koh Dorkmai, which is protected within a one-kilometer radius, and Koh Tachai, north of the Similans, which is protected up to 2km from its shore.

Surprisingly, Richelieu Rock, Thailand's most famous dive site for its whaleshark sightings, has a protection radius of only 500 meters.

Also protected are the reefs in Patong Bay.

It is illegal in Thailand to collect marine life or own coral. Collecting life in a marine sanctuary is punishable by six months in jail or a 10,000 baht fine, or both. Harming coral carries a fine of up to 40,000 baht or jail for up to four years, or both. This means that shell collecting in a national park or marine sanctuary is prohibited by law.

Carelessly dropping an an-



Nipphon Phongsuwan: Of the 60 or 70 dive shops he contacted, only around 10 replied.

chor in the wrong place and damaging coral is not only damaging to the reef but illegal. Of course, collecting giant clams or tritons, which are protected species, is prohibited anywhere in Thailand.

K. Nipphon said his first problem has been getting the dive shops to show an interest. Why is this? K. Nipphon says, "I think some shops believe that, because they already have their own standards, they don't need to become members of Green Fins."

But there are many reasons why a dive shop should become a member, not least that membership is free.

In addition, members get greater recognition, again free. The organization issues certificates of participation and levels of recognition, corresponding with mooring buoy programs and beach clean-ups.

There will be free sponsored advertising of the project through dive associations, and national and regional media cov-

erage, as well as international recognition and inter-governmental cooperation.

Because the project is funded by the UN, it will also be featured on the UNEP website. And if that is not enough, dive operators will receive UNEP support in establishing programs, such as Reef Check and mooring buoy placements.

K. Nipphon says his main job is to teach dive operators and staff about conservation, coral surveys and coral monitoring. "Ideally, I would like to train them in the field but it is hard to do. It is hard to get [many] shops to come together at one time for one or two days for Green Fins.

"If I set a date, they don't have time or they have a trip. I may have to change my strategy and do PowerPoint presentations. I am willing to do that for 70 dive shops."

In an effort to standardize the industry, Green Fins members will take part not only in reef assessments but also in self-assessments. These will include questions about joining in beach clean-ups as well as promoting a strict "no touch" policy for all reef diving and snorkeling.

K. Nipphon will assess dive operators twice a year, and these assessments will be available to customers.

Besides keeping busy with the Green Fins program, K. Nipphon still wants to receive more information about changes to the reefs, especially after the tsunami.

Anyone who sees something underwater that is troubling or that has changed should contact the PMBC at 076-391128. Anyone who wants to know more about Green Fins can contact K. Nipphon direct at Tel: 09-472-9863, or email him at: nipphonp@hotmail.com




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Foo (left) leads *La Samudra* (center) in Race 3 of the Phang Nga Bay Regatta. *Foo* won the race, but *La Samudra* took the Racing class trophy. Photo courtesy Artasia Press

Samudra wins Bay regatta

PHANG NGA BAY: David Lindal's *La Samudra* was too quick on the bay for Scott Duncanson's *Securicor Somtam Express*, winning the Racing class of the 8th QBE Insurance Phang Nga Bay Regatta 2005, held between February 9 and 13.

The four-day event attracted a fleet of 27 yachts and 179 sailors, and raised more than 268,000 baht for tsunami victims.

Regatta President Andrew Craig was happy with the turnout. "Bigger sponsors and more elegant parties this year have really complemented our regatta, which is unique due to its destinations and relaxed attitude," he said.

La Samudra was one of

eight yachts in the Racing class, including two Phuket 8s, the Farr 43 *Switchblade* and *Foo*, a Beneau First 51.

However, it was *La Samudra* that stole the show, and the silverware, with two wins, a second and a third, beating nearest rival *Somtani Express*, which recorded two seconds and a first. Mike Downard and his crew on *Switchblade* came third.

Other results: Cruising A: 1. *Simba*; 2. *Minx*; 3. *Remington*.

Cruising B: 1. *Blue Jay*; 2. *Aquavit III*; 3. *Kay Sira*.

Multihull: 1. *Summersalt*; 2. *Mumbo Jumbo*; 3. *No Fixed Address*.

Champions honors: 1. *Sunshine*; 2. *Eden I*.

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It's that time again. The 2005 Grand Prix season is about to start. Seven-time Formula 1 drivers' championship winner Michael Schumacher has privately confessed that he wants to win 100 Grands Prix and 10 titles. That he is capable of this is indisputable, but he will not have it all his own way this year.

New regulations, new driver pairings and even a couple of new – well, transformed – teams will change the entire top echelon of motor racing.

Regulation changes include a limit on the number of sets of tires a driver can use during a race weekend, which will inevitably lead to more off-course excursions late in the race; a driver who can conserve his tires for the race distance will be in a strong position come the checkered flag.

Secondly, engines will now have to last for two race weekends, or around 1,500 kilometers. Designed to reduce costs as well as limit advances in the speeds of the cars, the engine rule will reduce running on Fridays, to the detriment of any spectators that may be at the circuit, but it may also mix the grid up a little should a driver have to make an engine change; the rules state that he would go back 10 places from his qualifying position.

Other changes include raising the front wing and moving the rear wing forward slightly, both in an effort to slow the cars down.

Ferrari will start the season with a modified version of its championship-winning 2004 car, before introducing the new car at the fifth race of the year. The 2005 contender will be the last Formula 1 car to be designed by South African Rory Byrne before he supposedly retires after 10 years at the helm of Ferrari's de-



Can they do it again? Test driver Luca Badoer puts one of the Ferraris through its paces at Vallelunga, Rome.

Schumi zoomy again – or not?

sign shop ('supposedly' because friends have told the *Gazette* they don't believe it).

At McLaren, Kimi Raikkonen is joined by Colombian Juan Pablo Montoya, winner of the final Grand Prix of 2004. The two are reckoned to be one of the strongest pairings in the business, but it is likely they will take points off each other, which will play directly into Michael Schumacher's hands.

