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IN THIS ISSUE

News: Fears of disease outbreaks in tsunami camps; B5.25bn set aside to revive tourism. **Pages 2 & 3**

INSIDE STORY: Putting Phi Phi back on the map. **Pages 4 & 5**

AROUND THE ISLAND: Water load of fun on Koh Sireh. **Page 6**

AROUND THE REGION: Foreign media 'worst enemy' of Khao Lak. **Page 8**

PHUKET PEOPLE: Sense and sensibility at Deaf Eagle. **Pages 10 & 11**

LIFESTYLE: Love is in the air in Patong. **Page 12**

MAKING TRACKS: Shamu Shamu orca-strates pet success. **Page 17**

FIRST PERSON: Why a hotel Managing Director remains optimistic. **Page 19**

BUSINESS: Tour agents and hoteliers see hope; Money Talks. **Pages 20 & 21**

SPORT: Lee wins Thai Open; Cricket, Tiger Skins preview; Langkawi regatta; Mini-marathon. **Pages 22 & 23**

GOOD LIVING: Rabbiting on at Baan Yin Dee. **Page 24**

PROPERTY: Lovely Layan; Bloomin' Bert solves pussy problem; Home of the Week; Doven on chickens and pigs. **Pages 25-28**

PLUS

AROUND THE NATION 7; HAPPENINGS 9, TRAVEL 14; KIDS 15; HOROSCOPES, EARTH WATCH 16; EDITORIAL, LETTERS 18; ISSUES & ANSWERS 19; COMPUTERS 20; WINE 24; CLASSIFIEDS 29-35.

Call for subsidies for airlines' costs

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET: Udom Tantiprasongchai, Chairman of Orient Thai Airlines has called upon the government to subsidize airlines using Phuket International Airport as a way to boost tourism to the island.

At the same time, several airlines – Thai and foreign – unveil promotions intended to attract tourists here.

K. Udom said on March 7 his airline would like the government to waive the airport departure tax, offer free visas on arrival to passengers, and excuse airlines from paying landing and navigation fees at Phuket Airport for six months.

K. Udom said that before the tsunami, Orient Thai brought around 270,000 passengers a year from Hong Kong and Korea to Phuket. Since December 26, however, it has brought fewer than 15,000.

He said, "We have already offered 10,000 free international tickets and reduced a 10,000 baht-plus fare to only 5,000 baht, but still there hasn't been much movement of passengers."

He said he proposed the subsidies to Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop at the end of January, but has yet to receive a response.

"If this plan were passed, every airline would benefit, not only us," he said. "It would reduce the cost for each passenger by about 2,000 baht. Seeing as price is an important factor for customers, this would help persuade them to come here."

"I've done all I can to help the situation ... but I've got nowhere. The only thing I can think of now is to appeal to the government to help the airline industry by giving these subsidies."



Wind and rain failed to deter those who were determined to enjoy the fashion show and other events in the Loving Andaman festival in Patong last weekend. For more, see Page 12.

Meanwhile, Bangkok Airways has set aside 43,920 free tickets for government officers traveling from Bangkok to Phuket or vice-versa to attend meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) between April 1 and September 30.

In the same period, private-sector MICE travelers will be able to buy one-way tickets between Bangkok and Phuket for 500 baht and round-trip tickets for 1,000 baht.

Tourism Council of Thailand President Vichit Na Ranong today said, "The MICE market has [shrunk] since the tsunami."

"We are trying to compensate for the fall in the number of international MICE travelers to Phuket by attracting more people from the domestic market."

Australian national carrier

Qantas and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) have launched a joint "Rediscover Thailand" marketing campaign, offering tourists specially-priced packages to Phuket.

The first of six non-stop charter flights – one a week – will leave Sydney on June 20, and similar packages are planned for September and October.

Simon Bernardi, Head of Qantas Holidays, said, "[This campaign] will help the country's tourism industry get back on its feet. We expect Thailand to regain – and quickly – its popularity with Australians."

In addition, Singaporean low-cost carrier Tiger Airways is to start operating three additional flights a week to Phuket. The new flights will begin March 25.

Enforcing life vest law 'probably impossible'

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn & Anongnat Sarpisut

PHUKET: Pol Col Anant Huangsathong, Superintendent of Phuket Marine Police Region 5, has identified people's indifference to safety laws as partly to blame for the nine deaths in the ferry disaster last Saturday, when heavily overloaded *Rungroj* capsized and in heavy seas and sunk between Koh Yao Yai and Koh Yao Noi.

"It's not easy to get everyone wearing life jackets because Thai people always take a long time to accept rules," he said. "It's like the wearing of [motorcycle] helmets – if police set up checkpoints often, people complain about it. I think it will be impossible to get all passengers on boats to wear life jackets."

"We don't have officers standing by to insist people follow the rules, because that is the way of life of local people – it's the way they have done things for more than 20 years," Col Anant added.

But, he added, "I will post officers to prevent [overloading] happening again, because [such incidents] damage tourism."

According to a *Nation* report, Pongpow Ketthong, Deputy Director-General of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department, took a tougher line, instructing Phang Nga Governor Anuwat Metheeviboon – in whose province the boat sank – to order an investigation into the operations of the provincial harbor chief.

Of the nine who died in the sinking of the *Rungroj*, five were children and three were women. At the time of going to press, one woman was still missing.

Continued on Page 2

Enforcing life vest rules 'nearly impossible'

From Page 1

The 13-meter vessel had left Bang Rong pier in Thalung District and was close to Koh Yao Noi when it was pummeled by waves whipped up in the afternoon's sudden heavy winds.

The vessel was heavily overloaded. Although it was licensed to carry just 22 people, it was carrying about 70 passengers, along with 10 motorcycles and other cargo.

Ferry captain and owner Dol Rerngsumthorn and his son Warakorn surrendered to police on Monday to answer charges of reckless conduct leading to death and injury. Both denied the charges and were released on bail.

One of the *Rungroj* survivors, 34-year-old Koh Yao Noi resident Chanida Romin, told the *Gazette* from her hospital bed at Wachira Phuket Hospital, "The captain himself was the first person to jump into the water. The crew told us to jump through the windows into the sea. By then the water was up to our knees. It was complete chaos as everybody struggled for life jackets [because there were not enough].

"Not everybody had a life jacket. I had one, and found myself in the water with two other people. One of them also had a life jacket, but the other didn't. The two of us could only watch as she was pulled under by a large wave. She drowned right in front of our eyes.

"I hope all the relevant government agencies take action to prevent something like this from ever happening again," she added.

Three die in Chiang Mai bus crash

PHUKET: Two female students and a female teacher from Phuket Rajaphat University (PRU) were killed in a road accident near Chiang Mai on March 3.

The three were members of a 40-strong party from PRU on an educational trip to northern Thailand. They were on their way back to Phuket at the end of the trip when the accident happened.

The dead students, both aged 23, have been named as Talubetch Bumrum and

Arseuna Tohlae. Both were final-year students at PRU's Faculty of Science.

The lecturer who died was Assistant Professor Kaneungnij Pakdeewong.

Pol Lt Col Komkrit Kerdkaew, Inspector of Doi Saket Police Station, Chiang Mai, told the *Gazette* that the dead women were on a bus which crashed at a bend on the Chiang Mai-Chiang Rai Road.

The road runs along the edge of a cliff, said Col Kerdkaew, but there was a concrete

barrier which had stopped the bus falling into the canyon below.

He said, "Many of the students had climbed out of the windows by the time we got there, but it took two hours to get their possessions off the bus and attend to the injured."

The bus was being driven by Pravit Samukkeetham, 50, the head driver at PRU, who was also injured in the accident. He was charged with negligence causing death.

Fears of disease outbreak raised

By Kamol Pirat

PHUKET: The Department of Health (DOH) will step up its efforts to ensure there are no outbreaks of disease in tsunami-stricken areas and camps for displaced people, the department's Director-General, Dr Somyos Charoensak, said on March 2.

Dr Somyos made the announcement at a meeting of health officials from the six tsunami-affected provinces at the Phuket Merlin Hotel in Phuket City.

Although no outbreaks have been reported, Dr Somyos expressed particular concern about camps at Baan Bang Muang and Baan Nam Khem, both in Phang Nga province, and explained that health officials will focus on keeping the sites hygienic by providing clean drinking water and improving wastewater systems.

"We will provide clean drinking water and train officers of the local [administration] organizations in clearing up the garbage. This will protect against the spread of disease.



'The [Department of Health] will ensure the temporary camps are in good [hygienic] condition': Dr Somyos Charoensak.

"We thought the temporary camps would give [people affected by the tsunami] a place to stay for only a short while, but, three months later, the permanent houses are still not finished. So

the DOH will ensure the temporary camps are in good [hygienic] condition," Dr Somyos said.

He added that the DOH will monitor wastewater problems in the areas, and will coordinate with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to install temporary water-treatment equipment.

Dr Somyos added that the DOH will also set up – with assistance from international organizations, including Unicef – centers for children at Baan Bang Muang, Baan Nam Khem and other sites where the government is building permanent relief housing, so that health officials can monitor children's physical and mental health.

"We have plans to build six centers for children in the four most heavily affected provinces: Phuket, Phang Nga, Ranong and Krabi," Dr Somyos said.

Japan travel giant pushes Phuket

PATONG: Ways to attract more Japanese tourists back to post-tsunami Phuket were top of the agenda during the annual meeting of Japan's oldest tour company, JTB Corp, at the Diamond Cliff Resort and Spa.

JTB Group President Sano Kazuhisa said JTB was planning to increase its promotion of areas affected by the tsunami, including Phuket, the Maldives, Langkawi, Penang, Sri Lanka and Southern India.

As part of this drive, JTB has organized a "goodwill visit" to Phuket by 200 Japanese people for later this month, as well as literary and art competitions on the subject of Phuket.

Mr Kazuhisa added that this was first time that JTB had held its annual meeting in Thailand, but that it would probably use Phuket as the venue for other events later in the year.

— Anongnat Sartpisut

Sporting celebration of Phuket's Heroines

PHUKET CITY: The Thepkra-sattri Tambon Administration Organization and the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) are honoring Phuket's Two Heroines with a day of sports on March 13.

Activities, on the Baan Don-Cherng Talay Rd near the Pacific International Resort &

Spa, will start at 1 pm and will include *sepak takraw*, "sea boxing" (boxing while sitting astride a greasy pole suspended over a pool of mud), tug o' war, mountain biking and motocross.

Entry in most events is free, but competitors will have to pay 100 baht to compete in

the mountain bike races and 200 baht to compete in the motocross events.

Participants should register on the day, between 11 am and 12:30 pm.

For more information, call the SAT Phuket, at Tel: 076-250-110.

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Many fishing boats in Phuket were damaged when the tsunami drove them up against the bridge to Koh Sireh.

Fishing boat relief payout complete 'by March 11'

PHUKET: The Phuket office of the Department of Fisheries (DoF) was due by March 11 to have finished paying out about 46.8 million baht in aid to rebuild Phuket's fishing fleet, Issara Bussayarat, Chief of Fisheries Development at the Phuket DoF office, told the *Gazette*.

K. Issara said on March 4 that 550 fishing boats in Phuket registered with the DoF were damaged by the December 26 tsunami, and that the Department had already paid some 30 million baht so these boats could be repaired.

"Almost half of the 550 damaged boats are already back at sea and the rest are being repaired," he said.

K. Issara added that about 800 boats not registered with the DoF needed about 24 million baht for repairs. "We will pay about 70% [of the 24 million baht needed] in compensation to them," he said.

Defending the Department from complaints that the aid was slow in coming, he said, "We have received a lot of phone calls – about 100 calls a day – asking why we are working so slowly, or why the caller has not yet received compensation.

"But right now we are checking all the evidence and all the details so that we do not give money to cheats, and this may delay payment."

– *Sangkhae Leelanaporn*

Aid theft probe extended

PHUKET: The deadline for completion of the vice-gubernatorial investigation into the theft of more than 2 million baht of tsunami aid money was extended until March 11, Governor Udomsak Usawarakura said.

The original deadline for the investigation – led by Vice-Governor Supachai Yuwaboon and separate from the criminal investigation by the police – was March 2.

However, the Governor said, V/Gov Supachai had told him his inquiries would involve more people than previously thought, and his committee would need to continue its work until March 11. This was also the

day when the police were due to conclude their criminal investigation.

The money – 2,050,000 baht kept in a safe in a strong room at Phuket Provincial Hall – was reported missing on February 15 by the Chief of the Phuket Office of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (ODPM), Metha Mekarat.

The police investigation was centering on collecting evidence to bring a criminal prosecution, while V/Gov Supachai's committee was gathering information to sue whoever is responsible for the theft in the Civil Court with the aim of getting the money back.

B5.25bn set aside to revive tourism

BANGKOK (*The Nation*): The Cabinet has approved a 5.25-billion-baht budget to carry out projects to revive tourism in the six Andaman-coast provinces hit by tsunami, after cutting the down the proposed figures by 4.11 billion baht.

Government Spokesman Jakrapob Penkair said the Cabinet approved a budget of 2.651 billion baht from the normal budget for the 2005 fiscal year for projects to revive tourism in the six provinces, compared with the original 5.849 billion baht requested by various government agencies.

The Cabinet also approved 1.4 billion baht from the central fund of the 2005 fiscal year for the same purpose, compared with the proposed budget of 2.319 billion baht.

K. Jakrapob said the Cabinet also approved a further 1.2 billion baht from the normal budget of the 2006 fiscal year for projects to revive tourism.

Interior Minister Bhokin Bhalakula on March 1 announced that the government had so far paid out 283.7 million baht for compensation to people affected by the tsunami. A total of 58,550 people from 12,480 families in 412 villages of the six provinces had been affected by the tsunami, he said.

In another development, representatives of six countries on March 1 signed an agreement at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish a center to issue tsunami and other disaster warnings.

The agreement, called the Charter of Asian Disaster Pre-

paredness Center, was signed by Dr Suwit Yodmanee, who will be the director of the center, as well as representatives from Cambodia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Dr Suwit said that the implementation plan to set up the necessary technologies to issue the warnings had been drafted, and that it would cost about US\$50 million (about 2 billion baht) to establish.

However, he added that the system had yet to be endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization – Unesco.

Dr Suwit said he would inform a meeting of the International Oceanography Council (IOC) in Paris, held from March 3 to 8, about Thailand's readiness to host the warning center.

Tsunami relief center 'no longer needed'

PHUKET: The relief center for tsunami victims in Phuket has closed, following a Cabinet decision on March 1 that there was no longer a need for emergency assistance of the kind the center had provided.

Phuket Governor Udomsak Usawarakura said that the focus now has shifted to long-term recovery. "The need now is for homes to be rebuilt, for careers – such as those of the fishermen and shopkeepers – to be revived, and for hotel staff to be able to go back to work.

"The governors in each province can handle this task as part of their routine work," he said.

