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Mixed reviews for evacuation drill

By Anongnat Sartpisut & Stephen Fein

PATONG: The evacuation drill of the southern half of Patong Beach on Friday, April 29 received mixed reviews, from both tourists and the many government officials who attended.

Arriving by helicopter shortly after 10 am, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra met a crowd of some 2,000 volunteer evacuees, many of them children, wearing T-shirts made specially for the event.

Also on hand were diplomats from 22 countries, including the ambassadors of Germany, Austria, the UAE, Greece, Kazakhstan and Qatar, as well as representatives of international relief agencies, including the Red Cross.

They were seated, along with other dignitaries, in a tent on the beach at the foot of Soi Bangla, from where they could view the evacuation from different angles by watching large-screen televisions.

In his speech, PM Thaksin said the drill was an important way to prevent loss of life should there be another natural disaster and also to show the world that it is safe for tourists to return to Thailand's Andaman coastline.

The Prime Minister added that the government would push ahead with its plan to install an early warning system using a network of offshore buoys, regardless of whether other countries chose to join in, because the safety of residents and tourists was its top priority.

He said he was glad that information about tsunamis was now being included in school curricula, recalling how a 10-year-old British schoolgirl on



Run for your lives! 'Evacuees' wearing T-shirts printed specially for the occasion, lead the charge away from the beach.

vacation at Mai Khao Beach was able to save her family and others because she had learned about tsunamis in her geography class.

"Foreigners know about tsunamis," he stated. "Here in Thailand, we didn't learn about them until December 26," he said, pausing to let the ramifications of the statement sink in.

PM Thaksin also commented that there were not enough signs indicating the evacuation routes. He later presented one such sign to Patong Mayor Pian Keesin, who bowed deeply and gave a big wai upon acceptance.

After speeches by Deputy Interior Minister Somsak Thepsutin, Phuket Governor Udomsak Usawarangura and then himself, PM Thaksin pushed the button at about 10:30 am to begin the drill.

A series of loud calls began

from the three siren towers, each of about one-second duration and with an eerie, falling cadence. The volunteers began to run off the sand, along the beach road to Soi Bangla, and then outside the "risk zone", defined as anything on the beach side of Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd, which was as far as the December 26 tsunami waves reached.

The drill was based on the assumption that future tsunamis would resemble the December 26 disaster in terms of force, wave height and progress inland.

The volunteers, photographed and filmed by the hundreds of local, national and international media present, were directed toward "safety" and encouraged to move faster by rescue workers and police, many of whom were blowing whistles. A TV cameraman was seated in a cherrypicker above Soi Bangla,

Continued on page 4

High anxiety as Dulwich talks come to a close

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET: Teachers and parents of students at Dulwich International College (DIC) were waiting anxiously as the Gazette went to press to learn the outcome of a May 3 meeting of the board of Dulwich College in London (DCL) which could decide, after weeks of intense negotiations, whether DIC is allowed to keep the "Dulwich" in its name.

Negotiating on behalf of DCL in talks in Phuket and Bangkok was Ralph Mainard, DCL's Deputy Master with responsibility for external relations.

On April 28, frustrated parents gave a bumpy ride to Mr Mainard when they met him at the Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket.

The parents were particularly irked by consistently polite refusals by Mr Mainard to reveal precisely what the two sides disagreed on, although he did tell them he hoped decisions would be reached very soon.

"No final resolution has been reached," Mr Mainard said, "but I think all parties are now very aware of the big issues. I hope decisions will be made in the next few days."

Pressed as to what the "big issues" are, he said, "I am constrained in what I can and cannot say."

Asked what he thought were the chances of an agreement being reached that will allow DIC to keep "Dulwich" in its name, he said, "I'm optimistic – 80%". When this was greeted with collective horror, he swiftly revised the number up to 90%.

"We are much, much closer than we were when I arrived 10

Continued on page 2

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High anxiety for all at DIC

From page 1

days ago. I hope by next week we will all know," he stressed.

Mr Mainard also told the meeting that both "sides" had agreed the previous week that unless a deal could be struck, the Dulwich franchise will end on June 24.

The row initially erupted after Mr Mainard visited the school in March to make an annual inspection. His report, though it expressed satisfaction with the academic aspects and "ethos" of the school, was critical of its management.

Criticisms included the state of the school's refectory (canteen) and the fact that teachers' morale was low, partly because some did not have contracts and therefore felt insecure, and partly because teachers on expatriate packages face having to pay more tax.

But the situation reached crisis point last month, when Headmaster David Cook was peremptorily sacked by DIC, without reference to DCL.

Mr Mainard described Mr Cook's reinstatement as "an issue in the talks". From London's point of view, he added, a headmaster cannot simply be sacked.

Central to the talks, however, is how much control each side has in the school.

DCL clearly believes that

the headmaster should have "more overall control", while Dr Arthit Ourairat's thinking appears to run in the opposite direction. Following the sacking of Mr Cook, he hired four directors, one of them being the Academic Director, or headmaster.

Also under discussion is the make-up of the school's board, which currently consists of people appointed by Dr Arthit. DCL would like to see a wider representation. Talks have also centered, Mr Mainard said, on "how far a board of governors is able to govern the management of the school".

Central to this is the wording of the franchise agreement. The current agreement, Mr Mainard said by way of example, mentions that DCL should have a say in the appointment of a headmaster, but does not address the topic of his dismissal.

Despite Mr Mainard's professed optimism, it was clear that the two sides are still some way from being the best of friends. The school has nearly 800 pupils, yet only 150 parents and teachers attended the meeting. Many said they knew about it only when friends sent them SMSs.