Williams has two new drivers for 2005: Australian Mark Webber and Germany's Nick Heidfeld. Not surprisingly, Heidfeld was engine supplier BMW's choice, while Webber joined from the now-defunct Jaguar team.

Jaguar has been sold to the Red Bull concern (a Thai connection there) of Austrian Dieter Mateschitz and has thrown a lifeline to out-of-work McLaren driver David Coulthard. At the time of writing the second seat at Red Bull was a toss-up between F3000 champion Tonio Lizuzzi and former Jaguar pilot Christian Klein.

Toyota has a new driver line-up in Ralf Schumacher and Jarno Trulli, both of whom are proven race winners, but whether the new car – the first designed in its entirety by Mike Gascoyne – will be up to it is another question. The team has something to prove after three under-performing seasons in Formula 1, and a podium or two is essential if the Japanese bean counters are to continue funding the outfit.

Japanese rival Honda has bought 45% of BAR and, for reasons best known to itself, has let David Richards go. It was Richards who pulled the team into shape – particularly last year when Jenson Button achieved so much – so how BAR will perform in 2005 is open to question. Button is joined, once again, by rapid Japanese Takuma Sato.

Renault starts the year strongly with Spaniard Fernando Alonso and a returning Giancarlo Fisichella, while 1997 world champion Jacques Villeneuve, who drove three races for Renault at the end of last season, joins Sauber alongside Felipe Massa.

The exciting news in January was that Russian conglomerate Midland Group, 50% owned by Canadian citizen Alex Schnaider, will take over Eddie Jordan's eponymous team. With Toyota engines and no shortage

of cash, 2005 could see the resurgence of Jordan, although its choice of drivers is a little dubious.

Indian Narain Karthikeyan, who is renowned for being fast but a little erratic, is the number one choice, with the second seat going to Portugal's Tiago Monteiro: two drivers with not an ounce of F1 experience. Tough on any team, let alone a fledgling one like Midland-Jordan.

And what of the 10th team, the perennially underfunded Minardi? They start 2005 with as little budget as in previous years. With aging Cosworth engines, an outdated chassis – al-

though the team claims it will introduce radical aerodynamics by the time the F1 circus gets to Europe in April – and no-hopers behind the wheel, it is perhaps time for the tiny Anglo-Italian team

to call it a day, or at least drop down to a lesser formula where it might stand some chance of success.

The first race – there are 19 this year, with a new venue in Turkey in August – is in Melbourne on March 6, with Malaysia two weeks later. China is the final race of a long, long season, on October 16. Happy viewing.

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



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Construction Update

by Anongnat Sartpisut

Around 300 million baht is being invested in an 82-condominium development on seven rai with a view over Cape Panwa.

The development is called Bel Air Panwa. Dr Johan Marcks, Director of joint venture partner Mystasia (Thailand), said, "We chose the name Bel Air because of the high profile of Bel Air in the US. It also suggests class and high standards, and that's what we intend to offer at Cape Panwa."

Bel Air Panwa is a joint venture between the Australia-based Watson Property Group and Mystasia. The contractor is SCT Building.

Builders went on-site in April 2004 and the development should be completed by August 2006.

Three of the buildings will be of five stories each. Two of these – Saiburi and Kraburi – offering a total of 27 units ranging from 105 square meters to 210sqm, and priced between 5.2 million and 12.5 million baht.

"Longlom", also five-stories, will have 31 units of between 115sqm and 208sqm, and priced at 5.5 to 8.7 million baht.

There will be 24 apartments in the three-story Khirirat and Tapi blocks. Each apartment will be 105sqm and will be priced at 3.9 million baht. These apartments will have a view of the pool rather than the sea.

Echo of California dreaming



Artist's impression of the Bel Air Panwa development, with one of the pools in the foreground.

There are three types of unit on offer – one with two bedrooms and two bathrooms, one with three bedrooms and three bathrooms, and penthouses with three bedrooms and three bathrooms. It will also be possible to buy two units to combine into one larger apartment.

The condominiums are designed to offer modernity – simple lines and clean colors – and more traditionally Thai elements, such as dark parquet flooring.

The company is looking to sell units mainly to foreigners, especially in Australia, Europe

and Asia. But, said David Petrus of Watson Property Group, "We have had Thais interested in buying, too. We think 60% of our potential purchasers want to have a condominium as a holiday home, and 40% are looking for a place to live."

He added, "There are two

reasons why customers will want to buy here. The first is location, the second is price."

He continued, "Our units have a nice view and are furnished to a high standard, yet the price is low, especially when compared with similar projects in similar locations."

The concrete condominium buildings will be damp-proofed. The apartments will feature marble flooring in the living, kitchen and dining rooms, and wood mosaic parquet in the bedrooms. All will have ADSL Internet access and UBC as standard.

The complex will have two large swimming pools, a Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, games room and fitness room, along with a reception, mini-market and 24-hour security.

The electricity and telephone cables will be underground, and while the complex will be attached to the mains water supply, there will also be a reserve tank holding a four-day water supply.

More information is available from Bel Air Panwa at Tel: 076-282404 or Fax: 076-282405, Email: info@belairpanwa.com or Website: www.belairpanwa.com

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Home of the Week

Kata

Ocean views – and freehold, too



Come on in – the water's lovely. The huge pool is one attraction of the condo.

A two-bedroom luxury condominium in Kata with sunset ocean views and ultra-modern decor has come onto the market.

The bedrooms are spacious, with built-in wardrobes and timber furniture, and well-appointed bathrooms, one of which has a Jacuzzi.

The living and dining areas are open-plan and lead onto a balcony with sunset views over the Andaman Sea.

The state-of-the art kitchen has wooden kitchen cabinets with black granite worktops and a breakfast bar, and is equipped with stainless-steel appliances and a double-door fridge/freezer.