Gov Udomsak pledged to continue assisting people in Phuket, even though the center

has closed, and he said he would use ordinary funds from the government to pay for homes and fishing boats.

People who registered with the relief center will be given priority over those who did not, he said, adding that the government had intended the relief center to be only a temporary measure, to give people time to start adjusting their lives to their new situation after the tsunami.

People who have so far received little or no help can apply to the Phuket Office of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (ODPM) for assistance until the recovery plans start to bear fruit, the Governor said. The ODPM will consider such applications on a case-by-case basis.

– *Kamol Pirat*

BBAP elects new committee

PHUKET: The British Business Association of Phuket (BBAP) held its annual meeting on February 24 and re-elected Martin Carpenter as Chairman. Andy Dowden was re-elected Treasurer and Chris Hill was elected Secretary, replacing Paul Spring. Mark Phillips was voted in as Social Secretary, replacing Howard Digby-Johns.

Both Mr Spring and Mr Digby-Johns stepped down from the general committee, and were replaced by Tony Bridges and Steve Lawrence. Paul Moorhouse remains the third general committee member.

For more information about BBAP, email: honsec@bbap.org

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Queer News

Costly cat nap

BANGKOK: Just like the felines they are named after, cat burglars are known for their stealth, cunning, and grace of movement.

But a cat burglar who successfully scaled his way into a Siam Commercial Bank office early one Sunday morning shared another trait with cats that turned out to be his undoing – cat napping.

Police arrested would-be bank robber Narong Chuaysuk, 22, early on the morning of February 27 after the Sakon Nakhon native broke into the Siam Commercial Bank's Bang Mod branch on Rama II Road – and then fell asleep under the tellers' counter, unaware that his pre-snooze movements had triggered a silent alarm.

Police said that, when arrested, Narong had in his possession wristwatches, a pen, VCD and CD players, two screwdrivers and a one-meter-long wooden stick that he had used to break into the bank – making one wonder if perhaps it isn't time for SCB to review its security plan.

Narong admitted that he had broken into banks on two previous occasions, police said. The first two break-ins were both at Krung Thai Bank's Bang Khunthien branch, on February 7 and again two weeks later.

Narong told reporters that after trying unsuccessfully to break into the Bang Mod bank's safe, he had rifled through drawers and kept whatever valuables he could find.

He said he then felt sleepy and decided to take a nap before heading home.

Narong revealed that he used to make furniture, but could not find work. He then met a man who persuaded him to take up the potentially more rewarding occupation of robbing banks.

Police brought Narong to the two banks to re-enact the crimes. At the SCB, he deftly climbed up to the third floor and removed an iron bar with the wooden stick, before removing slatted windows and gaining entry.

Source: The Nation

ANNOUNCEMENT

The winners of the 2nd
Junior IMPAC Dublin Literary Awards
for Phuket & Surrounding Provinces
will be announced
on Saturday, 19 March 2005.
Members of the public are
cordially invited to witness the
prize giving at
the Metropole hotel
third floor

9:00 ñ 11:00am

A common refrain from entrepreneurs whose businesses on Phi Phi Don were lost or damaged is that they are reluctant to start rebuilding until they know exactly what the government plans to do with the Phi Phi islands.

Saritpong Kiewkong is a former Chairman of Krabi Chamber of Commerce, Vice-President of the Krabi Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBor-Jor*), owner of the Phi Phi Pavilion Resort and managing director of Phi Phi Cabana and Ton Trai Village resort.

In the tsunami his businesses suffered damage amounting to millions of baht – some of which will be covered by insurance, some not – but he will not start rebuilding any of them until the government unveils its plans for Phi Phi.

He foresees problems. "I think the renovation will start in three months," he said. "I think the government wants Phi Phi to be more ordered and regulations more strictly enforced."

"But I can foresee there being protests, especially from the people who will lose out. That said, I think it will be just a few people who will be affected, the ones who broke the law before by building on land where they had no right to build, for example, the ones who were allowed to get away with this before."

K. Saritpong says only 5% of Phi Phi's natural resources but 40% of its manmade structures suffered material damage in the tsunami. But the island is suffering most now because of the knock-on effect of bad publicity and the reluctance of tour companies to bring tourists to Phi Phi Don in its current battered state.

He says he would be happy to see the island zoned, and for people who hold a Chanote for their land to be allowed to rebuild, if the new properties meet certain standards.

"Buildings should be stronger, so if there is another wave, even if the wave is 10 metres high, they will be safe," he said.

"There should also be a defensive ditch at the top of the

Phi Phi's new shape still far from clear

Before the tsunami, there were growing complaints that the Phi Phi Islands, in particular Phi Phi Don, had developed much too quickly and that this was putting at risk the pristine environment and the serenity that had attracted visitors in the first place.

Since December, there has been a feeling that, while the loss of life and property caused by the tsunami was indeed tragic, the island now has a chance to put right the development wrongs of the past. It has been suggested, too, that those whose businesses and homes were on low-lying ground be moved to hillsides, safe from any future tsunami.

Central government and local authorities are supposed to be working together to rebuild Phi Phi and restore the tourism industry, but there are already complaints that things are moving too slowly, as the *Gazette's* Sangkhae Leelanapaporn reports.

beach. Buildings should be about three stories high, but no higher than the coconut trees, and they should be painted in a way that matches their surroundings."

He continued, "I've lost about 200 million baht on two hotels that weren't insured ... I'm waiting for the government to decide what it's doing, but I still want to run my business here. I believe tourism in Phi Phi will have a bright future after the restoration."

At the moment, around 1,000 Phi Phi residents are in temporary accommodation in Krabi or Phang Nga, and they must be allowed to return, says Yongyuth Suthin, President of

Ao Nang Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*), which is responsible for Phi Phi.

"If they stay in, say, Krabi, they won't know how to manage or find jobs," he explained.

K. Yongyuth, whose own guesthouse and restaurant were destroyed by the tsunami, said the *OrBorTor* is currently surveying local people on what they would like happen on Phi Phi.

While the government would like to move homes and businesses from the narrow isthmus between Ton Sai and Youn Kasem Bays, and relocate them to the hillsides, K. Yongyuth believes many people want to return to where they lived before,




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The government may take over the low-lying area between Ton Sai Bay (pictured) and Youn Kasem Bay, and turn it into a park.

– Photo by Dan Miles

as they are fishermen and want to be near their boats.

Wherever they are, though, the new buildings should comply with regulations. “The problem before was that people would show us really good plans, and we would approve them, and then they would build something completely different from what was on the plans,” said K. Yongyuth.

When it comes to the overall look of the new Phi Phi, K. Yongyuth said, “We can’t specify anything yet, because the plan for Phi Phi is not yet clear. We have meetings almost every day at provincial and central government levels, but there hasn’t been much progress yet. The *OrBor-Tor* isn’t brave enough to do anything without knowing what the provincial and central government intends to do.”

He does know one thing, though: that progress is too slow. He said, “Usually, in the high season, we have 100% occu-

pancy here, right now we have about 7%.

“If the provincial and central government take too long summarizing what Phi Phi should be like, it will have a detrimental effect on everyone. As it is, I think the physical rebuilding [once the planning is done] will take three years, because we are an island and it will take time for the materials and equipment to be brought here.”

He continued, “Local people are getting frustrated.

When I visit them in their temporary accommodation in Krabi, I have to tell them ‘Please be patient, you will go home.’

“But I can’t understand why things are moving so slowly.”

The tsunami not only changed the geography of Phi Phi but also the attitudes of its people, said small trader Natthawut Teangthong.

He explained, “Previously, there were about 1,000 small

businesspeople here. About 90% of them rented their property from people who had proof that they owned the land. Some, however, rented from people who did not have proof.

“Many small businesspeople were not enthusiastic about town planning because they were afraid they might lose their land.

“But since the tsunami, people agree that the island needs proper planning, because it looked like a slum, and it would not be safe if another wave were to come here. Most of the people killed here died not from drowning, but from being hit by debris.”

But Sommai Chanpin, 49, who had been running his small business at Phi Phi for 17 years when the water came, is confident in his and his neighbors’ ability to rebuild without government help.

“We don’t care whether the government wants to support us

or not,” he said. “We stood on our own two feet at the beginning and many people have just ignored the government and returned to working here.

“Every time I listen to the news on the radio or see it on TV, all I hear was about the big budgets for renovating Khao Lak and Phang Nga, but I never hear anything about helping Phi Phi.

“In the past, we organized our lives – things such as electricity, water and waste incineration – without help from government.”

But like other businesspeople, K. Sommai, who wants to rebuild his diving business and souvenir shop, wishes the government would hurry up and decide what should happen at Phi Phi.

He said, “I rent my shop here and I want to see if the government wants to find another use for the land it stands on, but

they are being too slow deciding on this ...

“I can’t wait around for the government to come up with a project, because I have to eat in the meantime.”

He added, “The government has given the Governor of Krabi executive powers over the rebuilding, but as far as I know, he hasn’t talked to the small traders here.

“He should involve us, not just have a committee from Bangkok at every meeting.”

Krabi Governor Anont Promnart defended the progress made so far. He said he and his colleagues were awaiting the results of the deliberations of the Phi Phi Renovation Committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop.

It seems likely that DPM Suwat will propose that the government take over the low-lying center of Phi Phi Don and turn it into parkland, moving people who previously lived and worked by the beach up onto the foothills, both for reasons of safety and to make the island look better, said K. Anont.

He added that he had urged the Public Works Department to speed up the completion of the town planning regulations it had been working on even before the tsunami, but, really, he could not do much more until DPM Suwat’s committee has finished its deliberations.

However, he said, “Whatever is decided, it looks like we will have to recover land that currently belongs to the private sector and swap it for land now owned by the state in order to create a space that will keep local people safe in the event of an emergency.

“But whatever happens, the ‘new’ Phi Phi will definitely look better than the ‘old’ one; it won’t be a slum and it will be safer.”

He added that, despite the need to have the tourists return soon, it is important to take time to make considered decisions.

“If we want to make Phi Phi a paradise island, we should not rush too much, because then there is a danger that it will end up being as much of a slum as it was before,” he said.

The Life Spa

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By Anongnat Sartpisut

We don't stop playing because we get old. We get old because we stop playing – so said the author and playwright George Bernard Shaw.

If Shaw was right, it could be argued that Phuket's fount of youth lies on Koh Sireh – at the foot of the province's biggest water slide.

It takes just 10 seconds to shoot down the 87 meters from the 14m-high top of the slide into the main swimming pool of Andavana Spa.

"I like to go down the slide lying down," enthuses spa General Manager Jatuphol Na Ranong.

"From the top, you get a panoramic view of the surroundings. But on the way down you don't see anything ... except the sky whizzing past you very fast.

"It has four curves, which are really exciting, but the last one, just before you hit the water, is definitely the best."

The slide is open to anyone weighing less than 150 kilograms. "Children over three years old can give it a try, if they are brave enough, although I would recommend that children should be at least five before they try it," says K. Jatuphol.

"If a child hasn't been on such a slide before, we make them sit down, because it is easier to control yourself that way than if you go down lying down.

"But however you go down, it is perfectly safe – so long as you don't try to do something stupid, such as stand up."

A water slide is an unexpected thing to find at a spa. Aren't spas supposed to be havens of peace, harmony and relaxation, rather than places to attract adrenalin-hyped children (of all ages) shrieking their way down a large plastic channel? Especially if that place's name – Andavana – is an abbreviated version of "the peace of Nirvana in Andaman".

K. Jatuphol explains, "Of course, we built the spa first. We had one pool then, a Jacuzzi for the spa. But we still had a lot of land left, so we decided to add



Endless fun for kids – and parents – on the giant slide at the Andavana Spa.

something for children – a pool with a water slide – so that this would be a place for the whole family.

"To make it different, we decided to make ours the biggest slide in Phuket."

The slide empties into the

deepest of three connecting pools. In the 16-rai "Andaman Park" there is plenty of room for all three pools, plus the spa – housed in nine Sino-Portuguese-style villas – the fitness center, restaurant and playground.

The park, developed at a

cost of 91 million baht, opened at the beginning of December last year and initially attracted up to 400 visitors a day, although numbers have been down considerably since the tsunami.

However, K. Jatuphol hopes to persuade visitors to re-

turn by offering a special promotional rate of 50 baht a day, compared with the pre-tsunami price of 90 baht for adults and 70 baht for children.

Andavana Park is open every day between 8 am and 10 pm. The 50-baht admission promotion runs until April.

Andavana Spa is at 25 Moo 1, Thepprathan Rd, T. Rassada, Muang, Phuket 83000. Tel: 076-253113-5. Fax: 076-253116. Email: andavanaspa@yahoo.com



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The government has set a new goal to rid the nation of illegal narcotics in four years, senior officials said after a policy meeting on the issue.

The administration wants a three-pronged attack on the drug scourge: controlling drug production and dealers, reducing drug use, and assisting those most at risk of taking drugs, said Lt Gen Krisna Polananta, Secretary-General of the Office of the Narcotics Control Board, the lead agency in the effort.

Officials at the meeting agreed to set a target of ridding the country of domestic narcotics production by sometime in 2008, Gen Krisna said.

Interior Minister Bhokin Bhalakula said his ministry planned to increase the number of "anti-drug volunteers" from the current 3 million, arguing that community participation was important to combat drug abuse in villages. Currently there is one volunteer for every 20 people in the country. The goal is to reduce the ratio to 1-to-15 or 1-to-10, he said.

During Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's first term, the government waged an all-out war on drugs that ended in the deaths of more than 2,500 people.

The new campaign will start where PM Thaksin's previous war on drugs left off, Gen Krisna said.

South in fear: Nearly 80% of residents polled in the three southernmost provinces say they feel insecure and are afraid that the ongoing violence in the region could affect them or their property.

According to an Abac Poll carried out by Assumption University and Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani, of 3,279 people surveyed in the region, 59.4% do not believe there is a Muslim separatist movement in southern Thailand.

The government has consistently blamed the wave of violence that has resulted in the deaths of more than 700 people in the past 14 months on Muslim separatists seeking to carve out a separate homeland.

New deal done on drug war



Strange bedfellows: Characters from the Disney on Ice show greet fans during a media parade at the Ancient City in Samut Prakan province. The event was staged to promote a week of performances put on by the skaters at the Impact Arena in Muang Thong Thani, Bangkok.

More than 50% of residents polled, most of whom are Muslims and ethnic Malays, said they felt uncomfortable with the presence of the military in the area.

More than 54% said they would prefer to see the government adopt a more peaceful approach to handling the violence

in the region. Thousands of heavily armed troops and police officers have been deployed to maintain peace and stability in the region.

Longon's run: The Pollution Control Department (PCD) is pushing for an environmentally-

safe cremation center to replace polluting furnaces in Bangkok, where some 500 temples each cremate up to six bodies a day.

PCD official Jarupong Boonlong said that even at the temples with the best facilities, toxic emissions can still exceed environmental standards by 17

times. PCD Director-General Apichai Chavacharenpa said he would seek cooperation from Bangkok Governor Apirak Kosayodhin to construct a central crematorium.