Mr Mainard said DCL had not been allowed access to DIC's database of parents' contact details, and had to rely on the Parent-Teacher Association's far-from-complete list to spread the word.

And, in what seemed to many to be a slap in DCL's face, Debbie Cook, wife of the fired headmaster, was herself sacked on April 28 by DIC.

The following day, the Deputy Head of Secondary, Tim Creber, was, in effect, demoted, and two teachers already hired from the UK for Deputy Head posts, but not yet arrived in Phuket, were told that they could still come, but as regular teachers only.

Mayor ducks out of dismissals debate

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET CITY: Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana has insisted it is back to business as usual following her sudden sacking of her three deputies on April 8.

Mayor Somjai denied that she was locked in any kind of dispute with the former deputies – Ayuth Tansiroj, Niwas Aroonrat and Piya Siamhan, all members of the Kohn Noom ("Young Turks") party which had ruled the city for around three decades.

K. Niwas was appointed a consultant to the mayor, but K. Ayuth, whose cousin founded the



Mayor Somjai: 'I'm going to put a stop to the bickering.'

Young Turks, held a meeting on April 22 at which he claimed to have been unfairly dismissed and

called for the mayor herself to resign within three days – or face a petition aimed at forcing her from office.

However, Mayor Somjai told the *Gazette* on May 1, "This is an internal matter, within the Khon Noom party.

"I just want to put this situation behind me and get on with my work. They could say something, I could say something back, then they could say something back to that, and so on – it could drag on forever.

"I'm not going to let that happen. I'm going to put a stop to the bickering, and get back to my work," she said.

Woman 'drowns' in tin mine

KOH KAEW: Police on April 26 recovered the body of Som Taem-ngam, 45, which was floating on a car tire in a tin mine lagoon north of Dulwich International College.

It is believed that she drowned while washing her clothes on the bank of the lagoon while drunk.

Pol Maj Wacharin Jirathithikarlwiat, of Phuket City Police Station, said that K. Som's husband, Sommit Sompinit, 36, told police that both he and K. Som were drunk the previous night, and that she went to wash clothes in the lagoon, but fell into the water and drowned.

"He went looking for K. Som and found her body at about 8 pm, and placed it on a car tire and left it floating in the lagoon," Maj Wacharin said.

"He then went to his relatives' home nearby, but did not report her death to the police because he was scared," he added.

Disasters seminar held to boost understanding

PHUKET CITY: Government officers and people involved in the hotel trade and other tourism-related businesses in the six Andaman provinces struck by the December 26 tsunami gathered at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on April 30 for a seminar on "earth-based natural disasters".

The event was organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's Department of Mineral Resources (DMR).

The aim was for those taking part to learn more about natural disasters, how to mitigate their effects, and how to respond to them quickly and efficiently.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Yongyuth Tiyapairat said the event helped to clarify who should be respon-

sible for which aspect of mitigation and response.

K. Yongyuth said that a book on natural disasters, published by the DMR, will be placed in schools, public libraries and government offices.

The book is currently available in Thai only, said K. Yongyuth, but a version in English will be available soon.

Said K. Yongyuth, "We hope that, after taking part in this seminar, hotel and tourism business owners will have a better understanding of their responsibilities with regard to such natural disasters.

"We hope, too, that we can get the word out that Thailand is still a safe destination, that tourists can be confident that they are safe when they stay with us."

– Athiga Jundee



Natural Resources and Environment Minister Yongyuth Tiyapairat: helping to clarify responsibilities.

APOLOGY

Mr Thongchai Wongavatchanakarn has prosecuted me (Mr Georg Dietlmeier) at Phuket Provincial Court on a charge of trespass and mischief. I hereby admit that I am guilty. I wish to apologize to Mr Thongchai Wongavatchanakarn and to express my gratitude to Mr Thongchai Wongavatchanakarn for forgiving me and withdrawing the case against me.

Mr. Georg Dietlmeier
Announcer

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Opening of night bazaar deferred for a year

PHUKET: Construction of the Phuket International Night Bazaar (PINB) has been put back by a year and the number of shops it will include has been slashed by 80%, because of the tsunami.

Builders should have started work on the 170-rai site off Chao Fa West Rd in March, and the Bazaar should have been completed by November, ready for the start of the high season.

However, PINB Managing Director Dr Chintana Daengdej told the *Gazette* that the project had been deferred for a year.

In addition, just 2,000 units will be built, rather than the 10,000 in the original plan.

Dr Chintana said the firm stopped marketing the project in January, after realizing how badly the tsunami had hit local businesses. The earthquake of March 28 had not helped matters.

She said, "Investors in Bangkok are too worried to invest in Phuket right now. Phuket businesses may want it to open soon, but as our target group is tourists, it made sense to us to wait until next year.

"This is not a good year to invest in business. I talked to the people interested in renting units and we agreed that we should aim to open at the end of next year.

"We intended that 70% of the visitors we would attract would be tourists; usually Phuket gets about four million visitors a year, but I can't see that being the case this year."

Dr Chintana added that she had heard that other developers have delayed major projects.

Although the revised plan contains fewer units, the units will be three times bigger than originally proposed - 15 square meters rather than 5sqm.

Dr Chintana said, "Only around one-third of the development will be taken up by shops, rather than 50 per cent, as under the original plan. That means we can have more attractive public areas to attract tourists."

- Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

Princess to visit tsunami survivors

PHUKET: HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn is due to tour Phuket, Ranong and Phang Nga on May 12 and 13 to visit victims of the tsunami.

The Princess is scheduled to be in Phuket on May 13, when she will visit Baan Bang Rong in Thalang to donate fishing boats, kitchen equipment and scarves and caps to Muslim residents.