The condo building breaks away from the all-too-common pointy-roof architectural style.

Rooms are air-conditioned, but there are also ceiling fans. The condominium also has a roof terrace.

Altogether, the condominium, which is new, offers 210 square meters of living space in a well-designed and well-constructed building.

The complex itself offers club facilities, including a gym

with spa and sauna and a large swimming pool.

Units are served by three-phase electricity, hot water, UBC TV and a land-line Internet connection. There is also mains water.

The land title is foreign freehold "Condominium" and the asking price is 13.9 million baht.

Contact: Richard Lusted, Siam Real Estate, Tel: 076-280805, website: www.siamrealestate.com email: info@siamrealestate.com

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Graham Doven

Arthur Owen bought a property in Phuket last October. He and his friend Peter, who also bought a property the same day, arrived on a particular Saturday that most people on the island will remember as having one of the most consistent, heavy rain-falls in recent memory.

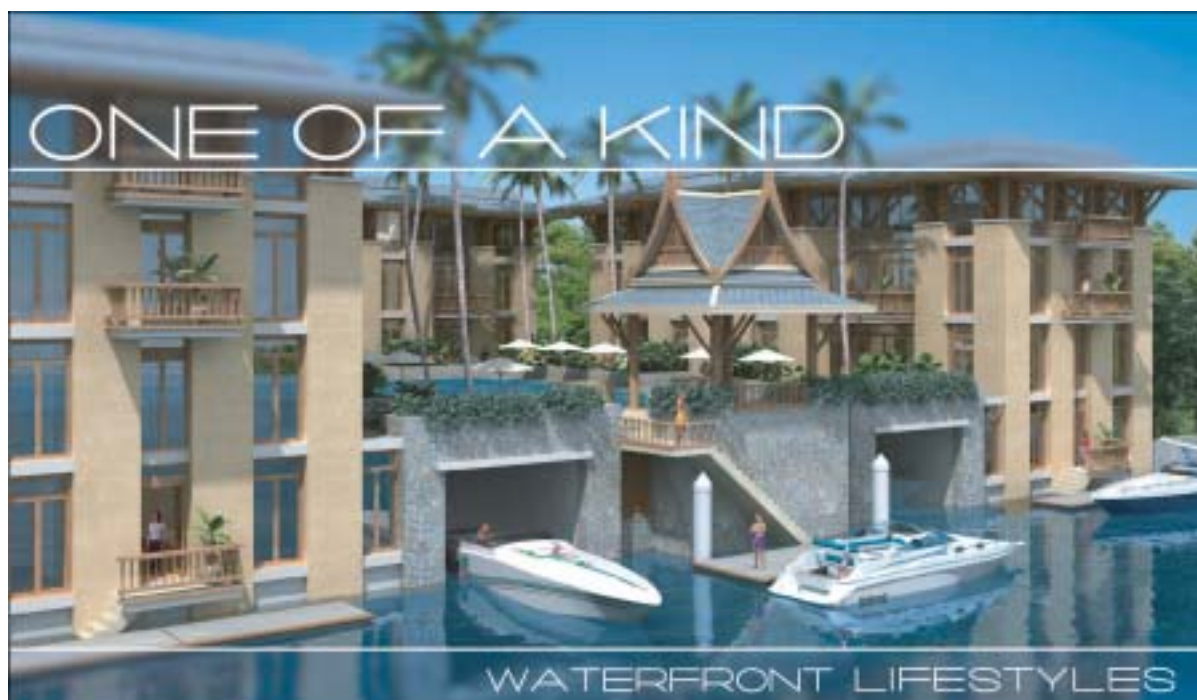
My friend Martin remembers it well because his office on the oceanfront was attacked from the rear by avalanches of mud and debris caused by the torrential rain. That was about two months before his office was once again devastated, but this time from the front by the tsunami.

Anyway, on that day in October, Arthur, Peter and myself drove around in the rain. Arthur and Peter, having decided that they liked the project, went back to my office, which by this time had a foot of water covering the road outside.

We proceeded with the deal, which included plodding through the water to the ATM for the deposits and back again. The deposits weren't needed at that particular time, but they insisted. I remember one of them saying, "Oh well, if I still like it now, it can only get better."

However, Arthur recently said, "That comment seems almost ironic after what has happened, but I don't regret investing in Phuket, and I am hoping to get some other friends to join me."

Arthur has worked in in-



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Arthur Owen says he hasn't lost any sleep over his investment.

Why Arthur isn't worried

vestment management throughout the world, including in Hong Kong for seven years, as well as in Singapore, Australia, Europe and Africa. He is based in Cape Town, has a home in France and travels extensively.

He recently returned to

Phuket to see for himself how extensive the damage from the tsunami had been. "It's much more a human tragedy than an investment problem. There is a perception around the world that Phuket has a bigger investment problem than is the case. We have

to put it in proper perspective," he said.

"The problem was that the [extent of damage] in Phuket was distorted by the international television media to sell their stories. There was no perceived difference between Phuket and Aceh. This is only just starting to come out now.

"Perceptions are important, so we have to do whatever we can to allay the belief that there is a problem [with investing here]. It's not a fundamental problem. I haven't lost a night's sleep over my investment here.

"Of course, some people are more difficult to convince, such as the people who are concerned about ghosts, or people who are afraid of the ocean," he added.

Arthur cited an example of the effect such perceptions can have. "The effect was felt not only here in Phuket and in Asia. A friend of mine was seriously thinking about canceling her holiday in a beach cottage at Noosa Heads in Queensland, Australia. She was worried that she would not be able to relax while her young sons were playing on the beach."

Memories fade, though, and there is no reason not to be enthusiastic about Phuket's future, both in investment and tourism. With a bit of luck we might even get bigger-spending tourists coming, as some of our previous visitors are well-known for both their superstitions regarding ghosts and their aversion to spending money. Happy New Year anyway.