Pongdet Thienchavalit, chief of Bangkok's environmental health division, suggested that the proposal may be impractical and noted that the city had not received any complaints from residents living near the temples.

Death stick packaging: The Public Health Ministry has said all cigarette packets must carry graphic half-pack-sized images showing the dangers of smoking, along with a written caution, after March 25.

The six pictures chosen include those of a patient suffering from bronchitis in hospital, a woman with a wizened face, a father holding a baby in his arms while smoking, the corpse of a lung-cancer patient, the yellowed teeth of a long-time smoker, and a picture of a smoker accompanied by two skull icons.

Thailand is the fourth country to adopt such a tactic to combat smoking. The others are Canada, Brazil and Singapore.

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

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Foreign media still broadcasting the wrong message

More than two months after the tragic events of December 26, many media organizations and overseas tour operators are still proving to be the worst enemy of people's efforts to revive Khao Lak and of giving hope and jobs to thousands of people in the areas affected by the tsunami.

In my home country of Germany, some news channels have made terribly incorrect statements, such as saying that Khao Lak is closed to tourists until further notice, thus severely hampering people's efforts to rebuild their lives and businesses here.

Some news channels have gone even further, announcing that tourists in Thailand now would get in the way of rescue teams.

I can't believe that any person announcing something as stupid as this could possibly have an IQ high enough to fill out a news reporter's job application. I implore all travelers wanting to come to Thailand to check websites of travel agents and tour operators located in Thailand for better, more up-to-date information.

In reality, life in Khao Lak is slowly getting back to normal in the areas spared from destruction. Khao Lak center appears totally normal, with banks and exchange counters, supermarkets, restaurants and several souvenir shops open to the public.

Several dive shops have reopened and are ready to cater to divers who want to visit the still beautiful and mostly undamaged Similan Islands.

In addition, 23 resorts in Khao Lak are now operational again, five of which are right on the beach.

For a complete list of operational resorts in Khao Lak, visit www.khaolak-coop.com/khaolakbeach/KLHotelList.htm

Work it out: With tsunami relief volunteers comprising the majority of customers for Khao Lak businesses these days, another

blow to the area has come from officials making it very clear that all volunteers should get work permits or face severe penalties.

Local Thai and foreign residents alike were outraged when they heard this, not to mention the volunteers themselves. One volunteer, who spoke to the *Gazette* on condition of anonymity, said, "After hearing this threat by the ESO [Employment Services Office] I decided I will go back to Sweden. I came here because I wanted to help the Thai people, but I became uneasy when threatened with the possibility of jail time for doing a good deed."

"I'm sorry to say this, but I would advise all volunteers to do

the same and go home. Then, when the cries for help of the Thai people who we could not help in time get louder and louder, perhaps the officials will wake up and realize what they have done."

"I am shocked and very sad. I paid for the flight

ticket myself and even had to take a small loan from a bank to get here, and now this ... I can't believe it."

Dumb dome: Another shock for Khao Lak residents came with the proposal that 2 billion baht – more than the total amount of



Beaming in Bang Niang: A ray of hope is being built in the devastated area of Bang Niang Beach, as builders embark on the first reconstruction of a private home near the beach. Thanks to the help of many friends and even old classmates, the owners of the home were able to finance the reconstruction after obtaining the legal papers allowing them to do so.

After a thorough inspection by officials to check the stability of what was left of the building, the reconstruction process started. The plan is to restore the house and garden to its pre-tsunami condition as fast as possible in order to inspire others whose homes were wrecked to do the same and to get Bang Niang Beach back on its feet again.

money spent on relief throughout Thailand – would be spent on building a high-tech memorial dome on 360,000 square meters of land earmarked for misuse as a memorial park in Khao Lak.

Every person I questioned about these plans was outraged and came up with similar proposals on how to put such a large amount of money to better use.

Most notably, people pointed out that Khao Lak has part-time medical clinics but no hospital, as well as no proper wastewater treatment plant and no proper garbage disposal management, or any of many more facilities that could help the area become a top travel destination.

The question most often raised was, why does the government want to spend so much

money on a memorial? Some respondents suggested that some people are queuing up to fill their pockets through the project, and asked why wouldn't the government use the money to help victims of the tsunami?

One respondent said, "My family, who I lost in the tsunami, will not come back because of this dome. For me, a place to mourn is at the beach or by the sea – the place where my family disappeared. I don't need this dome. I need a house and a job, and many of my friends agree with me."

• Editor's note: The dome was scheduled to be discussed by the Thai Cabinet on February 15. However, reports of Cabinet meetings then and since have made no mention of the dome proposal.



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By Franky Gun

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This week



THE GOOD LIFE: Greg Costello (seated, left) celebrates his birthday with Maggie Adams (blue dress) and friends at the Surin Beach holiday home of Brenda and Derek (seated, center).



CRUISING: Kingfisher Marine and the Andaman Island Group recently took friends and business partners for a sunset cruise aboard Kingfisher's luxury vessel *Phayoon 3*.



SEA TRIALS: (above) Thoroughly enjoying whatever the evening throws up are a fine selection of the *Gazette* staff with Alistair Why, MD of The Aspasia Phuket, aboard the motor yacht *Voyageur*.

SEOUL MATES: (left) Honeymooners Lee Kyung Hee (left) and Kang Tae Hwa from South Korea enjoy Patong's Diamond Cliff Resort & Spa.



FAMILIAR FACES & PLACES: (above) SilkAir representatives and agents – including SilkAir Manager for Thailand, John Sim and the company's Customer Services & Cargo Sales Officer, Gadvadee Dumluck (3rd and 2nd from left) as well as Sowichaya Sintucharoen, the Director of local tour agent Green Travel (8th from left) – enjoy themselves on a recent fam trip.

FOR THE CHILDREN: (right) *Gazette* Managing Editor Alasdair Forbes (right) hands a check for more than 13,000 baht to Gene McCain of the Tsunami Relief Fund for the children of Takuapa. The money was raised by a school in Ohio, whose school newspaper is called the *Shenandoah Gazette*.





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For most of those who experienced the tsunami, one of the things that sticks in the mind was the hideous roar of the wave.

But among the small community of vendors with impaired hearing who were working along the beach road in Patong when the tsunami struck, the deadly surge was a silent killer.

Many of those that survived saw their small businesses damaged or destroyed. For them, the task of rebuilding is especially difficult, as many lack the necessary communication skills to navigate through the complex world of Thai bureaucracy in order to gain financial assistance.

Kris Olsen, 42, is one person who understands their plight. When he was 14, Mr Olsen was knocked unconscious during a car crash in his native Denmark. When he awoke, six days later, he realized he could hear nothing.

"God has his own way," he told the *Gazette*. "I lost my hearing when I was 14. On December 26, many people died in the tsunami. God has his own way; I cannot explain why he does these things. Maybe God doesn't like me. We just have to accept what happens and never stop fighting, just as I have done all my life."

When Mr Olsen lost his hearing, he first went into denial. "I could not believe I was really deaf at 14 ... My dad told me that when I was young, I was a bad boy. I never listened to anyone and did whatever I liked," he said, implying that his father saw his accident as an act of instant karma – hardly words to bring comfort to a young teenager whose world had just gone silent.

Mr Olsen explained that the unusual name of his company – Andaman Deaf Eagle – highlights the point that deaf people must, out of necessity, develop their visual skills to a point of

Paradise for the

Kris Olsen, from Denmark, is Managing Director of tour company Andaman Deaf Eagle Company Ltd in Phuket City. Unable to hear since the age of 14 following a car accident, Mr Olsen has struggled hard against negative stereotypes to prove that deaf people, and others with disabilities, are fully capable of success – if they are willing to work hard enough for it.

His current goal is to turn Phuket into an internationally-renowned tourism paradise for those with impaired hearing. He thinks this is possible because, in his opinion, hearing-impaired people are treated more considerately in Thailand than in his homeland and many other countries.

He talked with the *Gazette's* Anongnat Sartpisut about his experiences as a deaf person and his current effort to help hearing-impaired victims of the tsunami.

great acuity, comparable to that of an eagle.

"You must use your eyes instead of your ears. You must look at images and be able to remember them. You have to work and study hard to show that deaf people are not stupid. We can work and earn money," he said.

It took him about two years to learn to read people's lips, which allowed him to communicate with his family and friends. But while the skill is useful in Denmark, it is not possible for him to lip read in languages other than Danish.

Like most people who lose their sense of hearing, Mr Olsen's speaking ability has gradually declined.

"I haven't forgotten how to speak, but my voice has gotten worse and worse.

When you can't hear, you can't learn how to speak Thai or other foreign languages. You can't hear, so you don't know how to use your voice," he explained.

While he is now dedicated to helping other deaf people, it took him some time to accept his situation and move from denial to the coping stage. "I went to a normal school with hearing

people because I didn't like deaf people," he said.

"Deaf people used sign language, and I thought it looked stupid – I didn't want to learn it at first. But after a friend began to teach me to sign, I started to realize that deaf people weren't stupid after all," he added.

Never one to quit, Mr Olsen continued to study at normal schools, completing high school and then going on to earn a degree in computer science from Copenhagen Business College in 1986.

"I learned with hearing people, but I had an interpreter so I was able to understand what my teachers and other people were saying. Still, I needed to study harder than other people," he said.

After his graduation, he tried many jobs and, he said, was able to do them all – but what he really wanted to do was to run his own business.

"Many deaf people in the US, Denmark, Norway, and Thailand know how to work hard to earn money. I decided that I would do the same. It's too difficult to find jobs when you're



deaf," he explained.

Fortunately, he was able to benefit from the very generous social assistance provided for the disabled in Denmark. He was given a lifelong pension after his accident. In his native country, it was enough to get by on, but no more. In Thailand, however, it was enough to live well and to realize the dream of starting his own business.

"I didn't want to just sit at home and watch TV all day. That's boring. I thought it would be better to use the pension money to move to Thailand. I wanted to do something, so I set up my company to help deaf people."

Given his never-say-die attitude, perhaps it is no surprise that it was fighting that first brought Mr Olsen to Thailand.

He finally made his move to Thailand six years ago, setting himself up in Pattaya. Unfortu-

nately, his wife left him after three years – running off with all the money from his first company.

It must have come as quite a shock, because his wife had lived with him in Denmark for one year. "My family liked her, everyone liked her," he said.

With nothing left in Pattaya, Mr Olsen moved to Phuket in 2003 for a fresh start.

He set up his new website, www.phuketdeafeagle.com, with the express purpose of offering help and support to disabled people interested in visiting Phuket and the rest of the Andaman region.

Despite a start-up cost of of 600,000 baht, Mr Olsen explained that the website is more of a hobby than anything else.

"It gives me many things to do. I work hard, often sitting in front of the computer for 10 to 12 hours a day. But I don't really

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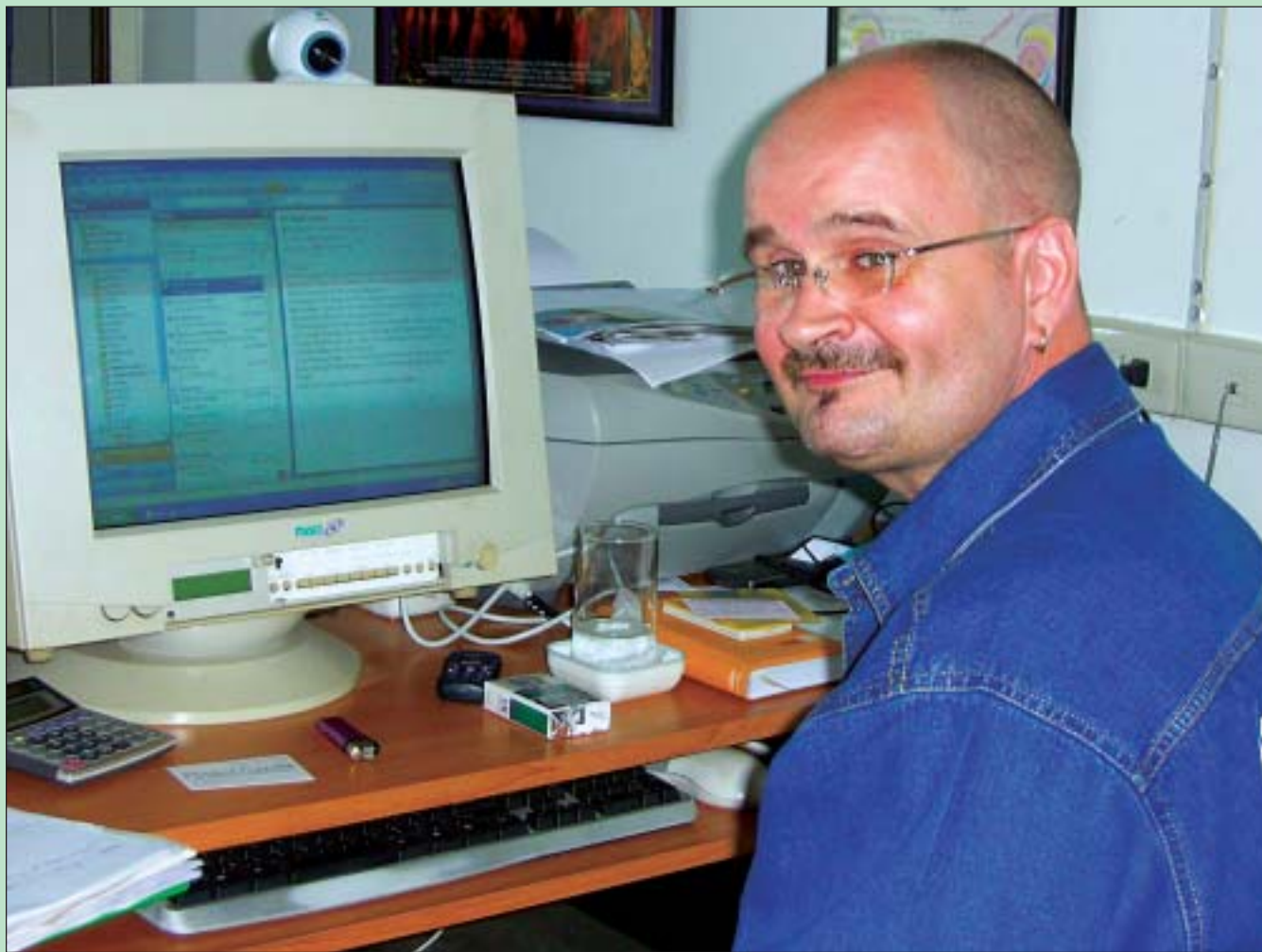
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deaf and disabled?



Far left: Mr Olsen and Andaman Deaf Eagle employee Nutnicha 'Tukky' Robinson give the universally-recognized "thumbs up" gesture.

Left: Kris Olsen often spends as much as 10 or 12 hours a day working on his website.