HRH is due to start her tour in Ranong Province on May 12, arriving in Suksamran District around 9 am to see how local people are raising goats and catching crab and sea bass before donating seven fishing boats, cooking equipment and money for scholarships to tsunami survivors.

From there, the Princess will go to Kuraburi, Phang Nga Province, where she

will donate agricultural equipment, construction materials, water tanks and cooking equipment to residents.

Before coming to Phuket on May 13, the Princess will also visit Koh Yao, where she will donate construction equipment and watch people learning to make batik.

She is due to leave from Phuket International Airport at 3 pm the same day.

New Labor boss aims at 1-day work permits

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

PHUKET: The new head of the Phuket Provincial Employment Service Office (PESO) has instructed his staff to issue work permits to qualified foreigners on the same day they apply.

Boonchock Maneechot, 53, told the *Gazette* he would try to implement new technology and shake up the "old style" bureaucratic mentality at the offices, which in the past has left some applicants waiting months for work permits to be approved.

Officers there are also being encouraged to develop a "service mentality" that would include greeting the public with a cordial *sawasdee*, he said.

"For qualified applicants who have all their paperwork in order, we should be able to complete work permits in just one day [including getting final approval from Vice-Governor Winai Buapadit]," he said.

Previously head of the Ra-



Boonchock Maneechot hopes to shake up his department's bureaucratic mentality.

nong's PESO Office, K. Boonchock, a Surat Thani native, took up his post in Phuket on April 18. He noted that Phuket, with 7,000 registered foreign workers, is a far busier officer than Ranong, which has just 47.

"I understand that we have a lot of work to do here. We have about 200 people [Thai and for-

eign] coming to use our services every day. I have to check and sign about 100 work permit applications [or applications for renewals] daily. We're under time pressure, but we want to [streamline the system] so that people don't have to keep returning again and again," he said.

The *Gazette* notes that improvements have already been made; three

reliable sources said that their work permit renewals had been turned around in just two days since K. Boonchock took charge.

The new PESO boss also issued a reminder to foreign workers that applications for renewals must be made before expiry of the existing work permits.

"We have many people who are still confused. Their work permits have already expired when they come and ask for a renewal. I have to explain that, under the Working of Aliens Act, 1978, this is not legal," he said.

Phuket Air lands in trouble again

THAILAND: Phuket Air said on May 3 that it expected to resume its Bangkok-Amsterdam service within days, following a ban of the service by the Dutch civil aviation authorities.

The ban came after it was discovered that an aircraft serving the route had a faulty emergency lighting system and a pilot was found not to have a necessary medical certificate.

Sribenja Semmeesook of Aziam Burson-Marsteller, the public relations agency for Phuket Air, told the *Gazette*, "The reason they suspended the [Bangkok-Amsterdam] service is still not clear.

"There was no need to order the suspension because of the problem with the emergency lighting. Only one of the emergency lights [in a series] was not working, and we have fixed that already.

"Regarding our Filipino pilot, I think it was a misunderstanding between him and the Dutch civil aviation authorities. We are clarifying this with the Dutch [authorities] now."

She added, "I think we will receive permission to [resume the service] soon."

Water authorities weigh options

PHUKET: Phuket Irrigation Office Project Director Watchara Arepornsirir said on May 3 that if rain does not start to replenish Phuket's water reserves by the middle of the month, he will call in the Royal Rainmaking Project.

K. Watchara explained to the *Gazette* that Bang Wad reservoir currently holds 1.9 million cubic meters of water, and that Phuket Provincial Water Supply (PPWS), Phuket City Municipality and the Phuket Irrigation Office together hold an additional 800,000 cubic meters of water in

government-owned tin mines.

But, he added, "If the [government-owned] tin mines run out of water as well, we will not have any water to use.

"If we have no rain by mid-May, we must have artificial rain to supplement the province's water reserves."

Vichit Phuangsombat, the Director of the Southern Meteorological Center (West Coast), stationed at Phuket International Airport, told the *Gazette* that the shifting monsoon winds will soon see rain fall on Phuket.



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Queer News

Larvae carve an itchy niche

CHIANG MAI, PHUKET: Pity the poor housefly. Free of the ethical dilemmas facing humans, all it can aspire to in its short, frenetic life is to pass its genes onto the next generation.

But with drought conditions lingering on in much of the country, flies are apparently finding it more difficult to locate piles of moist excrement in which to lay their eggs.

The next best option, it appears, is inside the body cavities of unsuspecting mammals – preferably in buffalo or other large creatures with big noses and little ability to ward flies off. Perhaps it was only a matter of time before flies would discover that the body cavities of humans offered similarly cosy advantages.

The first such instance reported recently happened in Phuket, where doctors at Wachira Phuket Hospital removed some 50 blood-engorged maggots from inside the ears of Anan Temtan, 84.

K. Anan's relatives rushed him to the hospital on April 26 after he used cotton buds to relieve intense itching in his ears but ruptured his eardrums in the process, causing blood to stream from his ears.

A doctor used tweezers to remove some of the maggots before resorting to a vacuum tool to suck the remaining maggots out.

"We believe flies might have gone inside his ears to lay eggs, which hatched into larvae, causing the itching," said hospital Deputy Director Dr Somsak Nonthasri.

Anan's granddaughter, Wimolrat Temtan, 19, said K. Anan had recently helped clean up a market in his neighborhood.

Dr Somsak said he was surprised that K. Anan had not come to see a doctor sooner. Most people with something inside their ear canals would not be able to stand it for very long, he said.

The next victim reported as falling prey to fly maggots was an unsuspecting pig farmer in Chiang Mai. The 38-year-old woman, whose name was not reported, didn't realize she was host to dozens of infesting larvae until her left cheek became so badly swollen that she needed an immediate operation.