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Once had a friend who was a dwarf. He didn't live in an enchanted house in the middle of the forest with a gorgeous nubile girl, or have six other friends who were equally lacking in stature. Neither did he burst into song at the drop of a hat, with his mining pick perched on his shoulder.

No, he was just short. Extremely short. Steve was probably the tiniest person I've ever known, and what's more he didn't care. He was always first in the queue at the Snow White pantomime auditions (seriously!); he was even involved in the British tradition of dwarf-tossing on several occasions, despite that this pastime appears to have been banned by the French.

He had no qualms in choosing the vocabulary he used to describe himself. He wasn't "vertically challenged", or "physically disabled". He certainly wasn't "special" and would have headbutted, in the most sensitive area of the body, anyone who used that word to describe him. He was proud to call himself a dwarf.

Beautifully challenged

So why is it that the rest of the politically-correct world feels it has to take it upon itself to vanquish any word of this ilk from the English language? As this is, after all, a gardening column, I feel that it's important to call a spade a spade. Sorry, but I do.

And speaking of gardening, it's probably about time I got to the point: the dwarf white bauhinia, or *kaa-long* in Thai. This is another of those plants that's just about everywhere in Phuket, but is innocuous enough to sit in the background and mind its own business.

It's part of a much bigger group – the orchid tree family. It's most famous relative elsewhere is probably the Hong Kong orchid tree, which bears the flower that is on the Hong Kong flag. This is a striking group of trees, with colorful flowers vivid enough to be used in making natural dyes.



The small flowers of the dwarf white bauhinia can sometimes look like snowflakes sitting on the branch of a tree.

Photo courtesy of TopTropicals.com

There are more than 300 species in the group, and some of them could be mistaken for orchids, although not this one, which doesn't show off in the way that its cousins do.

The dwarf white bauhinia is originally from just south of the border, in Malaysia. However, it's well suited to the Thai climate, and has become well-established here, too. It's even been adopted by the southern coastal province of Satun as the provincial flower.

This is a perfect little tree for places where you don't want anything wild to take over. It will grow no more than two or three

meters, and won't take up much space or get in anyone's way. It really is quite inoffensive.

This unassuming plant produces fairly small, white flowers that look vaguely like snowflakes hanging on the branches, and it is sometimes called the snowy orchid tree. The leaves are easy to spot too, as they have a twin-lobed shape, a bit like an ox hoof.

The *bauhinia acuminata*, as those lovers of Latin like to call it, grows enthusiastically in full sun or in partial shade. It can grow in most well-drained, moist soils. Even sandy soils are fine, but give it plenty of water. With the right conditions, it will

flower almost continually – it doesn't seem to get bored in this regard.

The little tree will develop several trunks over time, and has to be trained to grow from a single trunk if that's what you want. Personally I prefer the natural look – let it decide for itself what shape it wants to develop. The branches will naturally droop a bit as the tree grows, so will need a little pruning to keep it strong.

Officially, this pruning should be done only after the blooms disappear, but given the fact that in Thailand they never do, it's difficult to know exactly when is best. The best advice I can give is to prune after your second beer – not too many to affect your judgement, but enough to gather a little enthusiasm for the task.

Bear in mind that this tree is a dwarf at the end of the day, so will never actually reach the dizzying heights of some of its taller relatives. Like many of its human counterparts, it's probably quite happy that it's a dwarf. This one's a bit more difficult to toss, though.

Want to know more about a plant in your garden?

Email Bloomin' Bert at: bloominbert@hotmail.com



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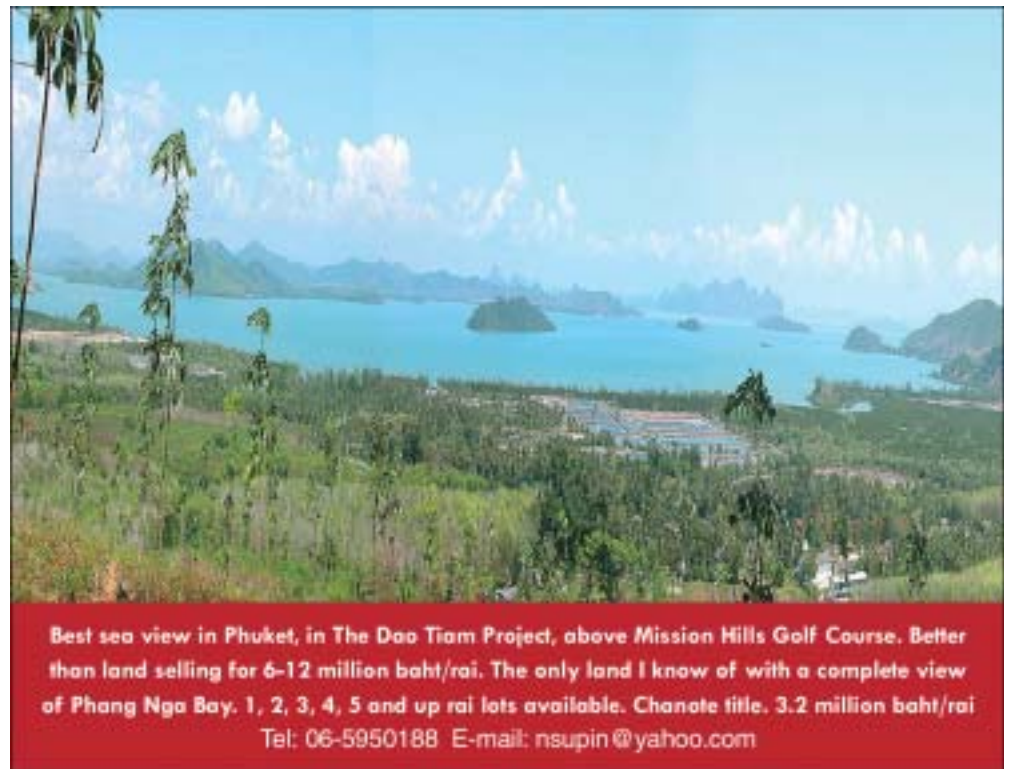
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appliances. Half price refrigerator, chest deep-freezer, twin-tub washer, 4 beds, 2 cabinets, teak sideboard, kitchen utensils and equipment. Quality polished teak grating settee, 2 armchairs, coffee table, cushions: 60,000 baht. Unpolished teak table, 4 chairs: 10,000 baht. Available at GM Storage, near Wat Chalong. Tel: 01-812-4800, 06-2818876. Email: brgonc9@supanet.com