It's not as easy in Denmark, he said. "Hearing people there are afraid of deaf people. They cannot communicate with them, so they fear them – and they think they are stupid," he said.

He admitted, however, "When people there get to know me we can talk, and if I don't understand something people can just write it down – or they can use body language."

But even with that language advantage, Mr Olsen still prefers to live in Thailand.

"I just don't feel very comfortable living with the hearing people [in Denmark] – only the people who know me and how to communicate with me. My dad knows how to speak with me, so I feel right at home when I stay with him."

That said, Mr Olsen acknowledges that deafness does come with a silver lining of sorts.

"Living in silence I get a sense of inner peace. When you can't hear anything, you don't have to listen to people arguing all the time or casting blame on others," he said.

Those interested in making a donation to the hearing-impaired tsunami victims, or learning more about Andaman Deaf Eagle's many services, should visit www.phuketdeafeagle.com or contact Nutnicha "Tukky" Robinson at Tel/Fax: 076-248626 or Tel: 01-9781800, or Mr Olsen at webmaster@phuketdeafeagle.com

consider it work, because when I am sitting at the computer I feel like I am enjoying life," he said.

Boxing is one of his favorite sports, and one which he views as a metaphor for his life.

"The best boxer wins, and any fighter who doesn't box well risks injury. I fight against all the obstacles I have to overcome because I am deaf.

"I never give up. I fight with my heart I fight through my work," he said.

Where once he thought of the hearing-impaired as stupid, Mr Olsen now takes issue with anyone who looks down on them.

"It's because they lack knowledge about deaf people. The deaf are not 'second-hand' people. They aren't stupid," he said.

"When someone looks down on me, it tells me more about them than it does about myself," he said, adding that he

usually just ignores such discourteous behavior.

Rather than enter a losing battle fighting rudeness and ignorance, Mr Olsen says such experiences only make him fight harder to show others his true abilities.

"My mother always asks why I need to do all this [when he could live comfortably on his pension], and I tell her I need to show people just how much deaf people are capable of," he said.

Right now his efforts are focused on 16 deaf tsunami survivors whose businesses were wiped out.

He isn't the only deaf Scandinavian working to help them out. Three deaf women from Sweden have already raised about 300,000 baht to help get the victims back on their feet and the relief effort has also included generous support from both Thai Airways International and the

Deevana Patong Resort and Spa.

"The Thai Red Cross told me that they need about 4.2 million baht in assistance for hearing-impaired tsunami victims. Now we have raised 300,000 baht, which will be used to fund education and reconstruction projects," he said.

As for his business aspirations for Andaman Deaf Eagle, which provides general tour services in addition to its special resources for the disabled, Mr Olsen said he would eventually like to focus more on the specialty side of the business, which includes a dating service for the deaf and other people with disabilities.

Despite his plans to play matchmaker, Mr Olsen himself is still single – though he would eventually like to settle down with a wife and have children.

"I would like to have small family, preferably two girls. I

have twin sisters and they're very nice," he said.

"In the short term I want to focus on my business. But in the future, I think I might like to sell this business and open a new one with the staff composed entirely of disabled people," he said.

He thinks his dream of turning Phuket into a paradise for disabled people can work because of the natural hospitality and down-to-earth nature of the Thai people.

"In Denmark the weather is cold, and the people can be cold too. Thailand is warm, as are its people," he said, adding that he feels more comfortable communicating with Thais through body language than he does with Danish people.

"I use body language when I go out shopping. Many Thais don't speak English, and I cannot speak Thai, but we can still communicate," he said.

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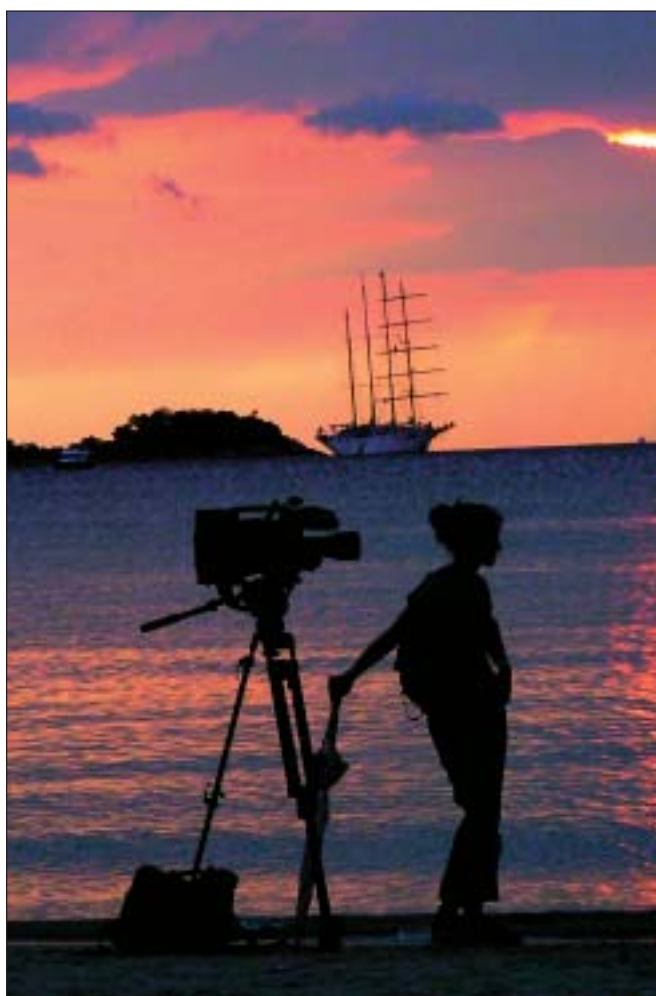
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TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters

Goa was a global village long before anyone put the phenomenon into words. A swirling gallimaufry of cultures, creeds and cuisines set against a startlingly beautiful backdrop. It's where the world comes to kick back, relax and rejuvenate, whether by dancing through an all-night beach party or slipping into an Ayurvedic spa.

Famed though Goa's seaside may be, it was the natural harbors and wide rivers that first attracted foreign traders and started the great multi-ethnic influx. Arabian cavalry steeds were being landed as early as the 14th century, and Portuguese merchants had set up bases by 1510.

Jesuit missionaries followed hard on their heels, and even when the British Empire held sway over much of the sub-continent, Goa remained a solidly Mediterranean-cum-Indian entrepot, a wondrous port whose myriad parts embraced statue-sque churches, sibilant saris and sun-kissed strands.

Finally absorbed into India proper in 1961, Goa experienced another invasion shortly afterwards, as the decade's hippies and love children flocked to its shores by the thousand from

around the world to shed their clothes, cares and inhibitions.

Specially organized, high-octane, high-volume beach dance parties for high – and low – society rocked the area in subsequent years, but lately Goa has taken a step further toward cutting out a new definition for itself.

The most obvious change has been the arrival of sparkling new hotels, a phalanx of major league mansions devoted to hos-

pitality that blend five-star international standards with Goa's inherent cosmopolitanism.

The older, ever-so-vaguely ramshackle and very charming guesthouses and family-run hostels still abound, but now they've been joined by the likes of the Fort Aguada Beach Resort, which comes complete with its own in-house astrologer, and the Leela Palace, with a par-three, nine-hole golf course on its grounds.

And then there is the Park Hyatt, whose 251 rooms – many with their own miniature and very private gardens – are housed in Indo-Portuguese *pousadas* set amid glimmering waterways and lagoons surrounded by 18 hectares of lush foliage.

At the Hyatt's heart lies the Sereno Spa. Indoor and outdoor pavilions are scattered around a central courtyard and a holistic

approach to health treatment is an important focus for both ancient and new-age therapies.

Ayurveda could well be described as Goa's "signature treatment", and there is a host of spas and treatment centers offering holistic approaches to healing, treating not simply the affected part but the person as a whole and

taking the view that prevention is better than cure.

On Vainguinim Beach, the Cidade de Goa Ayurvedic Spa provides an entire range of treatments in simple, calm surroundings administered by some of the best therapists on the coast.

Goa's most legendary attraction remains little changed – with beaches stretching as far as the eye can see. Each has a different character – chilled-out Arambol, upscale Candolim, low-key Palolem – but they all deserve a visit, whether for a day-long ultra-violet toast or simply a stroll at sunrise or sunset.

At Goa's heart, however, is the plain fact that this is a corner of India that is unlike any other part of the country; it has taken the very best of east and west and added a touch of its own zesty personality into the equation.



Main picture: Goa's architecture is redolent of its cosmopolitan past.

Above: Fort Aguada is one of the most unusual new hotels. Left: Some of Goa's more remote beaches are frequently deserted.

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Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are the names of at least 20 stars. The words may read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They may also read right-to-left or down-to-up. See if you can find more than your family or friends. Score: More than 10, good; more than 15, very good; 20 or more, excellent.

C	Z	S	X	O	B	W	A	J	E	H	Y	C	I	X
A	C	T	U	G	Y	L	V	G	B	X	G	J	N	C
P	V	H	H	L	T	S	S	U	L	Y	M	H	T	X
E	F	M	Y	A	U	U	Z	P	G	D	G	N	O	B
L	C	H	I	E	R	G	O	A	N	M	B	A	D	Z
L	T	R	P	U	S	L	E	A	N	T	A	R	E	S
A	P	B	T	O	A	U	X	R	C	J	S	A	A	I
O	J	C	J	R	L	D	E	Z	V	U	C	B	C	A
K	R	K	I	Z	R	L	R	G	I	E	D	E	I	Y
A	Z	S	C	B	G	Y	U	R	L	W	A	D	P	B
N	O	Y	C	O	R	P	I	X	W	E	E	L	S	D
W	F	E	I	C	K	S	D	Z	P	V	T	A	N	F
C	B	C	Z	G	Z	P	Z	Y	R	E	N	E	X	P
G	A	W	J	Z	A	Z	U	O	A	Y	J	U	B	V
N	E	N	Z	A	C	G	K	D	W	Q	M	N	A	M
B	N	W	O	E	S	O	T	M	J	L	A	A	P	I
W	O	J	I	P	V	N	H	X	G	A	T	Z	Y	L
F	I	U	O	Y	U	B	N	M	R	R	N	D	L	V
V	E	G	A	I	Q	S	G	E	N	K	J	O	J	O
J	L	H	Y	M	K	S	M	R	H	X	G	O	C	D
R	P	C	A	S	T	O	R	O	L	L	V	D	X	Q
B	E	N	E	D	A	D	H	P	A	E	T	E	M	Z
T	N	V	F	O	T	G	T	E	V	P	G	A	U	Q
J	M	N	N	Y	E	J	U	D	C	D	W	I	Y	R
W	K	G	I	J	X	A	S	Q	F	E	E	Q	R	A

Brain Buster!!

Q: The following formula makes five 2s equal to 5:
2 x 2 x 2 + 2 ÷ 2 = 5

Can you write a similar formula in which five 3s equal 5?

S = 3 ÷ 3 + 3 + 3 x 3 ÷ 3

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S MONSTER QUIZ

1. Winston Churchill; 2. A short wooden club; 3. Clockwork radio; 4. Supermarine Spitfire Type 300; 5. Joseph Stalin; 6. Fred Durst; 7. Mission: Impossible II and Gothika; 8. Dr Condoleezza Rice; 9. 65; 10. Tom A Swift's Electric Rifle; 11. Bono Vox and The Edge, both of U2; 12. Apple; 13. Parliament; 14. Sir Fred Hoyle, an opponent of the theory; 15. Merton College, Oxford; 16. Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vereeniging; 17. Wu-Tang Clan; 18. The Libertines; 19. The world record for a 160-character SMS; 20. Glucose.

Solution to last week's crossword

DRAM SHRUBS
E O P E O
ELASTIC SUN
I Q E A R
BA UNDERAGE
B I M E
DISTANCE OW
L O Y N I
HID ELLIPSE
T P O A I
PYTHON NEEDED

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz

1. American Lorado Taft was famous in which field?

2. The Iguazú Falls is on the borders of which two countries?

3. Which Beat Generation writer was born March 12, 1922?

4. What term was coined in 1964 by Charles Hamblett and Jane Deverson?

5. White Wedding, Rebel Yell and Eyes Without A Face were hits for which singer?

6. Which film recently won an Oscar for Best Original Musical Score?

7. The movie was based on whose life?

8. Which actress recently won the "Razzie" Worst Actress award?

9. They are manhua in China and manhwa in Korea. What are they in Japan?

10. Which sport has techniques called classical, free and Telemark?

11. The Srivijaya style of Thai art existed when?

12. Where would one find the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, sometimes called La Maison Bleu?

13. What is the term for the two regions of calm seas and light winds near 30° north and 30° south?

14. Who wears the No 6 shirt for FC Barcelona?

15. What is the term for organisms (including humans) that must consume organic molecules for both energy and carbon?

16. Hyde Park Corner and Russell Square are stops on which London Underground line?

17. The Hebrew word teva means what?

18. 1/2h(a+b) is the formula for calculating the area of what?

19. What, reportedly, did Gaius Julius Caesar say after crossing the Rubicon in 49 BC?

20. "Belch ache hits tremor" is an anagram of which English electronic duo?

Answers next week.

Never a Cross Word!

- Across
1. Operation evidence.

3. Small meals.

8. Also known as Eire.

9. Incite (3,2).

10. Half of half of half.

14. Col Gaddafi, for one.

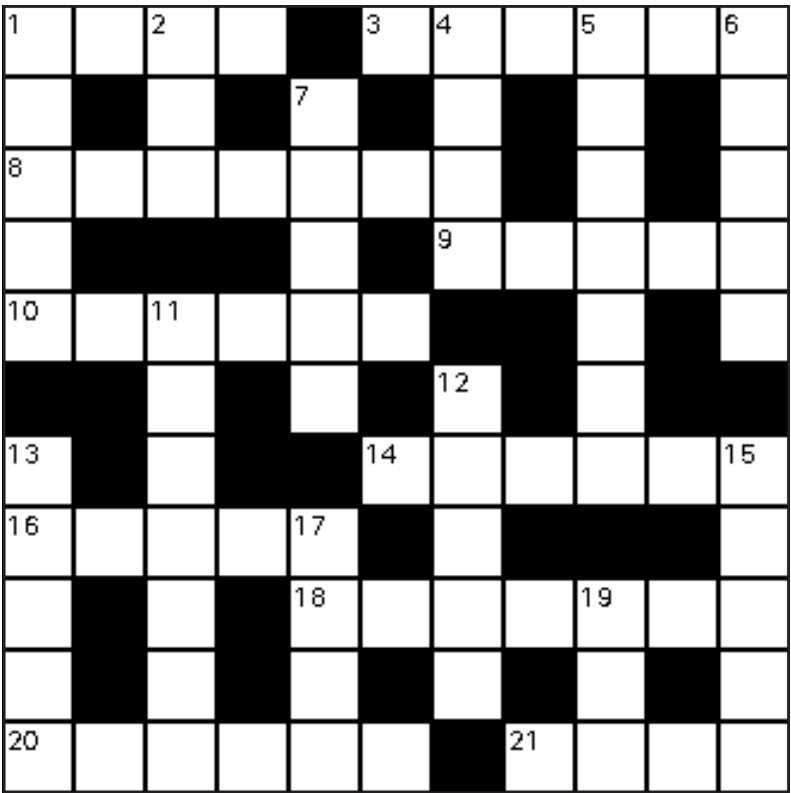
16. It was hell for ancient Greeks.