Dr Tawee Thanuparp-rangsarn at Nakhon Ping Hospital in Chiang Mai said the 38-year-old patient came to see him at the end of March, complaining of severe pains in her left cheek. "I checked her nasal cavity and found many fly maggots there," he said.

The doctor explained that the maggots had been feasting on tissue inside the patient's nasal cavity, leaving large festering wounds. The maggots had already eaten away so much tissue that some of the patient's bones were exposed, he added.

The woman was immediately anesthetized and operated on and Dr Tawee removed 34 fly maggots from inside the woman's nose.

"She then needed antibiotics to treat the bacterial infection for five straight days before being allowed to return home," he said, adding that the patient was a pig farmer exposed to a large numbers of flies on a daily basis.

"Probably while she was sleeping, a fly went up her nose and laid its eggs, which then hatched into larvae," the doctor speculated.

Dr Tawee believed this had been Thailand's first reported case of fly maggots growing in a human nose – but will it be the last?

Source: The Nation

Tsunami drill

From page 1

filming the "evacuees" as they passed below.

One onlooker noted with a laugh that the event resembled "a cross between a Chinese fire drill and the start of a marathon".

Meanwhile, five longtail boats that were neatly lined up on the shore headed out to sea in accordance with the evacuation plan, which assumes that it is safer for vessels to ride out tidal waves at sea than be subjected to the waves' devastating force when they hit the shore.

While the evacuees were scurrying up Soi Bangla to the theoretical safety of Soi Saen Sabai, the other side of Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd, a search and rescue mission was staged a few hundred meters offshore. Helicopters swooped in, dropping life rafts, flares and rescue personnel. Several jet-ski operators assisted in the operation, ferrying victims to shore.

There, the "victims" were given mock treatment by emergency medical staff – stretchers and other life-saving equipment at the ready – and then rushed to Patong Hospital.

Meanwhile, the dignitaries, media and scores of curious onlookers were kept informed about the progress of the evacuation by the master of ceremonies.

"Ladies and gentlemen! Eight minutes have passed and evacuees are already arriving at the designated safety zones!" they were told.

The drill was declared a success 15 minutes after it had begun, the MC announcing that all of the volunteers, both on land and floating at sea, had made it to safety.



PM Thaksin (pictured) said the drill was an important way to prevent loss of life should there be another natural disaster.

But the siren tower, being put through its paces, continued to sound.

The initial warning calls resembled the sounds of a monotonous session of the classic video game Space Invaders.



Dr Smith Thammasaroj, head of the National Disaster Warning Center, gave the evacuation a passing grade of 70%.

These later gave way to slowly rising then sustained tones similar to those heard by Londoners during the 1940 blitz by Germany's Luftwaffe. Finally, a voice message announced in different languages that it was safe for people to return to their hotels and the noise ended.

A time of 20 minutes had been established as the period necessary to evacuate the beach

before the arrival of the theoretical tsunami, assuming an earthquake of Richter magnitude 9.0 with an epicenter near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

After the drill finished, PM Thaksin noted that not everyone had participated in the exercise and that many onlookers, rather than taking part, had decided to join the VIPs and hundreds of members of the press corps in simply watching it.

"We should have had better cooperation from those who are not here in an official or work capacity," he said, adding that drills would need to be conducted at least twice a year.

Dr Smith Thammasaroj, head of the National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC), told the Gazette he was "about 70% satisfied" with the evacuation, but noted that it was only the first attempt and that he expected evacuation times to shorten with more practice.



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One local observer suggested that the evacuation drill be repeated each year as a tourist promotion, similar to the running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain.

He noted that too many people had tried to reach safety by using cars or motorcycles, which increased the risk of accidents. A full-scale evacuation of Patong's entire coastline would happen "very soon", he said.

K. Smith was later quoted by Indian newspaper *The Hindu* as saying that Thailand would be able to issue timely alerts to neighboring countries once the early warning system was fully operational.

Phuket Tourist Association President Pattanapong Aikwanich said he was satisfied with the drill, given that there hadn't been much time to organize it.

"It is crucial to let the world know that Phuket has an operational warning system so that tourists will return in the next high season," he said.

He also called on the government to provide greater support to the tourism industry, saying that average hotel occupancy rates in Phuket were currently about 15%, an all-time low for the province. The situation in Phang Nga and Krabi was similar, he added.

Not everyone was impressed with the evacuation, however.

Australian tourist Allan Wybrow, who comes to Patong twice a year and is currently here on a three-month stay, told the *Gazette* the drill hadn't made him feel any safer.

"I know it was only a drill, but there were police standing around doing absolutely nothing, thinking it was a great joke ... The siren is helpful, but you have to know the difference between

the sounds – what each one means," he added.

Mr Wybrow was among many beachgoers who chose not to participate in the drill. Retired Danish construction worker Erik Woostrup, another regular visitor to Patong, was sunning himself just meters from a siren tower. He expressed mild guilt at not having participated in the drill, but added that he would run if he heard the warning signal in the future.

When asked if the exercise made him feel safer he said, "I think they are doing all they can, but it's not all that easy to fight

against nature. I don't think they could do anything more. But I wasn't really all that into it. I should have gone along with them ... but I didn't.

"I heard the sirens [before], all the way up to the Paradise Hotel, so I think the siren is loud enough for everybody to hear it," he added.

Mr Woostrup also said that he had tried to find out what message each of the different sounds was intended to convey, but couldn't find anyone who could tell him.



Bruno Gyr (above), who survived the December 26 tsunami and has since had a tsunami image tattooed on his right arm, said, "The tsunami will not come back to Phuket, but I will."