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The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd
367/2 Yaowarat Road, Phuket City
Tel: 076-236555 Fax: 076-213971

Would you like to keep up on what's happening in Phuket - the good, the bad and the bizarre?
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TO: The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd, 367/2 Yaowarat Road, Amphur Muang, Phuket 83000, Thailand.

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Island Job Mart

Thaisarco

Thailand Smelting and Refining Co., Ltd. (Thaisarco) located at Cape Panwa in Phuket, is a combined tin smelter and value-added manufacturer of tin products for both the domestic and export markets. Thaisarco has been producing 99.9% pure tin and tin-associated products for almost 40 years with a turnover in excess of 6 billion baht per year. The company is now looking to recruit two qualified, experienced and highly-motivated individuals to join our team in the following positions:

Senior IT Coordinator 1 Position

We are looking to fill the position of Senior IT Coordinator. The work will involve running the day-to-day operations of the IT department. In addition, the successful candidate will be responsible for project managing the implementation of a new company-wide computer systems.

General Qualifications:

- Thai nationality, male or female, aged between 27 and 40 with a bachelor's degree.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Strong technical ability in both stand-alone computers and computer networks.
- Good command of spoken and written English.

Specific Qualifications:

- A graduate in computer sciences or related field with minimum GPA 2.75.
- A minimum 5 years' experience in a technical field.
- Experienced in project managing and implementation a company-wide computer system.
- Strong management and leadership skills.

Human Resources Officer 1 Position

We are looking to fill the position of Human Resources Officer. The work will involve the day-to-day organization of human resources functions and assistance in the management of the department.

General Qualifications:

- Thai nationality, male or female, aged between 25 and 30 with a bachelor's degree.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- A good command of spoken and written English.
- Good computer skills.

Specific Qualifications:

- Graduate in human resource/political science or related field with minimum GPA 2.50.
- Minimum 3 years' work experience in a human resources department.
- Some knowledge of Thai labor laws and social security requirements would be an advantage.

Interested persons should send an application letter and current CV providing details qualifications and work experience. Applicants should also include details of their current salary and welfare benefits and expected salary. The application should be accompanied by a recent photograph and sent by post or e-mail to:

Finance and Administration Department (Recruitment)
Thailand Smelting and Refining Co., Ltd.
PO Box 2, Muang, Phuket, 83000. e-mail: hrdepartment@thaisarco.com
Closing date for applications is 20th February 2005.

The Phuket Gazette

The Phuket Gazette seeks to fill the following positions:

I. IT TECHNICAL SUPPORT OFFICER

Responsibilities: The Technical Support officer will focus, at least initially, on hardware and system maintenance, and networking issues (TCP/IP, LAN).

- ▶ Male or female, Thai nationality
- ▶ Diploma or degree in computers or a related field
- ▶ At least 2 years' experience in networking and hardware maintenance
- ▶ Good interpersonal skills
- ▶ Good command of spoken English would be an advantage

II. 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, and a keen interest in sports. Also essential are the ability to communicate in English, both spoken and written, and a car drivers license.

Qualified candidates are invited to send a CV to Passara Kaewbumroong, Human Resources, by email, fax or post to:

The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd
367/2 Yaowarat Rd, T. Taladyai, A. Muang, Phuket 83000
Fax: 076 213971 Email: mem@phuketgazette.net

TEACHER WANTED

Language school in Krabi needs Thai national to teach English. Must have BA (any), teaching experience preferred. Good salary and holidays. Tel: 06-2683053. Email: krabi.ls@gmail.com

DESIGNER WANTED

Computer-design artwork. Salary + commission. Also, Thai teacher wanted to teach Thai & English. Fluent English. Pls call ILC for more info. Tel: 076-280968, 01-4763242.

ESTATE

Administration Manager is immediately required for a 5-star villa estate in Surin Beach. Must speak and write English fluently, and have experience working with foreigners. This position requires strong organizational, bookkeeping and computer skills. Any experience with QuickBooks accounting software would be a definite advantage. Tel: 076-325759, 06-2934264. Fax: 076-325760.

STAFF WANTED

Thai female staff wanted for established bakery/restaurant on Samui. Should be under age 30, clean and presentable. English and experience an asset but not necessary. Good salary plus tips. Accommodation provided. A good opportunity for the right people to learn the baking trade. Tel: 077-427396, 01-9794577. Fax: 077-427575. Email: angela@angelasbakery.com

The Racha

In the aftermath of the tragic events of 26 December 2004, the team of The Racha remains committed more than ever to create Thailand's premier deluxe island hideaway, where people can balance body, mind and spirit in an environmentally-friendly space.

We are now looking for enthusiastic and passionate individuals to join the team for our deluxe 69-villa resort and to help us re-construct and re-open The Racha within the next months.

Executive Assistant Manager (Thai or expatriate)	English Teacher (Native speaker, B 35,000 up)
Sales & Marketing Manager	Financial Controller (Thai, B 60,000 up)
(Thai or expatriate B 40,000 up)	Front Office Manager (Thai, B 40,000 up)
Reservation Manager (Thai, B 25,000 up)	Chief Steward (Thai, B 15,000 up)

You will be a part of our team of like-minded colleagues sharing the same passion for true hospitality. The Racha, managed by Sanctuary Resorts, aims to be one of the premier resorts in South East Asia.