18. Unyielding.

20. Rubbed out.

21. Resist strongly.

- Down
1. It's easy to find this in Thailand.



2. Gorilla, for example.

4. Lacking clothing.

5. Venue for Canadian stampede.

6. Terrible smell.

7. Political group.

11. Venetian transport.

12. Rope material.

13. Its capital is Santiago.
15. A little bit crazy.

17. Amass money.

19. Beer.

Solution next week

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In The Stars

by Isla Star

The week ahead

PISCES: (February 20-March 20): If your partner's holiday plans don't exactly float your boat, you must come up with an acceptable alternative before the end of this week. A sudden stroke of business luck midweek brings a valuable opportunity to get promoted. If you're self-employed, expect a surge of outside interest and at least one lucrative contract to be signed before April. The color papaya orange promotes harmony on the home front.

ARIES: (March 21-April 20): Timing is everything this week. If you are in the wrong place at the wrong moment, there's a chance of missing out on a lucrative opportunity. The signs pointing to the right direction will be hard to miss, so you'll have only yourself to blame for getting side-tracked. An on-off relationship will finally be resolved; be very clear about what you want to happen.

TAURUS: (April 21-May 21): Taureans who are inclined to dwell in the past need to heed a lesson. If something is definitely behind you, there's no reason to keep it in your mind. It's time to shift into a faster gear and confront the future instead of going round in never-ending circles. The scent of mint will help you to wake up; plant some by your front door.

GEMINI: (May 22-June 21): Progress at work is smooth and your just rewards are waiting around the corner. Be on the lookout for an Aquarian who is trying to get one step ahead even though he or she doesn't have cards to play that are as strong as yours. Your people skills will be useful on Thursday when a tricky moment needs careful handling. The color lavender will enhance your romantic appeal.

CANCER: (June 22-July 23): A glittering week lies ahead for

Cancerians. Recent personal problems should now be firmly in the past and there's space to do the things that you really enjoy in life. Leo is looking for a way to get closer, but needs to see encouraging signs. Don't play games with this person's feelings as they could easily be hurt. The number 4 looks promising on Wednesday.

LEO: (July 24-August 22): You will find yourself getting worked up over trivial matters this week. Your fiery side will need some damping down if you don't want to upset those around you. This is a good time to meditate on what you really expect from a close relationship, but wait for next week's calmer atmosphere to instigate discussions. Your curiosity is piqued on Sunday when a casual remark doesn't quite ring true.

VIRGO: (August 23-September 23): Allow others some leeway before pointing out inefficiency. It could be that they really are doing the best job they can. Your usually rigid standards could use a little loosening up; getting overheated won't solve anything. To keep your cool this week, go exploring off the beaten track and indulge in some solitary space – if you can find it. Wear woody scents to tap into your earthy side.

LIBRA: (September 24-October 23): You will be bowled over by a surprise encounter this weekend. This could mean that a flame from the past is suddenly reignited. Rest assured that love can burn more strongly the second time around. Your creative streak is also set alight and you will accomplish much by the end of this month. On Tuesday, there could be confusion over appointments, so confirm before setting out. Wear turquoise to release tension.

SCORPIO: (October 24-Novem-

ber 22): Deciphering scrambled messages will keep you occupied for most of the weekend. Someone is finding it very hard to tell you what they really want; you will not want this situation to continue for much longer. A long-awaited package finally arrives in the mail, which should cheer you up midweek after a slightly gloomy spell on Monday and Tuesday. The number 4 could open a door on Wednesday.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 23-December 21): Pruning away the dead wood of a faltering relationship may allow new feelings to grow. Those who aren't prepared to give up without a fight should put their best foot forward this week to salvage some romance. On Monday, double-check your bookkeeping and you are likely to find a fault in your favor. The time is ripe for making getaway plans for next month if you want to avoid a soaking.

CAPRICORN: (December 22-January 20): Capricorns are advised not to allow business colleagues to make decisions on their behalf. Taking too many breaks from the office could easily result in someone making a commitment that you don't agree with. A promise made on Valentine's Day and since forgotten is met. Romance is well-starred from now until the end of the month. Allow plenty of time to get to appointments on Thursday.

AQUARIUS: (January 21-February 19): Aquarians will be subject to some stress this week as they must tiptoe around delicate issues, or deal with hypersensitive people. Saying as little as possible is recommended. If you are finding it hard to switch off and relax at the moment, go for a spa treatment. Gemini is planning to ask an intimate question and won't give up easily. The color watermelon red encourages tranquility.

Worms: from beautiful to disgusting

You may not like them, but worms are a hugely important part of ecosystems worldwide and there are even kinds that are beautiful. Worms fall into three basic classifications: flatworms, roundworms and segmented worms. All three phyla are found in both aquatic environments and terrestrial environments.

Worms are found everywhere, including inside people; species of roundworms and flatworms are major parasites in humans and many other animals.

Among the best-known segmented worms are earthworms and bristle worms.

Earthworms play an important role in breaking down organic matter and producing healthy, fertile soil. They are beloved by gardeners and fresh water fishermen alike.

Bristle worms, on the other hand, are found in the shallows of tropical seas. Their bristles cover their bodies, producing a poisonous sting when touched. Most fish ignore them and divers are well advised to avoid them. They are most active at dusk and after dark.

Marine flatworms are among the most beautiful of free swimming invertebrates in the ocean. Probably the best known is the "Spanish dancer". Its flat body flares out like the colorful red or pink skirt of a flamenco dancer as it swims or crawls along – hence its name, which is somewhat more exotic than its scientific designation: *Hexabranchus sanguineus*.

The Spanish dancer is frequently seen on sponges, certain varieties of which it is thought to feed on. This creature also takes nourishment from algae and a wide range of marine debris, thus playing an important role in maintaining the balance of the marine ecosystems where it is found.

There are thousands of flatworm species. One of the most common is the fresh-water species *Turbellaria*, more commonly known as planaria. It has a pointed head with two big spots that look like eyes and are, in fact, light sensitive. Many experiments have been done with planaria. If they are split right down the middle, each half will regenerate its missing section, thus creating two whole new animals – not a bad party trick.

Planaria, which range in size from microscopic to several inches in length, are readily



EARTH WATCH

By Robert Cogen

found in streams and are a staple of high school biology projects.

Roundworms, or nematodes, are quintessential parasites – and the bane of every mammalian species. The list of potential symptoms of an infestation reads like an encyclopedia of human misery: abdominal cramps, diarrhea, flatulence, lesions, vomiting, visual impairment – to name just a few.

In Thailand, certain roundworm species inhabit snails in rice paddies for part of their life cycle before entering a free-swimming phase. When a farmer walks through the paddy, the roundworms burrow through his skin and settle in his muscles, where they lay eggs. These hatch, feed on human blood and tissue and then release themselves back into the rice paddy to look for a snail to infest, thus completing the cycle.

Once they establish themselves, these parasites are not easily killed – medical intervention is required to remove and kill them – one reason many rice farmers don rubber boots when they go out into the fields.

Fortunately, most ringworms can be kept at bay by proper hygiene and wearing protective clothing.

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

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Shamu Shamu: a whale of a store

Going shopping has never ranked high on my list of favorite pastimes, and at one time the thought of writing about a shop would never have crossed my mind.

However, this month's column is devoted to what is quite simply the best pet store I have ever seen in Thailand. Indeed, I cannot remember seeing a better one anywhere in the world.

The ShamuShamu pet store, named after the famous Florida SeaWorld killer whale, opened its doors on Phuket in the second half of last year on Chao Fa East Rd, about half way between Phuket City and Chalong Circle. It sells a quite amazing range of products and foods.

The company is the brainchild of Kajornwan Chueng, who, having traveled extensively around the world, completed a four-year computer sciences degree in Seattle.

Returning to her native Thailand, she decided against a career in computers, and instead set up a business combining her love of animals with the marketing skills she had learned in the US.

The company originally opened in Bangkok four years ago. Initially, it was intended to be a mail-order business only, but



ShamuShamu has a huge range of pet products and the membership scheme, at 189 baht a year, delivers serious bargains.



having space still available at the company's warehouse in the capital's Sathorn district, K. Kajornwan decided to open a retail outlet as well.

The concept is quite simple. Although anybody can shop there, the company has a membership scheme. For an annual fee, currently 189 baht, members get by mail a free quar-

terly magazine, full of useful information, as well as a full product guide.

In addition, members – currently there are more than 4,000 – receive discounts on the full

product range, and it is this range that sets ShamuShamu apart.

Between 60% and 70% of products are imported direct from the US. Virtually anything you can possibly think of for cats and dogs is available, and many more items that you probably never realized existed. The range of different foods is staggering, ranging from the highest-quality premium brands to the regular brands you can find in any supermarket.

With such a range of products, you would be forgiven for thinking that the high quality would be matched by even higher prices. Not so. Many of the prod-

ucts are much cheaper here than in Britain, for example.

Food products are also much cheaper than I have found elsewhere. For example, a giant tin of Pedigree dog food currently retails in the local supermarkets at 75 baht. ShamuShamu charges members as little as 60 baht, destroying the myth that supermarkets will always be cheaper than smaller establishments.

Although a former breeder of show-winning Siberian huskies, K. Kajornwan does not believe in pet shops selling live animals. In her opinion there are enough unwanted animals in Thailand already.

A high-quality grooming parlor is on site as well, and all her staff have at least four years' experience in the pet trade. In addition to catering to owners' cats and dogs, there are goods available for those who prefer the company of rabbits, hamsters and so on, as well as goods for bird- and fish-fanciers.

I highly recommend this store. For more information, visit the store's website at www.shamushamu.com.

Top Dog is always pleased to receive comments and news about animals. Email him at: topdog9@myway.com



By Top Dog

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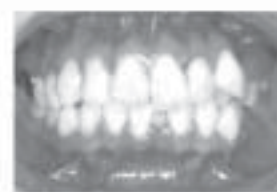


Before

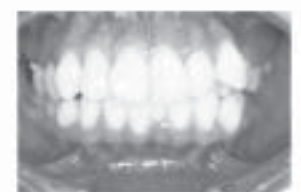


After

Laser Tooth Whitening



Before



After

- Crowns and Bridges
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More lives lost to greed

Yet again people have died as a result of the greed and rashness of a ferry operator coupled with the near-non-existent enforcement of safety rules by those whose job it is to ensure that Thailand's marine transport is safe.

The March 5 tragedy on the sea between Koh Yao Noi and Phuket once again puts Thailand in the same league as Bangladesh or the Philippines – countries with dreadful reputations for ferry disasters.

The timing could not be worse. Phuket is struggling to counter continuing negative press reports that the island was "devastated" by the tsunami. Those tourists who are coming here understand that a tsunami is a highly improbable event at any given time and that the risk of a recurrence during their vacation is negligible.

But Saturday's deaths will tell tourists that the risk of an accident at sea is both real and ever-present. Imagine, too, the international press coverage had foreign tourists died in the sinking, as they did in the speedboat accident off Koh Pha-ngan on January 25 – the story would have merited banner headlines around the world.

Blame should be laid squarely on the captain of the ferry, who allowed his boat to become overloaded. Whether this was because of greed or because he was too feeble to refuse passengers is irrelevant. He should also be held responsible for failing to ensure that all passengers were wearing buoyancy aids and for motoring out to sea despite warnings that the weather was turning nasty and that boats should stay in port.

Blame also attaches firmly to the authorities who have failed, yet again, to adequately supervise the local marine transport industry. Undoubtedly, the plaintive cry of "not enough budget" will be heard. This is no excuse. When we have a government that is prepared to consider spending two billion baht on a Disney-style tsunami memorial, then surely there is budget available.

Once again, we will likely witness a knee-jerk crackdown on marine safety from the relevant authorities. This will be resisted by boat operators, who will complain that buying enough regulation buoyancy aids will drive them out of business and that stringent checks are interfering with their right to make a living – and so on.

Within a month or two, if history is any guide, officials will give up and go back to sleep.

This must not be allowed to happen. As has been demonstrated with motorcycle helmet checks, it is possible to sustain a safety campaign for more than five minutes.

The same commitment must be applied to marine safety so that more people do not die unnecessarily.

– The Editor

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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.

Help me find the woman who saved my life

On December 26, 2004, I was in Kamala. When the tsunami came, a local woman helped me climb a telecom mast. She saved my life.

Her name is Pat. I believe she works at Phuket FantaSea or is a friend of people who work there. I gave her my telephone number. Pat and her friend tried to call me, but they didn't speak much English and I do not speak Thai.

Can someone help me find Pat, please? I need only an address to write to, or her telephone number. Her friend gave me a telephone number, but I have been unable to get through.

If I got a number that would work from the UK, I can have someone who speaks Thai call her, and if Pat writes to me, I can get someone to translate her letter.

My address is 30 Victoria St, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0LP, Scotland. UK. My telephone number is +44 1383 623257.

Fenella McEwan
Scotland

Permitting a fiasco

The powers-that-be have said that everyone involved in "good Samaritan" projects to rebuild and aid following the tsunami must have a work permit or else be subject to penalties for failing to do so.

Were the US Navy personnel who recently performed charitable work in Phuket granted work permits?

Was a bureaucrat even dispatched to ensure that the correct

paper trail was followed to allow the seamen to commit these unselfish acts of compassion without the proper red tape?

Large William
Phuket

Absurd audacity

Did the local government issue work permits to the 1,200 American sailors and the US ambassador when they passed out school materials and assisted in cleaning up Kamala recently?

Perhaps this letter should be printed to highlight the short-sighted audacity of the local government in requiring volunteers in cleanup, reconstruction, and general unpaid aid work to have work permits or face fines and/or deportation. In light of the recent tsunami devastation, this is patently absurd.

Farang Rak Thailand
By email

Parental discretion required

Perhaps it's time the *Gazette* made its Kids' Page more relevant by localizing the material. You could even base the quiz (which is usually too hard for children anyway) on recent stories in the *Gazette*. For example:

1. How many times did the elderly Frenchman ejaculate into the two prostitutes? (Good for arithmetic.)

2. Which body part of the missing child in Nam Khem did the soldier find last? (Good for biology.)

3. How many plastic bags were required before the Frenchman got back his ring from the prostitute with diarrhea?

4. What animal does a dead human being most smell like: a) a cow b) a dog c) a pig?

Then perhaps the student who got most answers right could become a trainee editor.