He also told the *Gazette* that a German friend had been given a rather rude reply by an official, following a beachside explanation about the system a few days earlier.

"After the session they asked if anyone had questions. One of my friends asked what the escape route was from here [in front of the Phuket Cabana Hotel, equidistant from Soi Bangla and Soi Sawatdirak] and the man said, 'If you don't like it...you shouldn't come to Thailand.'"

"My friend was furious about that answer because it was unfair. The guy in charge should have said, 'We are working on it.' That would have been the best answer for him to give," he said.

One keen participant was Swiss national Bruno Gyr, who said he had been able to sprint barefoot from the beach to Soi Saensabai in just two minutes. He also made a point of personally thanking K. Smith for his work in establishing the warning system.

Mr Gyr was one of the many tourists injured during the December 26 tsunami, suffering a bruised elbow, and he has since had a tsunami tattoo emblazoned on his arm.

While noting that the exercise bore little resemblance to the confusion and panic of December 26, Mr Gyr said that the drill nevertheless made him feel safer – but that he didn't expect to fall victim to another tsunami.

"The tsunami will not come back to Phuket, but I will," he said.

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By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

Look through any wedding album and chances are it will contain pictures of the bride; the groom; the bride and the groom; the bride and groom with their parents; the bride and groom with their friends and every combination of the above.

But the wedding pictures of couples who marry at Laguna Phuket could be just that little bit different, as the "guests" in their pictures could include a baby elephant.

The attendance of the baby elephant is just one of the optional extras available to couples who tie the knot at Laguna's new wedding chapel.

The high-roofed, Thai-style white chapel stands on stilts in a lagoon, facing the sea. Up to 50 guests (more if the walls are opened) can watch the bride arrive – by car or by boat – and then exchange vows with the groom.

After a lagoon-side Champagne toast and cake-cutting, the happy couple can then, if they choose, be taken from the chapel direct to their room by boat – with the traditional "Just Married" sign on the back.

The chapel is only for use by couples staying at one of the five hotels or resorts in the Laguna complex, who can pay an extra US\$1,500++ (about 55,000 baht) to marry in the chapel.

The building can host a variety of different types of wedding; a "celebrant", rather than a religious minister leads the proceedings, which means that the chapel can be used by anyone, regardless of religion.

Although the first bride to be hitched there was from Hong Kong, the Laguna management has its sights firmly set on the



Left: The bride and her father can arrive at the wedding chapel by car or – as in this case – by boat.

Below: The chapel can hold 50 guests, or more if the 'walls' are opened up.

BRIDE AND LAGOON

Japanese market, and has enlisted Japanese wedding specialist South Pacific Bridal to put together a complete bridal package for Japanese couples.

Despite this, said Rung-aroon Wichitwatee, Public Relations and Advertising Manager at Laguna, the bulk of the five or so enquiries received each day so far have come from Europeans.

K. Rung-aroon said, "The Laguna Wedding Chapel

gives guests the opportunity to have a Western wedding ceremony without having to be Christian.

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Thais think politicians corrupt: poll

The vast majority of Thais believe national politicians seek to gain financially from government bids, a recent poll by Assumption Business Administration College found.

The poll, entitled *Origin of Corruption in the Public's Opinion*, was based on responses by 3,156 family heads interviewed in 25 provinces between February 20 and April 26.

It found that just under 74% of respondents believed national politicians sought to gain personally from government bids.

Almost 85% believed there were corrupt officials in government, while a little over 12% said there were not.

Poll director Noppadon Kannika said the respondents felt the origin of corruption could be traced back to vote buying.

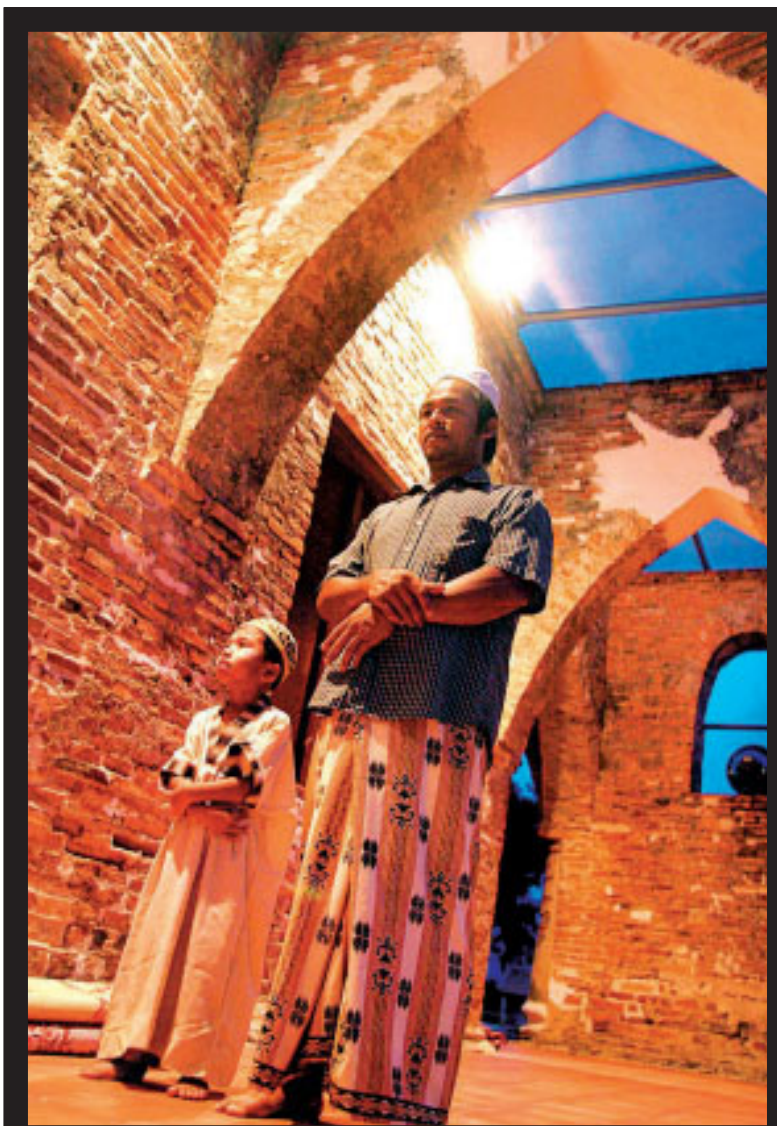
About two-thirds of the respondents believed that vote buying was prevalent during the last general election, while about 21% thought there was no vote buying.