We provide a full training program and a competitive remuneration package.

Please submit your letter of application together with your CV and a recent photograph to:

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General Manager
gm@theracha.com
42/12-13 Moo 5, Rawai, Muang, Phuket 83130
Phone 0 76 355 414 Fax 0 76 355 637
www.theracha.com, www.sanctuaryresorts.com

Important Notice: Please send us your application again even if you have already applied recently for any of the advertised jobs. Most of our files were lost or destroyed in the Tsunami disaster and could not be recovered.

MANGOSTEEN RESTAURANT

The Mangosteen Resort & Spa, the 5-star boutique retreat in the South of Phuket, offers an opportunity for a top Chef de Cuisine: "Mediterranean Delights with Asian tastes" and classical Thai food. Our restaurant has built up a great reputation during its first two years of operation. The Mangosteen now needs a chef who makes every dish an experience for its guests. Creativity, consistency and a motivated team will be the keys to success. Foreign or Thai nationals welcome. Tel: 076-289399. Fax: 076-289389. Email: hajo@mangosteen-phuket.com For further details, see our website at: www.mangosteen-phuket.com

CHEF/RESTAURANT

owner. We are currently renovating a 40-seat restaurant and bar in Patong. We are looking for a chef (Thai or expatriate), who at the same time will be responsible for the whole business, either as employee or business owner. Must have experience in both Thai and European food, and must speak good English. With a quick solution you can influence the renovation. Work permit can be arranged. Email: jsmithy2005@yahoo.com

REAL JOB IN EUROPE

British manager of Black Sea Coast property & publishing company wants to employ a Thai person for many different jobs. Visa will be arranged for 3 months – if happy, extended. Pay is 200 euros plus expenses all paid. Accommodation arranged. Meeting in Thailand. Ed Vaan. Please contact by email to: champagne@worldemail.com

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ONLINE CLIENT

contact/sales. Sailing company requires a person with very good English comprehension, basic computer skills and an out-going personality to work as our initial client contact in our Phuket City office. Advantages: car licence and enjoyment of the outdoors. Starting salary: 10-20,000 baht/month. Send CV to apply. Tel: 076-232-960, 01-8919653. Fax: 076-232961. Email: rob@sailing-thailand.com

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hostess. Leading dive company is looking for a hostess to work on board a 100ft live-aboard vessel. Serious & experienced applicants please phone for an appointment. Tel: 076-281388, 01-8913051.

CRUISE DIRECTOR

Indonesia. Experienced, English-speaking Cruise Director wanted for luxury live-aboard in Indonesia, with preferably with captain's licence. Send CV and photo by email to: cdindonesia@hotmail.com

COOK NEEDED

for new bar and restaurant in Nai Harn. Must be able to cook Thai and international food. Tel: 076-288676, 01-8939471. Email: sihilton@hotmail.com

MEDIA SALES REPS

wanted. Positions available in Phuket and Samui. Thai nationals only. Must be fluent in English. Good basic + commissions. Pls contact for more info. Tel: 02-6150525, 01-5357944. Fax: 02-6150225. Email: terry@csloxinfo.com

NANNY NEEDED

to take care of two 2½-year-old children five days a week. Must speak very good English and must have car. Good salary. Please ring Jack at Tel: 09-7480782 or Steve at Tel: 01-6546100.

NEEDED URGENTLY

Maid & cook. Please call for more information. Tel: 076-273427, 01-8295388.

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Need experienced sales representatives for the high season at a Gold Crown resort in Samui. We have financing available and pay all commissions within two weeks on full down financed deals. Limited amount of slots open. Pls contact for more info. Tel: 077-413844. Email: fred@samuiopeninsulareort.com

Island Job Mart

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Qualifications:

- Age 23 years plus, male or female
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works.com(international) Co., Ltd.
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Cherngtalay Thalang Phuket 83110
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Email: sales@works-international.com

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EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Andaman Prestige, a residential property developer based in Surin, requires an Executive Assistant to report to the Managing Director. We are looking for a dynamic and hard-working individual with the following qualifications.

- Thai female or male aged 23 years or above
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent
- Fluent in spoken and written English
- Excellent interpersonal and multi-tasking skills
- Excellent computer knowledge including MS Office and Internet
- Familiarity with basic accounting principles
- Driving license

The successful applicant will receive a generous compensation package which includes a performance bonus. Interested candidates may apply by submitting a full resumé and recent photos to:

Andaman Prestige Co., Ltd.
326 Prabamee Road, Patong, Phuket, 83150.
Tel: 076-345211 Email: info@surinheights.com

SALES, MARKETING NEWSPAPER

Newspaperdirect distributes daily newspapers from 50 countries to hotels, restaurants, expats etc. We need a sales manager, to be responsible for selling advertisements in the newspapers. Good spoken English, good computer skills, Photoshop, Word, Excel. Outgoing personality. Good salary for right person. Call our Patong office and ask for Mr Lenny. Tel: 076-346218, 09-8093566. Fax: 076-346232. Email info@newspaperdirect-phuket.com

RECEPTIONIST/SALES

Urgently looking for 2 female Thai nationals to work as cyber cafe receptionists/tour sales on Koh Samui. Positions include accommodation. Applicants must speak basic English. Please contact to apply or for more information. Tel: 077-413884, 01-5357768. Email: yaaryron@hotmail.com

STAFF WANTED

We need: Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, German, English salespersons, and English-speaking Thai staff: Receptionist, Accounts staff, Waitress. Pls contact for more info. Tel: 076-285278, 06-2705064. Fax: 076-285-277. Email: mzm@email.com or see our website at: www.team4you2.com

SALES & MARKETING

Assistant for real estate company in Patong. Thai national. Good written and spoken English. Good interpersonal skills. Computer knowledge: MS Office and Internet. Reliable and enthusiastic. Pls contact for more info. Tel: 076-340792, 07-8822856. Email: info@phuket-tropical-realestate.com

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Like new, computerized bike. Has screen to track pulse, time, dist, calories, speed. Paid 7,600 baht, sell 4,500 baht. Used only once; smooth and quiet. Tel: 076-411963.