Seriously, just how long will it be before the *Gazette* starts reporting the news within the bounds of good taste acceptable to family newspapers everywhere?

It's plain that decisions about what's fit to print are being made by people (and I suspect all of them must be men) who have no idea what's not acceptable to the island's parents, let alone the island's children.

Or perhaps no-one ever bothers to edit the paper.

I'd rather not read the *Gazette* than put up with the catalog of horror and bad taste that you seem to find suitable for the same young, impressionable minds that you expect to read your Kids' Page.

Please try to find some consistency and common sense.

Marcia Mallows
Rawai

Prayers from the US

I received my 26.12.04 *The Wrath of the Tsunami* book today. It is beautifully done.

I was in Phuket last June and I spent a week at Patong.

I cried as I looked through the book. It is so hard to imagine something so terrible happening to the nicest people I have ever known. It breaks my heart. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims and the survivors.

I know the Thai people will rebuild.

Janis Roguskie
Shenandoah, USA

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

Managing the aftermath

Aspasia has 35 guest rooms, a 40-cover restaurant for fine dining – Columns – an all-day bar, bistro and bakery – Malinas – which can seat 100 people at a time, and a spa with the space to treat five clients at once.

Before the tsunami, the hotel had an occupancy rate of 85%. Since then, it has hovered around 12%. We've had only around one-fifth as many diners in the restaurants as we did before the tsunami – so we've closed Columns, except for functions – and the number of clients at the spa has plummeted by 70%.

"Frustrating" is a good way of describing what things have been like during the past few weeks. The biggest problems for us have revolved around the fact that we are newly opened – at the time of the tsunami we had been open just over two months.

As a result, we are not very well known in the trade and we had not had time to build up an expatriate clientele for the restaurants and the spa. In addition, we are not located in an area with a walk-by trade.

Since the tsunami, there have been several obstacles to rebuilding our business. The first was the inaccurate coverage by the large international media concerns, who should at least have bought an atlas before venturing out.

Second was the travel advisories by certain governments trying to cover previous errors of judgment.

Third, some airlines pulled out of their Phuket routes too

FIRST PERSON

Alstair Why is the Managing Director of the Aspasia Phuket resort, which had been open for just two months on December 26, when the tsunami struck Phuket.

The Aspasia, on high ground above the north end of Kata Beach, was well out of reach of the waves, and none of the staff or guests was killed or badly injured. But for the Aspasia, the tsunami has done far more damage in the weeks since the water left than it did during the minutes the water was on the island.

Like countless hoteliers and others in the tourism business across the island, Mr Why is currently faced with the problem of trying to keep the Aspasia going, while waiting for the tourists to return.

He is happy to admit that, in terms of what happened on December 26, the Aspasia is "one of the lucky ones". Now, though, even the "lucky ones" are in a precarious position, as he explains in this personal account of what it is like to be a hotelier in post-tsunami Phuket.



early. One can make allowances for the charter airlines and the foreign scheduled airlines reducing or cutting flights in the aftermath of the tsunami. But for the national carrier [Thai International Airways] to do so, especially cutting the Australian and some Asian flights, really didn't leave a good feeling.

Many potential tourists already seem to have strange notions about what is going on in Phuket – someone asked me last week if the noise of reconstruction was so bad that they should delay coming to the island.

If they ask, we can reassure

them, but if they can't get a flight, well, that's the end of that. Or, if there are reduced flights, it becomes a longer, more tiresome journey and thus much less appealing. Cutting flights also makes Phuket feel isolated and uncared for.

Fourth, there has been a somewhat understandable fear of disease and/or ghosts by certain nationalities, and this has kept them away.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand could perhaps have reacted more quickly, but given its size, their response time was understandable.

We are different from most other hotels in that we built apartments, sold them leasehold and then made our hotel from the apartments that the lessees lent us to form a "rental pool".

Revenues and expenses are pooled and the profits distributed to lessees, so those taking part will be wondering about financial returns in 2005.

Despite everything, we have kept our staff on; they will be the last to go. Retaining our employees is the least we can do to repay the local community for their bravery in this crisis.

People cannot find jobs eas-

ily; the destruction in Phang Nga province alone has added thousands to the queues of unemployed. Contributing to possible social unrest will undoubtedly backfire on those who prefer the dollar to humanity.

We haven't given pay increases this year, and we have not replaced staff who have left of their own volition, but we have not touched the jobs and salaries of the others.

The relief we felt immediately after the tsunami that the hotel and all the staff were safe has now been replaced with stress over how to keep going until things improve.

We cannot go on indefinitely at these levels of business. We must also continue to maintain some sort of profile, particularly as a new resort, and this does not come cheap, especially with much-reduced revenues. Advertising has to continue, and sales and marketing expenses have to be paid.

In the meantime, we have staff cross-training and staff doing different jobs within the resort, where previously we would have hired temporary staff – a waiter might help with the landscaping, for instance.

Obviously, we aren't the only business going through this right now.

I know from my friends and contacts within the industry that this is widespread.

That said, I remain positive about the future – I am always optimistic, as I believe business is the art of the possible.

I don't have any fingernails left, though.

Can foreign licenses be used to drive in Thailand?

I have seen advertisements from a company called "International Automobile Association Inc" offering international driving licences valid for six to 10 years.

Are these driving licences legal in Thailand? Will they be recognized by the police here?

Mike White
Phuket

I currently hold a Malaysian driving licence and I would like to drive in Phuket. Can I drive in Phuket with my Malaysian licence? Or will I need an international driving licence?

Victor
Malaysia

Teerayuth Prasertphol, Chief Technical Officer of Phuket Provincial Transportation Office (PPTO), replies:

On the first point, no, these licences are not legal for use by drivers on Thailand's roads and as such will not be accepted by the police.

It is possible that there are "International Automobile Association Inc's" in other countries, but a license from them would not permit the holder to drive a vehicle in Thailand.

The only international driving licences that are valid in Thailand are those approved by the transportation office.

As to the question from "Victor", I am pleased to say that there is an agreement that allows people from the Asean countries – specifically Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – to use their home country licences in the other member countries.

In this case, the driver should obtain an English translation of his Malaysian (or other nation's) driving license from his local transportation office.

This will enable him to drive legally in any Asean country.

What visa do I need for a TEFL course?

I will soon be traveling to Thailand and intend to do a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) course while there and subsequently, I hope, find work.

I have a number of questions. First, what is the visa situation? I had planned to do visa runs extending my visa by 30 days each time until I could apply for a work visa, but I am not sure if this is advisable.

Second, could you please explain what my options are? I only have a one-way ticket as I intend to travel to Australia if things don't work out for me in Thailand. Will this be a problem?

Marcus Gosling
UK

Pol Col Chalermpong Vadhana-sukha, Deputy Superintendent of Immigration Division 3 in Bangkok, replies:

You should first ask for a reference letter from the TEFL

school where you are planning to study.

The letter should specify clearly how long you intend to be studying in Thailand.

Take the letter to the Thai embassy or any Thai consulate in your country, along with other necessary documents, and apply for a non-immigrant visa for education.

Your plan to stay in Thailand on a succession of 30-day tourist visas is not advisable.

Issues & ANSWERS

Want to know how to get something done? Can't understand some of the dafter things that seem to go on in Phuket? Want to pitch an idea to Phuket's authorities or institutions? Then this is the forum for you.

Submit your queries or suggestions to us and we'll ask the appropriate people to respond to them.

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

If you are caught studying in the Kingdom while holding only a tourist visa, you could find yourself in trouble with the Immigration Department.

You may even be barred from re-entering Thailand after being stamped out of the country.

As for your air ticket, you will not have to buy a round-trip ticket – provided that you enter the country on the correct, non-immigrant visa for education.

Gmail hits the spot

As Gmail becomes more widely accepted, more and more people will discover that using it is unlike using other free web-based email, such as Yahoo! or Hotmail.

The first thing that newbies to Gmail (<http://gmail.google.com>) will notice is that the interface does not provide folders where you file away emails for future reference. Indeed, this is one of the basic tenets of Gmail, which instead uses "Conversations" as the basis for viewing emails.

Although the concept of "email conversations" is not new, many people are unfamiliar with the term. A "conversation" is simply a collection of all the e-mails that relate to one particular email, including all the emails forwarded to other people, and their replies.

For example, you receive an email from "K. Nut" with "Patong dinner" in the Subject line, and you forward that email to others inviting them to join you, as well as reply to K. Nut agreeing to go. All the emails you sent, by forwarding K. Nut's original e-mail, as well as all the replies from those you invited – together with K. Nut's original email to you and your reply – make up what is known as a conversation.

To keep track of all these emails using Gmail (remembering that filing them into a single folder is not an option), you simply "label" any of the emails in that conversation with an appropriate name, say, "dinner in Patong", and Gmail will create a quick link to the conversation in the green box on the left of the screen.

To label an email, and thus a conversation, when you are viewing your Inbox, place a tick in the box to the left of the email, then go to the drop-down box called "More Actions" at the top of the screen, and select "New label...".

Emails can also be labeled while you are viewing them by following the same steps.

If this sounds too confusing, try giving "conversation view" a run in your current mail client. Most email clients, including Outlook Express, have included this view as an option for years.

In Outlook Express, when you are in either your Inbox or a newsgroup, go to View | Current View and select Group Messages by Conversation. Your

Inbox will now show conversations grouped according to the title given in the Subject line of the original message, and you can set up Outlook Express so that replies to that email are grouped under the original message.

You can then choose to view only the original message, or the message and all its replies. To display the original message and all replies to it, double-click the "+" sign to the left of the original message.

To display only the original message, double-click the "-" sign next to the message.

To display expanded conversations for all messages, go to Tools | Options, click the Read tab, and then select Automatically expand grouped messages.

If you start amassing too many conversations too quickly

in your Gmail account, you can mark conversations with "stars" so they can be accessed easily through the "Starred" button that remains on the left side of the screen no matter what page you are viewing in Gmail. To star a message, click on the light blue star beside any message or conversation.

Of course, if you like using folders to keep track of your e-mails, set up your mail client (Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora, Thunderbird and so on) to download Gmail emails and deal with them as you do with all your other non-web-based email. (See last week's *Gazette*.)

Another aspect of Gmail that newbies will have to get their head around is that Gmail discourages deleting email. Instead, users are asked to Archive emails no longer needed.

For most people, this aspect alone gives pause for thought – how does one find a particular email that might be needed urgently? This is where Search Mail, at the top of the screen, steps in. This is Google – the world's most popular search engine – searching through your email so the chances are good that it will find the mail you want, and fast.

Another Gmail feature that makes things easier is keyboard

shortcuts. Also known as "hot-keys", these shortcuts allow you to compose

an email by simply pressing "c", view the next message by pressing "n", view the previous message by pressing "p", and so on.

To switch on the keyboard shortcuts, log into Gmail, click Settings in the top-right corner, then select "Keyboard shortcuts on". (The default is "off".)

A full list of keyboard shortcuts can be found by clicking "learn more" under the "Keyboard shortcuts:" heading.

Last, but by no means least, the Print function is superbly stripped down, with no sidebar ads or any other rubbish on the print version except the Gmail logo in the top-left corner of the first page. Email looks as though it has been printed using a mail client.

Hoteliers, tour

By Kamol Pirat

PHUKET: Following the events of December 26 – and not surprisingly – the vast majority of tourists left Phuket. Overseas, a similar proportion of those planning to holiday in Phuket canceled their vacations.

Many hotels, otherwise left generally intact by the limited devastation, saw their occupancy rates plummet to 10% or less when, just days before, they had been approaching 100%.

Only the hotels occupied by relief workers and the media have gained anything from the disaster – and even then the gain has been short-term.

The traditional Western holiday season will soon be coming to an end, and the Asian market has yet to embrace Phuket again. Hotel operators are – at best – breaking even.

There has been some improvement, however. Uwe Lukas, the hotel manager of Kata-thani Phuket Beach Resort told the *Gazette* that his hotel has seen occupancy rise to around 40% now, from the January low of 11%.

"We would normally be seeing occupancy of 75% to 80% at this time of year," he said. "Our current occupancy allows the

staff to continue working but the hotel is not turning a profit."

He said that although it may be too early to predict, he feels that the numbers of guests will not rise significantly before the low – or "green" – season begins in April.

Mr Lukas has some optimism that promotions run jointly by his hotel and tour operators will attract more interest than is being shown at present. "We often have Asian and Australian guests during the low season, and the British market has been stronger over the past few years."

He acknowledged that cutting the room rates is a necessary short-term measure, but believes that this will not affect the long-term survival – and quality – of the island's main industry. "I hope that this low season will be as busy as normal [for us] and I expect [the 2005-2006] high season to see occupancy rates top out at around 75%," he concluded.

The general manager of Patong's Royal Paradise Hotel, Dr Jirachai Amornpairaj, said that he is optimistic that government support and promotion for its MICE (Meetings, Conferences, Incentives and Exhibitions) to be held in the affected Andaman provinces will bear fruit.

COMPUTERS

By Chris Husted

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Prospects for

The prospects for global stockmarkets in 2005 look promising. Global economic growth continues and, while different economies reflect differing conditions, the overall situation is good.

Some stockmarkets, including those of Australia, New Zealand, India and many Eastern European countries, are already trading at record levels, when measured by popular indices.

The Middle East – a region that is usually out of most investors' sights – has also produced some excellent returns over the past year.

Many stockmarkets are not at record levels but still look set to deliver good returns this year.

I am always wary of stockmarkets at record levels, but it is only natural that well-managed economies will frequently produce this result.

It is not the intention of this column to lure investors into the stockmarket; investors must always choose investments that they are going to be able to live with comfortably.

It is also important that investors should not hold investments just because they have performed well in the past; they should review the suitability of their holdings frequently.

Take the example of property – especially residential property (though excluding one's own home).

Many of the world's residential property markets have produced excellent returns over the past few years. However, every asset has a price: when residential property markets plummet, investors can find themselves in an unpleasant and illiquid place.

There are more residential property markets at valuation levels that are greatly stretched – by any method of measurement – than at any time in history.

Gold is another investment that needs to be treated with caution. Although prices fell by almost 10% recently, it must be of concern that gold seems to be only a reciprocal of US Dollar

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 By Phuket Air
 (Start at 11.05am. to 18.00pm.)
ONE DAY ONLY

11:05AM. Departure by 9R522 to Hadyai
 12:05AM. Arrival Hadyai International Airport
 Transfer to Border (Thai-Malay)
 Sadao-Changloon (SIC)*
 13:10PM. Immigration process
 14:10PM. Transfer back Hadyai
 International Airport
 15:10PM. Hadyai International Airport,
 Check in, Leisure at Airport and
 wait for the flight
 16:50PM. Departure by 9R525 to Phuket

End of Program

PRICE	PAX
ADULT	2,950
CHILD(2-12YRS)	1,550
INFANT	

Program Includes:
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agents see plenty of hope ahead

He said, "We were 25% full last month and although the European market is showing signs of growth, the Asian market is languishing," he said.