Some 52% of the respondents said they were not confident that the justice system could punish corrupt senior government officials.

Cracked houses: Deputy Prime Minister Pinij Charusombat said each year between 1,700 and 2,000 home buyers are sold sub-standard or illegally constructed houses.

Speaking at a fair held on Consumer Protection Day, he called on the Office of the Consumer Protection Board to be more vigilant following the highly-publicized case of homeowner Rattana Sajjathap, who was conned into buying a townhouse built illegally on public land in Bangkok. DPM Pinij said the PM had personally ordered authorities to take measures to protect home buyers.

He added that the persistent defrauding of customers was not limited to the housing market.



Muslims pray at the Krue Se Mosque in Pattani on the first anniversary of the bloodbath in which 108 suspected insurgents were killed in clashes with security forces in the deep south. Of the total dead, 32 were killed at the famous mosque on April 28, 2004.

Also in need of better regulation were unregistered goldshops and companies with misleading TV ads for air conditioners that claimed falsely to be capable of filtering germs out of the air, he said.

Estranged behavior: Forty-one-year-old Anuchai Noithai went on a shooting rampage in

Saraburi's Phra Buddhahat District, killing four people and injuring three others after failing to get together again with his estranged wife, one of the murder victims.

He also allegedly caused damage to seven vehicles by setting them ablaze.

Police said they also found a burned-out pickup truck in the

garage of the family's home, where the shooting took place. Three small ploughs that had been damaged by fire were found in a neighbor's garage. The fires are all believed to have been started by Anuchai.

Coup legacy upheld: A Cabinet screening committee rejected a proposal that the government scrap a 33-year-old law restricting the private sector's involvement in 16 businesses deemed vital to national safety and the public's well-being.

The panel agreed to turn down the proposal by the Council of State, which said there were other laws regulating those businesses.

The panel contended that there was a need to retain Revolutionary Order No 58, as a number of the businesses in question were not clearly regulated by any other legislation. The order was issued after Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn staged a coup in 1972.

Swift justice: Five people were found guilty and received the maximum sentence of 50 years each, as the trial over the 1988 conspiracy to fraudulently obtain Royal decorations finally reached a verdict after 17 years of grinding through the courts.

The five convicted were Arun Phetcharat, Montri Chamnong, Pattaya Pimsa-ard, Aree Sartsara and Methe Borisut.

The defense has vowed to appeal both the verdicts and the sentences.

Eight other defendants died during the judicial review, and the charges against them were

subsequently removed. Three others were acquitted.

The conspiracy shocked the nation as details emerged of how a senior monk, a deputy education minister, several high-ranking government officials and a number of charity workers had doctored charity donation records in order to qualify for decorations.

Remote controls: The government is to speed up registration of buyers of prepaid SIM cards in four southern provinces, possibly by next week.

Deputy Prime Minister Chaturon Chaisaeng said a meeting of representatives of the National Telecommunications Commission, CAT Telecom Plc and the Telephone Organization of Thailand (TOT) agreed that CAT and TOT could order mobile phone operators to gather and submit names of customers with unregistered SIM cards already in use and submit them to the authorities. Mobile-phone operators should get this done in less than three months, he said.

"We have to hurry to get this completed [in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla] because there are bomb attacks almost every day," he said.

DPM Chaturon added that the authorities were also trying to decide how to make unregistered SIM cards unusable in the four provinces, where some 700 people have died in the unrest since January 2004.

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

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Significant Lak of understanding

The events in Khao Lak to mark the passing of 100 days since the tsunami – on April 2-4 – were a success, drawing big crowds of international guests.

But it's open to debate how many of those present understood fully what the events were all about.

After three days of honoring the dead, giving offerings to the sea, observing a minute of silence, laying wreaths, listening to poems of hope, spirit and renewal, music and dance performances, art and handicraft exhibitions, and even a beach cleanup, all that was left behind was heaps of garbage and hundreds of empty plastic water bottles strewn around the northern part of Bang Niang Beach.

While the intent of the 100-day memorial was brilliant and very honorable, it was obvious that not all celebrants got the point. Unfortunately, it is now up to Bang Niang residents and volunteers to clean up again what should have been left clean in the first place.

ARD talk: A German TV team is searching for tsunami survivors who were at Bang Niang beach on December 26, 2004, for a documentary *Der Tag als die Welle kam* (The Day the Wave Came), to be screened on Germany's ARD – Channel 1 on the first anniversary of the tsunami.

The TV crew describe themselves as big fans of Khao Lak, and Bang Niang Beach in particular, and they have a great empathy for this area as they lost close friends in the disaster.

The author of the documentary, Kamil Taylan, says the most important aspect of the program is to make a public statement that Khao Lak is still alive, and that the majority of survivors are doing their best to revive the area.