AIRCON FOR SALE

Samsung air-conditioning unit, 10 years old, with remote. 12,000 baht. Tel: 07-2680110. Email: police1@phuketinternet.co.th

WATER TANK

3,000-liter water tank for sale at 6,000 baht. Tel: 09-8661009. Email: sveisko@ksc.th.com

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Mostly used for Web design. 1.5-year-old import from England. Please call between 6 pm and 9 pm. Tel: 01-891-4274.

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CHEAP BICYCLE

for sale. Anyone want to buy a cheap mountain bike? 18 gears. Not sure what make, probably one of Tesco's. 1,400 baht. Tel: 06-742 1780. Email: graham@primerocomputers.com

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player. Muvo TX FM. 512 MB. FM radio. MP3 player. USB memory stick. Install CD. Earphones. Neck strap. Brand new. Tiny size. Not a scratch on it. Not what I wanted after all. 4,000 baht. Tel: 01-9783089. Email: krsowton@loxinfo.co.th

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Tout, Trader & Trumpet

Bulletins

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is holding meetings in English at the following places:

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Mission Hospital
on Wed and Sun at 7 pm

Bangkok Phuket Hospital
on Fri at 7 pm

Patong
Patong Hospital
on Mon, Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun at 7 pm and on Fri at 8 pm

For more info, please call
01 895 4763 and 01 891 2895.

NEED A VOLUNTEER?

House builder from the UK would like to contact people and/or companies that want help with rebuilding, etc., in Phuket. Will be visiting in Feb-Mar, maybe with another builder. Grateful for any info. Tel: 441-452538334. Email: dr005a9452@blueyonder.co.uk

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GUARDIAN ALARMS HAVE MOVED

Please note that we have now moved to the Plaza-Del-Mar located at the entrance to the Laguna Hotel complex. We have also a new shop located at The Plaza Chalong. This is on the Jetty road from Chalong roundabout. Our telephone numbers will remain the same. Please call for all your security needs Tel: 076-383277, 01-8954480. Fax: 076-381225. Email: Guardian@loxinfo.co.th

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Personals

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Dutch yacht owner looking for long-term relationship with attractive English-speaking 25-40-year-old Thai lady. Carpe diem! Reply with photo. Email: fjitomed@yahoo.com.sg

HANDSOME FRENCH

man. 46 years old, single, looking for very cute and educated Thai lady about 30 years old, without kids, for serious relationship. Pls contact by email. Email: grangeaulnaies@wanadoo.fr

AMERICAN SEEKING

Thai lady. Divorced 62-year-old teacher from Las Vegas is looking for a Thai lady (25-45) for friendship or marriage. I'm flying to Phuket in March. Email me, please! Email: dj89052@aol.com

BACKGAMMON

Retired businessman looking for backgammon players on Phuket Island. Please call if interested. Tel: 076-386-113, 01-5778443.

EDUCATED GUY

Wishes to meet smart, warm Thai beauty who looks for charming friend or life partner. I am also considerate, sincere, caring and like a good home. Please contact for more information. Email: henry_harjus@yahoo.com

Looking for a love?
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9 pm, WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH
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OR K. PAM AT THE GAZETTE (076-236555).

FURTHER DETAILS ON PAGE 12, THIS ISSUE OF THE PHUKET GAZETTE.

Find more Classifieds at www.phuketgazette.net/

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CAR FOR SALE

Honda CRV, year 1997, automatic, 2,000cc, 95,000km. Price 580,000 baht. Tel: 09-2909567.

2003 HONDA CRV

Metallic gold, looks as new. Still under Honda warranty (16 months old). Full extras, leather interior, full insurance, service history, rear seats still with plastic covers as delivered. Immaculate condition, less than 11,000km. Selling because we don't use it. Only 890,000 baht ono. Tel: 06-7421780. Email: graham@primerocomputers.com

2002 TOYOTA

Camry. 2.4Q (top model), dark blue exterior, tan leather, 4 airbags, 40,000km, expat owner, good condition. 890,000 baht. Car is in Bangkok. Tel: 09-0597625. Email: kfarang@yahoo.com

Do Not Drink Tap Water!

TOYOTA COROLLA

1996. 1300cc. Good condition, about 100,000km. Only 200,000 baht. Tel: 01-705-7356. Email: yuvanart@hotmail.com

Pickups

ISUZU D-MAX

Privately owned 2002 D-Max. Only 28,000km, gold color, good condition vehicle, 550,000 baht. Tel: 076-286476-80, 09-218-0854.

TOYOTA HILUX TIGER
 SR5 3.0 EFI, 2001, 55,000 km. Full options: hard top, CD player, 5 all-road tires, long-distance night projectors, powerful horn, insect protection and more. For sale direct from European owner. Very good condition. 495,000 baht. Tel: 09-6456489. Fax: 076-260152. Email: mrdupouy@yahoo.fr

NISSAN FRONTIER

2003. Full options, for sale by original farang owner. Perfect condition, must see to appreciate. Diesel 3.0/Cab. No accidents. Fiber utility box, roof rack, running boards, bug protector/weather guards, liner, central locking (remote), etc. Regular maintenance, mostly highway driven. Still under warranty. 420,000 baht. Pls contact for more info. Tel: 038-773388, 01-4800813. Fax: 038-645472. Email: dustbox32@hotmail.com

ISUZU 4-CAB PICKUP

4-door pickup with hard top on the back. 3 years old, silver-gray, mag wheels, electric windows and mirrors, central locking, 2-wheel drive, manual gears, one owner, no accidents. 3-liter turbo diesel (120 hp). Drives like a dream. 485,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-296563, 09-8715642. Email: termalou@loxinfo.co.th

4 x 4s

NISSAN 4X4 TD

Special edition. 3 years old, 22,500km, leather seats, 2.5L turbo diesel. 600,000 baht. Contact for more information. Tel: 01-8942406. Email: work@umi.in.th

JEEP CHEROKEE

Automatic, ABS, cruise control, 2 airbags, onboard computer, leather seats, excellent condition, full service history. Private sale at 650,000 baht ono. Tel: 076-345617, 09-8674277. Fax: 076-345617. Email: erikdidy@hotmail.com

SUZUKI JEEP

Red Caribbean for sale. Good condition. Price: 120,000 baht. Pls call for more info. Tel: 01-8915474.