"We must do more to attract Asians here because the European travel season will end soon."

Occupancy rates during the low season tended to average around 60%, he said, but this month he did not expect the figures would exceed 40%.

"Most hotels make enough profit during the high season to subsidize the low months, when they might just break even or make minimal profits," said Dr Jirachai.

He pointed out that Asian tourists, such as the Taiwanese and mainland Chinese, have not yet returned in significant numbers.

"There is only Orient Thai Airlines that flies tourists from [those countries] to Phuket. Thai Airways International (THAI) does not," Dr Jirachai commented.

"And the action of THAI in canceling some flights from Japan and Australia [direct to Phuket] has simply made it worse."

But Dr Jirachai believes tourist confidence will return.

Ponne Thompson, Manag-

ing Director of an online reservations company, said, "We did not take one booking [for Phuket] in January, although we had plenty of cancellations.

"However, some good news is that bookings started again in mid-February, including some from Singapore and Europe.

She explained that tour agents continue to feel the pinch because the hotels have not co-operated with them by offering the agents reduced-rates packages to sell.

"The hotels offer the special packages through their own websites," she said. "Customers will not book through us if they can get a better deal directly from the hotel."

K. Ponne said that the domestic market is an important one to help revive the tourism industry but accused the unnamed hotels of discrimination. "Hotels are refusing to take bookings from Thais who want to take advantage of special online booking rates, and because [the tour agents] are not privy to the special deals, we are also unable to offer them to Thais."

She pointed out that there is still capacity at other destinations in Thailand, such as Hua Hin, Koh Samui and Chiang Mai, and that her company is trying to of-

fer customers who wish to cancel their Phuket holiday an equivalent package elsewhere.

"We are doing what we can to restore a sense of confidence among tourists by providing them with regular email updates on what the current situation [in Phuket] is. They wanted to come here before the tsunami, and they will want to come here again."

Nick Critelli, Marketing Manager of Turismo Asia in Bangkok, which also has a Phuket office, told the *Gazette* that Phuket was formerly a big favorite in its main markets – the UK, Australia and South Africa.

"But now," he said, "Samui, Pattaya and Cha-am are the favored destinations [in Thailand]. Not many people want to go to Phuket."

Although he did not provide numbers of tourists, he said that bookings through Turismo Asia are down by around 20%.

"We have some bookings into Kata-Karon and Cape Panwa but my best guess is that we should start to see occupancy rates and bookings getting back

to normal [only] halfway through the low season," said Mr Critelli.

"The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) should be campaigning harder to promote Thailand. The [next] high season will then be back to normal," he predicted.

He added that he understood the reasons behind hotels not "dumping" prices now in an effort to claw back custom. "It will cause problems later if rates are reduced too much now. Once you reduce the cost of a product, it is very difficult to increase it again – without annoying people."

Opas Netraumpai, Vice-President of the Tourism Council of Thailand and general manager of Club Andaman Beach Resort, said that the resort's current occupancy rate is only 30%.

"It is hard to speculate as to what the occupancy rate will be in a few months' time," he said, "although I can see that the domestic market is beginning to stimulate things down here with Thai families choosing Phuket for their children's school vacations."

He added that although the

Asian market had not returned in droves to Phuket, it, and the Thai market, would have to be the mainstays of the island's tourism industry until November and the start of the next high season.

"The MICE market is bolstering occupancy rates here. We may be operating at a loss and seeing only a 50% occupancy rate but it means that we can keep the hotel open."

There was an altogether more upbeat view of the current situation from Nannarin Punsanit, the accounting manager of Pacific Leisure, who revealed that the company's bookings are down just 10%.

"Our clients book their regular business trips – inbound and outbound – with us so we haven't been affected much, so far.

"Bookings may decrease mid-April and what the long-term outlook will be, no one can say."

K. Nannarin said that it remains essential to promote the region now and through to the next high season.

"The outlook for the tourism industry is – perhaps – better than we think. That said, the next high season is not going to be as good as, say, the 2003-2004 season.

"That's something we must all brace ourselves for."

'We must do more to attract Asians here because the European travel season will end soon.'
– Royal Paradise Hotel General Manager Dr Jirachai Amornpairoj

stockmarkets looking good in 2005

weakness. Does it have any independent merit?

Many stockmarkets do have another attraction. The late 1990s saw most markets soar to unrealistic levels on the back of illogical euphoria. It is in the nature of markets to overreact, so the early 2000s saw indices plunge.

Part of the reason for the '90s boom was the bubble in tech shares, but it was not limited to that sector. As US Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan commented in December 1996, the market was showing signs of "irrational exuberance".

This is standard in any stockmarket, or any market for that matter, at times when the present is rosy and the future seems to be paved with gold.

This is always followed by a correction or crash as share prices lose touch with reality. Price/earning ratios (PEs) – the price of a share divided by the dividend – have very definite ceilings; once they are substantially exceeded, an investor is in dangerous territory.

Investors in tech shares generally totally ignored the basics, and PEs on America's Nasdaq averaged 190 at its peak.

When one considers that a PE of 30 is generally regarded as expensive, it's no wonder the



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

market crashed. It would be the equivalent of driving at 500 kilometers an hour on a main highway.

The collapse of markets brought a return to reality, but the doom and gloom over its extent was unwarranted.

When people try to drive at 500kmh, it is illogical to blame the road for any subsequent accident. Yet investors seem to have no hesitation in blaming stockmarkets for their losses.

To be fair, Americans I have met seem to be the most rational about abrupt market movements. The worst investors, I am sad to say, were the British, who as a nation seemed to believe that the stockmarket had personally betrayed them.

In general (and there are many exceptions), they jumped instead into the residential housing market, apparently oblivious to the fact that this is – as the name implies – simply another market, and an alternative asset class.

They had already forgotten the history of the residential prop-

erty market in Britain between 1989 and 1993. Greed overcomes fear and ignorance is bliss – well, at least for a while.

The case in favor of stockmarkets at present is that, in most countries, Mr Greenspan's "irrational exuberance" is absent. Firms, in general, are increasing their profits at a respectable rate, and this allows PE ratios to remain sensible in a rising market.

This is a good time to invest, as opposed to periods when every second person you meet is giving you stockmarket advice – that is the time to get out. There is an old stockmarket adage: "When secretaries and taxi drivers are giving stockmarket tips, it is time to sell."

For investors who are interested in the UK stockmarket, it may be of interest that indices have been climbing for almost two years. In fact, they have risen about 50% since their lows.

For several reasons, they are not overvalued because of this rise.

First, the market fell too far before, to unrealistically low lev-

els. Second, corporate profits are good and the overall economic climate is reasonable.

Also, the Bank of England, the central bank, may start reducing interest rates from the second quarter of 2005. It raised them to cool the housing market and restrain consumers from incurring too much more debt.

It appears to have achieved its objective, and may need to cut rates again to stop the housing boom turning into a "bust".

Whether it can, in reality,

control this is another matter. For stockmarket investors, falling short-term interest rates will be good news, though it is unlikely that the Bank of England will reduce interest rates by more than 0.5% this year.

Richard Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial planning service. He can be reached at Tel and Fax: 076-381997, Mobile: 01-081-4611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th.

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Three in a row for Yo!

MALAYSIA: For the third year running, Peter Ahern's *Yo!* has won the Racing class of the BMW Royal Langkawi International Regatta 2005, held from February 27 to March 5.

Strong winds prevailed throughout the Langkawi regatta. Gusts of up to 20 knots, particularly consistent on the third day of racing, saw more than a few regular sailors turn green with the large swells.

The conditions also saw a collision on Day 3 on the crowded start line, between *Fistral* and *Regolarita 2*, putting both yachts out of action for the rest of the regatta.

SonnenKoenig came second in every race in the Racing class, hence placing second overall, while *Uluvalu* came third.

Phuket-based *Switchblade* consistently came fourth and last in class throughout the event. However, better results are expected in later regattas, as the Langkawi event was *Switchblade's* second major race outing.

Sailors from Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC) dominated the rest of the regatta, winning all but two of the remaining classes.

La Samudra won every race in the Premier Cruising class, with ACYC yacht *Emerald Blue*

coming second overall and *Bo-lero*, from Holland, third.

Minx, out of Chalong, won the IRC1 class, while *Abraxas*, from Singapore, came second overall. Malaysia-based *Beaux Esprits* came third.

However, luck was not on Scott Duncanson's side in the Sports boat class. His Phuket 8, *Securicor Somtam Express*, finished in equal first place overall with *KDP II*, on seven points.

Although the two boats each scored three wins, *Somtam* was relegated to second place overall as *KDP II* had won the most recent race.

KDP I came third overall in the class.

But it was in the Multihull Racing class that ACYC sailors

simply outclassed their Langkawi competition, with *Chameleon*, *Charro* and *No Fixed Address* – all from ACYC – coming first, second and third overall.

Kilo, also from ACYC, won the Multihull Cruising class, coming in ahead of *Sedna* and *Lighten Up*.

Jim Ellis on Chalong-based *Remington* won the Club class, ahead of *Chantique* and third-place *Pinocchio*, both of which are based in Langkawi.

Blue Jay, from Chalong, won the Live Aboard class. *Sunshine Forever* came second overall, while *Fistral* came third.

In the Classic class, *Lady M* came first overall, with *Isobar* coming second and *Musytari* finishing third.

Cricket Sixes gearing up

PHUKET: The organizers of the 2005 Phuket International Cricket Sixes have announced changes to the tournament format from last year's inaugural competition.

The five-day event – to be held April 6 to 10 at the Karon Municipal Stadium – will feature games played 20/20 or "Quickie Cricket", a new style of one-day play. Additionally, a floodlit match will be played on April 8.

Key organizer Michael

Maher, said that preparations have been slower than expected this year because of the tsunami.

"We could do with help of almost every kind," he said. "Everything from sponsorship – various packages are available or we can tailor a package if necessary – to umpires [are needed]."

For more information call Tel: 076-289110 or email Mr Maher at: mmaher.padmira@bigpond.com.

Lee wins Thai Open

By Andy Johnstone

PHUKET: Rough winds may have shaken a few buds but did little to put Richard Lee off his stroke in the Thai Airways International Open 2005. Lee took the honors – and a check for US\$78,500 – in his first Asian Tour title win.

The 31-year-old New Zealander carded a final round of two-under-par 70 on a blustery day at Blue Canyon Country Club to tie overnight joint leader Australian Scott Barr on nine-under-par 279.

Lee went on to win the first sudden-death hole with a par as Barr, who had held at least a share of the lead since the first day, bogeyed after a drive went askew.

The master of understatement, as well as the green, Lee was heard to say, "I've struggled for a long time and it's nice to finally win an event, it really is."

This was the second time that Singapore-based Barr had

lost in a play-off in his search for his first Asian Tour title. "It was a tough day to play but I played well and hung in there till the end, [but] a play off can go any way," said Barr, who lost in a shootout to Colin Montgomerie in the 2003 Macau Open.

The winner of the recent Myanmar Open, Australian Scott Strange – who made the gentlemanly move of calling a rule infringement on himself en route to a 72 – finished third.

American Bryan Saltus ended on 280 while India's rising star Harmeet Kahlon finished fifth, a further stroke back, after a closing 74.

Prayad Marksang, who came in at joint sixth, was the highest-placed Thai contender, shooting 73 for a 285 total in the final day's play.

India's Jeev Milkha Singh and Angelo Que of the Philippines, who both began the day looking like contenders, faded badly with 78s for a share of 10th place.

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New Zealander Richard Lee proudly holds aloft the Thai Open trophy, marking his first Asian Tour title win.

Photo by Paul Lakatos/Asian Tour.

Lee said he thought his playing days were numbered during last week's Myanmar Open, where he shot 80 and 75 to miss the cut.

"Last week, I absolutely hated the game. In the last nine holes of my second round, I started to tinker with my swing and I found something.

"This week, I started to putt better and things just came into place. This [win] opens many doors for me."

Final round scores of the top 12 players:

279. Richard Lee 70-70-69-

70, Scott Barr 65-68-74-72. (Lee wins in first hole of sudden-death shootout with a par).

280. Bryan Saltus 70-72-70-68, Scott Strange 68-67-73-72.

281. Harmeet Kahlon 70-70-67-74.

285. Ross Bain (Scotland) 72-73-71-69, Larry Austin (Australia) 72-69-72-72, Chris Rodgers (England) 70-70-73-72, Prayad Marksang 72-70-70-73.

286. Wang Ter-chang (Taiwan) 72-73-70-71, Jeev Milkha Singh 65-69-74-78, Angelo Que 71-70-67-78.

Charity fun run raises B800,000

PHUKET CITY: Richard Schildknecht, 41, won the main 10.5-kilometer race in the 5th Plookpanya Mini Marathon March 6, in a time of 37.25 minutes.

Mr Schildknecht, from Switzerland, was presented with a trophy by Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana.

A total of 1,629 runners competed in the event's two classes – 10.5km and 3.5km.

The fun run raised 800,000 baht towards the cost of organizing after-school activities for the pupils of Plookpanya School.



Richard Schildknecht is all smiles after winning the 10.5-kilometer race in the 5th Plookpanya Mini Marathon.

Fore! Skins attracts big players

KATHU: World-class golfers Colin Montgomerie and Thomas Bjorn are set to compete in the Tiger Skins golf tournament at Blue Canyon Country Club in April.

Montgomerie and Bjorn will join two-time US Open winner Retief Goosen and top Asian woman golfer Se Ri Pak, of Korea, for the event, which will take place on April 16.

The following day there will be a charity pro-am tourney and public golf clinic.

All four players will wear wireless microphones for the tournament, enabling the audience to hear the banter between them, and the event is set to be broadcast on international television.

The Tiger Skins is being brought to Phuket to boost tourism in the region following the tsunami, and sponsor Thai Asia Pacific Brewery, which produces Tiger Beer, has said the total

prize money of 7 million baht will be donated to the relief effort.

Two-time Ryder Cup team member Bjorn said, "The Skins game is a good format for spectators and TV – something happens on every hole; there's en-

tertainment in the game all the way."

Tickets – at 300 baht each – will be available from Thai Ticketmaster from March 14, through www.thaiticketmaster.com or via the call center at Tel: 02-2049999.

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There's been another disaster in the village. The proprietors of a local hostelry were running a farmyard – chickens, dogs, cats and the like. The chickens actually started with Henrietta, a bantam that was discovered with a broken leg after being hit by a car.

Henrietta slowly recovered in a cardboard box with a little help and encouragement from the proprietors and the clientele.

Eventually she was doing normal things like eating the crumbs from the tables and bars, crapping from the rafters, and generally behaving like your average everyday resident pub chicken.

Next thing you know, there was a small black rooster around. Again, a normal enough rooster, preening, crowing, strutting and crapping from the rafters. Then there were eggs, and the next thing you know, baby chicks.

All this was very nice until the resident snake got in on the act, and very quickly there was only one chick left. However, after that, things went along quite well; the remaining chick was growing up and the family carried on happily. Then, suddenly, disaster struck.