"We want viewers to understand that Khao Lak has a future," he said during a telephone interview.

As eyewitness accounts are a vital part of this feature, the team urgently needs to interview survivors who were visiting or living at Bang Niang Beach on



ANDAMAN COASTING

By Franky Gun



RIGHT PRIORITIES? While most of the Bang Niang Beach is still without electricity, government-appointed workers are busy constructing concrete roads, a luxury that the area had not enjoyed before the tsunami.

December 26, 2004. They are also looking for photos and videos of Khao Lak before and after the tsunami.

Mr Taylan said, "Our aim is to support Khao Lak and its people by showing how beautiful Khao Lak was before the tsunami; how everything was lost, [yet] how fast the reconstruction is moving.

"Also, we want to talk about the problems that small- and medium-sized business and

resort owners are facing on a day-to-day basis, while still being determined to move on.

"Finally, viewers need to see that the center of Khao Lak is undamaged, and that many resorts and businesses were not affected by the tsunami at all.

"We feel it is necessary to do this documentary and that it will help Khao Lak.

"The feature will be a serious and straightforward documentary, which is what ARD

wants, not a sensationalist blockbuster exploiting those who have already suffered enough. We want Khao Lak to survive."

Anyone interested in taking part in the documentary, or providing video footage, photographs or eyewitness accounts should send an email, with their address and phone number, to: c.milius@t-online.de or ktaylan@hr-online.de

The team will call back as soon as possible.

Not banking on the banks: Phang Nga's banks are still processing soft loan applications in a most irritatingly slow manner, unnecessarily slowing down the reconstruction process.

However, all along the coastline, reconstruction continues, and the spirits of surviving residents and business people remain high.

The toughest and most determined ones are the small- and medium-sized enterprises who, instead of trusting (and waiting for) banks and empty promises from official institutions to be fulfilled, are, with the help of volunteers and some innovative construction techniques (as can be witnessed at Bang Niang) getting on with the rebuilding themselves.



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Location Map



This week



SUPPORT FROM SWEDEN: Joy Orevich (2nd from right), a representative from Kungshögskolan's "Schools Helping Schools" project, from Ljungby in Sweden, donates sport and musical equipment worth 150,000 baht to Baan Kamala School.

SHORE LEAVE: (right) The crew of an Indian Navy submarine and a supply vessel made a recent courtesy call to Phuket and hosted a reception on board for members of the local Indian community and Royal Thai Navy officers. From right: Commander VB Bellary of the Indian Navy; Rear Admiral Sirichai Khanisthakul, Deputy Commander of the RTN Third Area Naval Command; and Gurbachan Singh Sethi.



FOOTBALL FRIENDLY: A team comprising flight crew and other staff from Italian national airline Alitalia beat local team Phuket Leader 7-4 in a friendly soccer match held recently at Surakul Stadium. Here, the teams exchange souvenirs.



CULTURE SHOCK: Dr Apinant Kosayanont (back row, center), Director of the Ministry of Culture's Office of Contemporary Art and Culture attends a press conference before an art market organized by the Ministry at Central Festival Phuket.



FONDER HONDA: AP Honda Co recently brought more than 1,500 staff from Honda dealerships throughout Thailand to Phuket for the company's annual policy-planning session. From left: President of Thai Honda Manufacturing, Katsushige Hoshino; President of Honda R&D Southeast Asia, Shigeaki Hayashi; President of AP Honda, Motohide Sudo; and Vice-President of AP Honda, Dr Arnop Phornprapha.



HELPFUL HILTON: The Hilton Phuket Arcadia Beach Resort & Spa and the Punchline Comedy Club raised nearly 173,000 baht for the Tsunami Relief Fund for the Children of Takuapa. From right: Kymberley Sproule, the hotel's PR Manager, and John Moorhead, MD of Punchline, hand the check to Kenneth Abday and Tipparat Ponrit.

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Although there have always been radio disc jockeys who have become celebrities it has been the emergence of dance music over the past 20 years that has heralded the rise of DJs as artists.

Shep Pettibone was one of the first club DJs to become famous as a performer. Following him have been such luminaries as Fat Boy Slim, Paul Oakenfold – and Lisa Loud.

Lisa, 35, has been among the top flight of DJs for more than 15 years, and her reputation has spread far beyond her native Southeast London.

Lisa – also a successful businesswoman and model – now guests at the world's best clubs. The *Gazette's* **Andy Johnstone** caught up with her before her show at Phuket's Trisara hotel on April 24.

Phuket Gazette: *I hear that you are now promoting Impulse, a famous brand of deodorant. Are you wearing it today?*

Lisa Loud: (laughs loudly) You've done your research, haven't you? Yes, straight out of the shower and I'm wearing it. It's a great idea to have it promoted by a DJ. Most clubs are pretty hot and sweaty!

PG: *Why are you here in Phuket?*

LL: First of all, I absolutely love Thailand, and I always include it in [any] tour I do in Asia, which is at least once a year.

I was booked to DJ at the Full Moon Party on Koh Phangan but we were given a vague warning that a bomb had been found – as we were told “30 minutes away” – and the government canceled the party.

It seems that the authorities were worried about it becoming another Bali.

[The Gazette has since learned that it was the continuing restiveness in the Deep South of Thailand that prompted the organizers to cancel, and that there appears to have been no specific threat in the Pha-ngan area.]

I already had a ticket to come out to Thailand, so in the end I worked in Bangkok at The Met Bar at The Metropolitan [hotel] on Friday [April 22] and at Bed Supperclub – it was going to be a “Bed on Location” at the the Full Moon Party – last night.