Motorbikes

1996 CBR 900RR

Well-maintained and in perfect mechanical condition. New tires and brakes. 160,000 baht. Please contact for more information or to arrange viewing. Tel: 076-236306. Email: justaskdan@excite.com

MOTORBIKE (CHEAP)

1996 Suzuki Viva. Similar to Wave/Dream. It's a well-taken-care-of, very reliable bike. New tires, shocks, etc. Regularly maintained. Green book and current tags. Kick starter. 10,000 baht or nearest offer (already have plenty of offers for 8,000). Email for photo. Please contact for more info. Tel: 01-8946353. Email: sylvie_yaffe@yahoo.com

HONDA PHANTOM

Very good condition, only 1 year old. Hardly used. Asking price: 55,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 09-9701797, 01-090-3730. Email: rogerkamala@hotmail.com

HONDA VFR 400

(nc30) in good condition. Full documentation. Yellow and black. Excellent power. 50,000 baht. Tel: 076-273-121, 01-8937290. Email: nod_nathaphong@hotmail.com

HONDA NSR 250

2-stroke, excellent condition. Asking 49,000 baht. Contact Roger. Tel: 06-0453139. Email: roth_61@hotmail.com

HONDA DREAM

100cc. Black, electric starter, 6 years old but in very good condition. Good looking and good running; 23,441km; new brakes, tires, battery, basket, etc. Have green book in my name, tax and insurance paid. 14,500 baht. Tel: 01-8924282. Email: taxiregio@freenet.de

PHANTOM & WAVE:

sale or rent. Honda Phantom 200cc and Honda Wave S 125cc for sale or long-term rental on monthly basis. Well-maintained, disc brakes, fully taxed and insured. Reasonable offers secure. Call now for full details. Tel: 09-5914965. Email: j1mes@yahoo.com

CLASSIC BIKE

Honda CB 500 T Nidek 1976 original, driveable. Tel: 076-340688, 09-8686836.

HONDA 125 WAVE

Electric starter, 25,000km, serviced by Honda dealer approx every 2,000km, hence excellent condition. Never rented. Digital speedo, alloy rims and quality tires. Available end of February. Genuine owner. 30,000 baht. Email: theglobalsoul@hotmail.com

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Daihatsu Mira, good condition and easy to drive. For rent at only 9,900 b/month or 3,500 b/week. Tel: 01-5371050.

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10,900 baht. Suzuki Jeep, power steering, with insurance. For rent at 10,900 baht/month or 3,900 baht/week. Tel: 01-5371050.

NEW VIOS FOR RENT

Full-options Vios (5 months old) for rent at 18,000 baht/month. Contact Pui. Tel: 01-8226570. Email: pui@pjp-intertrade.com

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FOR RENT

Black Honda Civic VTEC. Leather interior, 6-CD player, 2 years old. 21,000 baht per month. Please call Tel: 09-9708281 for more information.

Wanted

4-DOOR PICKUP

wanted. I need a 4-door pickup. Price around 300,000 baht. Not older than 5 years. Tel: 01-8918689. Email: villathani@hotmail.com

WANTED: KAWASAKI

Z 1000. Age does not matter. Running bike preferred. Mail with photo would be nice, but I am mobile so I can come and have a look. Tel: 01-8942406. Email: work@umi.in.th

CASH FOR 4X4

Looking for a 4x4-pickup, preferably a 2-door cab + half. Should be less than 4 years old and have less than 100,000 km on the clock. Others considered for quick cash deal. Please contact us with full details. Tel: 077-238702, 09-9088330. Email: barebater@hotmail.com

PICKUP WANTED

Year 2000-2003, 4-door, no accidents, perfect condition. Please send details by email. Email: alex@bbc-dive.ru

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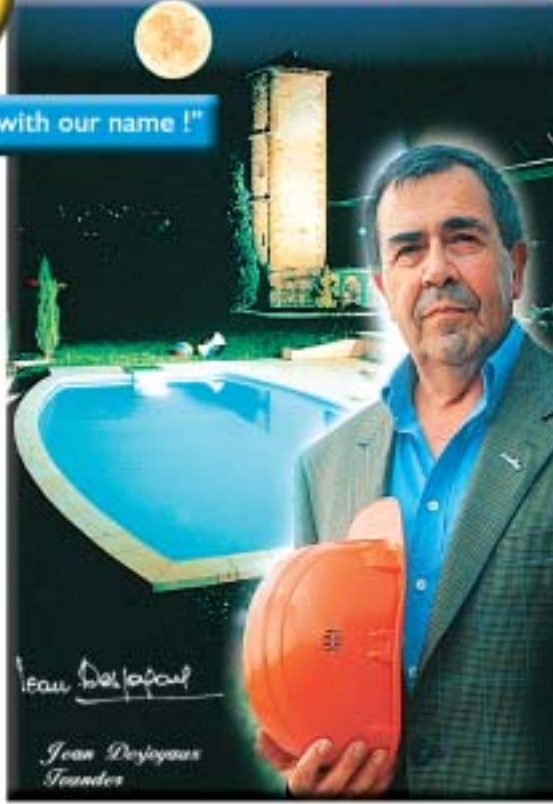




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