The staff turned up one morning to find all three chickens dead outside the door. General opinion among those who know about such things is that a couple of resident dogs had got hold of one chicken, the others

Farmyard tragedy and triumph



The pig is apparently happy in its new home, and will not return to the roadside in Baan Manik.

had come to help and, in the heat of battle, the dogs had disposed of the whole lot.

Frankly, I don't buy this story. I find it far more likely the culprit was one of those evil cats that like to kill for fun.

Another rumor whispered

in secret corners is that it could have been one of the "village GOMs". That's another story, but for a clue, remember the delightful movies with Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau, actually their last. If you remember the name of those movies you'll

know what a GOM is. There'll be more on the 'village GOMs' in the near future.

Yes! It's the pig! Here it is in full color, but sadly it seems that nothing can be done to get it back to "Pig Village". So it will remain

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Graham Doven

in its secret new home, and that's an end to the matter as far as the pig is concerned.

However, the gentleman who rediscovered it is determined that its memory should live on in the original location, perhaps in the form of another pig made from something less substantial than concrete (you'll recall that the authorities were worried that a motorcyclist hitting a concrete pig might come off worse, which is why it disappeared). Perhaps a lit sign with a picture of the original pig would serve, or possibly a plastic pig on a pole.

His plan, he explained, is to "set up a management committee and a board of trustees, initially for the installation of a new pig and then for the on-going supervision and maintenance required."

Whatever transpires, the main aim should be for the residents of Phuket once again to be able to get their bearings and bark into the mobile, "I'll only be a few minutes. I've just passed the pig."

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Construction Update

by Anongnat Satpisut



Layan's main attraction

Work has started on the 400-million-baht resort-style Layan Gardens development, which is perched on 14 rai of hillside land overlooking Layan Beach.

Construction of the "community resort" project began last month and is expected to be complete by October 2006.

The development will comprise five three-story buildings, each with eight units: three units on the ground level, two units on

the second floor and two penthouses on the top floor.

The units are available in three designs – there will be two two-bedroom units, 20 "standard" three-bedroom units, eight "large" three-bedroom units and 10 penthouses – with living areas ranging from 200 square meters up to 600sqm.

The interior design to be used throughout the development will be "modern, luxurious and high-quality", say the developers, and will make extensive use of teak and maka wood, tiles imported from Spain and Italy, and top-quality, European-style built-in kitchens from well-known manufacturers such as Teka and Fagor.

In line with the "community resort" concept, shared facilities will include three swimming pools and a pool bar, a tennis court, seven *sala* and a barbecue area. There will also be a shuttle bus service to ferry residents to and from Layan village and the nearby beach, as well as the Laguna complex.

Electricity supply and telephone lines – two per unit – will be underground, as will the wa-

ter supply, which will be supported by a well-water reservoir to ensure continual supply. Each unit will have a reverse osmosis water-purification system to provide potable tap water.

Paul Moorhouse, Managing Director of Layan Gardens, said, "Our main target customers are expats who have lived and worked in Asia for a long time, in places such as Hong Kong, Singapore or Beijing, and Europeans who have retired or are looking for a second home away from their home country, say, Scandinavia, Spain or France."

Instead of spending the winter in their country, they can enjoy the sunshine in Phuket."

Mr Moorhouse added that the Thai market is also being targeted.

"Most of our customers are attracted by word of mouth," he said. They know the quality of our previous projects, including

Above, the view from the site. Below, the standard ground-floor layout.



Lakeshore Villas, Lakewood Hills and Plaza Del Mar. This is another quality project which is receiving good feedback.

"So far, 14 of the 40 units have been sold. We expect all units to be sold by the end of September this year," he said.

Prices for the Layan Gardens units range from 15.45 million baht to 29.95 million baht.

For more information can contact Layan Gardens at Moo 6, Layan, Cherng Talay, Thalung, Phuket 83110. Tel: 01-8936602. Email: sales@layangardens.com. Website: www.layangardens.com

Gardening

Prickles

There are really only two types of people in this world – those who like dogs and those who prefer cats. There doesn't seem to be much room for maneuver or middle ground; that's just the way it is.

I'm a die-hard dog lover. These are animals that you can relate to, unlike those sneaky, sly felines. Dogs choose to be with you because they like you.

Not so with cats. They do a Steve-McQueen-style *Great Escape* runner as early as they can in the day. Some owners even make life easier for the little darlings by cutting a little hole in the bottom of their front door.

Later on in the day, once boredom has set in and they've become tired of killing birds and noisily fighting the other cats in the neighborhood, they return home.

They attempt to communicate their feelings for you by doing that sycophantic head-rubbing-on-the-leg nonsense, and if that doesn't get your attention, they start that annoying purring noise. So you feed them.

Now that they've got what they wanted they're off again. Who knows, they might even give you a good bite or a hefty scratch with their claws on the way out, just so that you don't forget who's really in charge.

You may have guessed that I'm not exactly the world's most ardent cat lover. I had a particular problem with cats leaving pungent liquid gifts in my plant pots a few years ago before I had a bit of a brainwave.

There's a cactus in this part of the world that cunningly disguises itself as a regular plant, but with plenty of traditional cactus spines attached for good measure.

A few of these in pots miraculously solved my cat problem almost overnight. For some inexplicable reason, they weren't particularly keen to return.

The cactus that managed to achieve this was the *Pereskia bleo*, or rose cactus. In Thai it's known as the *gulaab pukam*. Just between us, it took me some time to realize that this was actually a member of the cactus family, as it certainly doesn't look like one. It's an easy mistake to make.

All 13 species in the *Pereskia* family are so different from

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Pereskia bleo doesn't look like a cactus – but it is.

all other kinds of traditional cactus, that when you first see them they look like regular plants. They have erect stems and branches, and usually form dense, large bushes. The branches look woody and thin, and have dozens of large, laurel-like leaves. In fact, as far as I'm aware, this is the only cactus with leaves.

Being a cactus though, *Pereskias* do have spines. On the *Pereskia bleo*, they come in little tufts that you'd hardly notice, unless you were a cat, or you were daft enough to grab a stem.

Another thing that the rose

cactus has in common with all its cousins is the spectacular array of flowers. On most species of cactus you have to wait half a century for the flowers to appear. The rose cactus is much more generous, with the flowers appearing almost continually somewhere on the plant.

The flowers themselves are unusual: they're a vivid orange, five or six centimeters across, and look very much like a rose. They usually appear singly at the ends of the matured branches.

As with other varieties of cactus, this is a succulent plant. In other words, it has fleshy stems

that can store water. The young branches can put up with long periods of drought without suffering at all.

If anything, they seem to enjoy it, especially if they can get plenty of full sun, and for those of you who like to know these things, the rose cactus is propagated by taking and planting cuttings.

Left to its own devices, this cactus can become big and wild, yet it never looks straggly. There is a two-meter tall example near my house that sits there quietly in the background with its orange blooms beaming away. It hasn't had a moment's attention for years but it still looks fantastic.

Nicholas F. Peresk, a 16th-century French botanist, was the first to give this oddity a label, when he was traveling in Mexico and Brazil. If he were around now, he might be a little shocked at my suggestion for *pereskia bleo*'s 21st-century pest-repellent application. Let's just hope he wasn't a cat-lover.

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Chalong

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This contemporary-style house of 276 square meters sits in a secluded 739-sqm garden with a 28-sqm swimming pool. One of only 10 units in a quiet estate in Chalong, the house's proximity to all amenities makes it an ideal family home.

A long driveway leads through the grounds, which are laid to lawn and enclosed by a high wall, to a double garage that might also be used as a laundry or storeroom.

The design of the house is well thought-out. The main entrance is to the side of the house and leads into a large living and dining area, and a well-equipped Western kitchen. Sliding French doors lead out onto the patio and to the swimming pool.

Leading off the living area are three bedrooms, all of which have en-suite bathrooms, fans and mosquito screens.

Above the garage is a separate guest bedroom with en-suite bathroom and a living-cum-kitchen area, which could serve as a separate apartment or maid's quarters.

The house, which is offered for sale furnished, has a telephone line, water heaters, well water and three-phase electricity. The title is Chanote and the price is 11.8 million baht.

For more information contact Richard Lusted, Siam Real Estate. Tel: 076-280805. Email: info@siamrealestate.com Web: www.siamrealestate.com



Top row: the front of the house and the kitchen; Middle row: two views of the living room; Right: the family-size pool.



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Property Gazette

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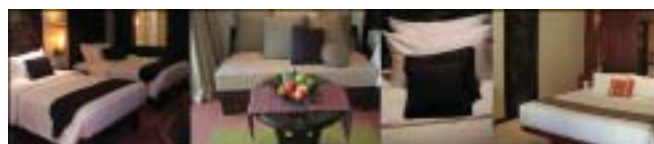


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Tout, Trader & Trumpet



The Touring 36



The utility series from Gulf Craft including the Walkaround 31 pictured. Models from 31 - 36ft in open-plan, cabin cruiser and patrol configurations, with various engine options available. Stock Walkaround 31 arriving soon with single diesel inboard.

The Walkaround 31



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QUICK SALE

A great business opportunity on Sai Yuan Rd in Rawai is up for quick sale (with or without company). 1,000sqm freehold land (Chanote title),

- *44-cover restaurant,
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1 shop in Patong Tower, another shop on Patong Beach. Tel: 076-344715, 01-797-7199.

ADSL NETWORK CAFE AND GAMES

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FORCED SALE - RESTAURANT/BAR

Kamala main road. aircon, seats 40, well-established. Walk in to take over remaining 7-year-lease at 6,000 baht per month. Call 076-385940 after 4 pm.

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for sale. freehold guesthouse. 10 rooms + room to build a small pool. 7.3 million baht, or will sell 6-year lease. Tel: 076-342280, 01-9781956. Email: palm@phuket.ksc.co.th

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Alcoholics Anonymous

is holding meetings in English at the following places:

Phuket City

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
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will be established soon in the Southern Fried Rice restaurant/guesthouse in Kata Night Bazaar. You will be able to play chess every day in a permanent chess room or in the restaurant. Please contact for details and to register interest. Tel: 01-8948446. Email: sfrkata@hotmail.com

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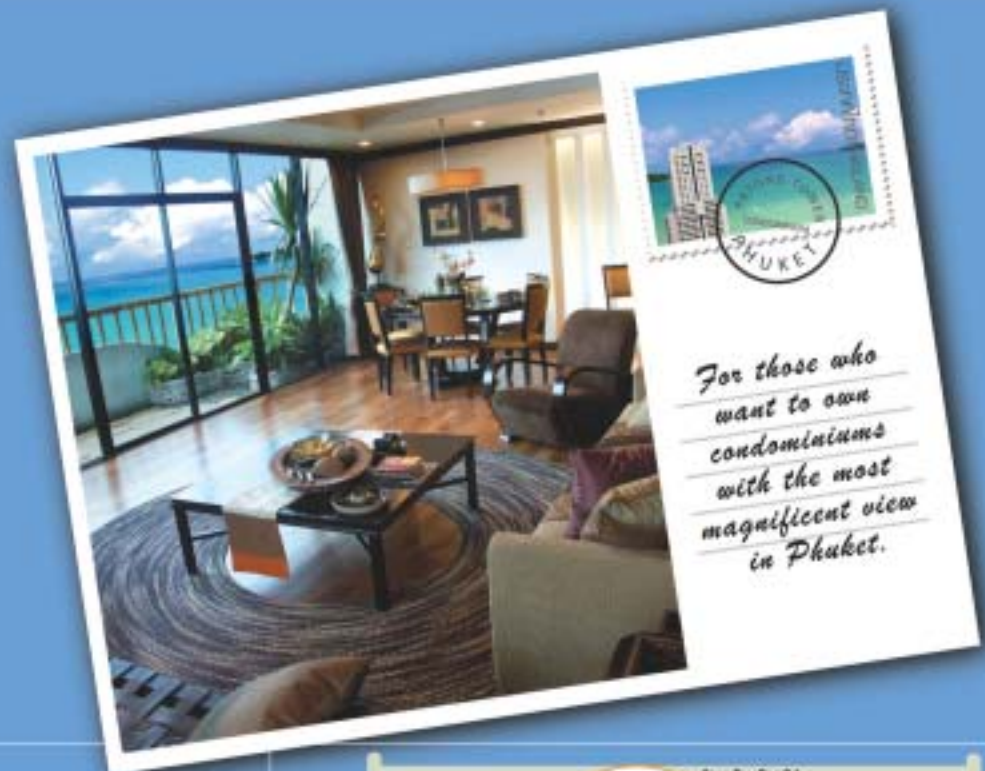
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Project Owner with 110 units: Divine Property and development Co., Ltd. Registered capital: 1,000,000 baht (fully paid). Address: 2 The Royal Place I, G floor, room No. 2, Soi Mahadokklung 1 Rajdamri Rd., Lumpinee, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330. Managing Director: Miss Sakul Sawatwala. Project size: One 32-story tower containing 165 units. Land title deeds 2090, 2379, 2380, 2381 Project area: 1-1-32 rai Part of the land is under obligation with Kasrak Finance Plc. Site location: Taweewong Rd., Patong subdistrict, Kato district, Phuket. Condominium registration No. 3/2540. Ready to transfer ownership within 30 days from the day of sale, providing full payment has been made.



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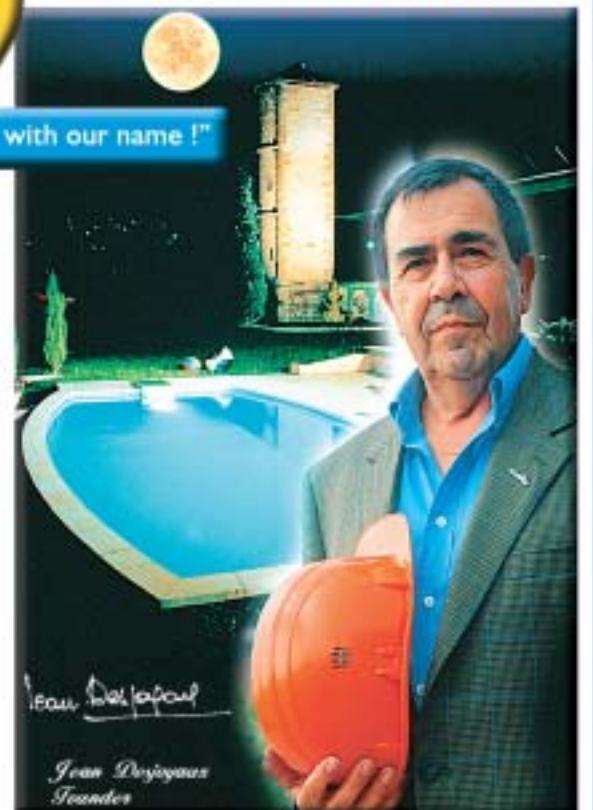
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