PG: *So I missed the chance to be in Bed with Lisa?*

LL: (laughs loudly) Cheeky! The

LOUD AND

connections with Bed brought me down to Phuket and to – if not launch this hotel, which opened, last November – then to put on a great party to give it – and Phuket – a boost.

This side of Thailand suffered so badly from the tsunami, and everyone has encountered setbacks, so [Trisara] decided to put on a bit of an event to get awareness going.

PG: *Boy George is DJ-ing at the Sheraton Walker Hill in Seoul soon, but as far as I know you playing here is the first event of its kind in Phuket, certainly the first in a hotel.*

LL: I'm really excited about being here, and Trisara is certainly a beautiful setting for an event like this. There are worse places I could be DJ-ing in.

PG: *Aside from when you are working here, do you have the chance to visit many other places or clubs in Thailand?*

LL: I've visited Thailand regularly since the late '80s and have island-hopped a great deal: Samui, Phi Phi, Koh Lanta ... As far as Bangkok goes, yeah, I've done all the traditional crazy Patpong things, falling in and out of bars, watched a few strip



The shy and retiring Ms Loud displays her nice boots.

shows, seen the drag queens ... I try to get involved, you know (laughs loudly).

PG: *How would you rate the club scene in Thailand?*

LL: The only sad thing about the

scene in Thailand is the new licensing laws that dictate that nightlife must stop at 1 a.m. That's [the time] that people in the club and dance scene are just starting to get going.

As far as venues, music and



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crowds go, I come here and feel totally appreciated by the audience. They completely get my music. They completely understand what I'm all about.

There is such a great mix of people in Thailand, Bangkok especially. It's so cosmopolitan these days. You get to be anything and do anything – as long as it's finished by 1 am (laughs loudly).

The licensing laws are the only downside to this country. But the major upside is that I get to come to places like this.

PG: Will you visit any of the clubs in Phuket?

LL: I won't have time to because I'm flying back to Bangkok tomorrow, and on to England on Tuesday. This is a real whirlwind tour for me. I've even had a camera crew – they're making a documentary – following me around for the last three days.

The life and times of a DJ! Everyone thinks it is such a glamorous job, but a lot of hard work – and at this level, a lot of hard traveling – goes into it.

PG: Would you ever give it up?

LL: I am a woman, and I do have the ambition to marry and have children. I want to see that in my future.

I don't think that I want to be doing this [DJ-ing] when I'm 45, but I've been in the music business – promoting bands, events and clubs or doing PR – since I was a teenager.

It's been part of my life for nearly two decades and I can see myself diversifying again within the industry and youth culture.

Slapping around the world will come to a halt, I'm sure. It's the late nights, and the fact that hangovers get worse as you get

older. The old remedies no longer work and it takes three days to recover when it used to take only one.

PG: Tell me more about the documentary you are making.

LL: It's for Channel V Asia, a London-based production company and a few other channels. The concept – and what I'd like it to be – is a series of documentaries capturing me and other DJs at work, but focusing on really interesting places around the world.

The working title is *Memories of a DJ*, and I'm also writing a book under the same title.

Thailand is one of my regular haunts, and with the tsunami and the way that people are rebuilding their lives, it's topical to be here. In fact, it really is the best place to start.

I've interviewed other DJs [in Thailand], club promoters and a few Bangkok celebrities. I'm really happy with it.

PG: You played your first show – opening for Paul Oakenfold – in 1987. What was the scene like for a female DJ then?

LL: (laughs) I was 17 then, and it was definitely not the norm to be a female DJ. I think that I was treated as a novelty act for my first few bookings. You know: "Ooh, she's the first female DJ!" and that sort of thing.

After a while – when people realized that I and the music I was playing were as credible as Paul [Oakenfold] and Carl Cox, I was accepted.

People saw that I was as good as the boys and that the only difference was that I had bumps in different places.

There was also an element of sexism – especially the further

north [in England] I went to play. There was always a promoter trying to get into my knickers.

PG: You are attractive. Do you get groupies?

LL: (laughs loudly) I've had all sorts; besotted fans, a few creeps – stalkers – who had managed to find out my address and sent me Valentine's cards. But I wouldn't be where I am today without fans, and most people are just lovely.

I remember that it's the fans who have given me this opportunity.

I'm just as you see me, a 100% cheeky London girl, nothing made up – I always give my fans time to talk with me.

PG: What do you think tonight's party will achieve?

LL: If this party helps to promote Phuket, and helps to bring the tourists back to the region, then great. I've been coming to Thailand for years; it's a country I love and the people here are beautiful, inside and out.

Some of my friends were on Phi Phi when the tsunami happened and managed to live by the skin of their teeth, so this is really close to my heart.

Many people here and elsewhere have a lot to put behind them and if I can in some way help them to have a good time, then I've really done my job well.





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At Home

by Rungtip Hongjakpet

While house hunting in Phuket, former Hong Kong banker Peter Ortmann discovered that around 500 properties with price tags of half-a-million US dollars (20 million baht) or more were either under construction or being planned for the island.

Sensing that buyers of such properties would be looking for furniture to put in them, Mr Ortmann decided that Phuket would be a great location for a branch of his "Everything Under The Sun" outdoor furniture business.

The company, which Mr Ortmann founded 11 years ago, now employs 35 staff in its branches in Australia, Portugal, Hawaii, Thailand and at the head office in Hong Kong.

In addition to selling direct to homeowners, the company also supplies international hotel chains.

As well as manufacturing its own outdoor furniture – under the names Sunweave, Sunteak and Sunalu – Everything Under The Sun is a stockist the brands Dedon (of Germany), Gloster (UK), Tuuci and Weber barbecues (both from the US).

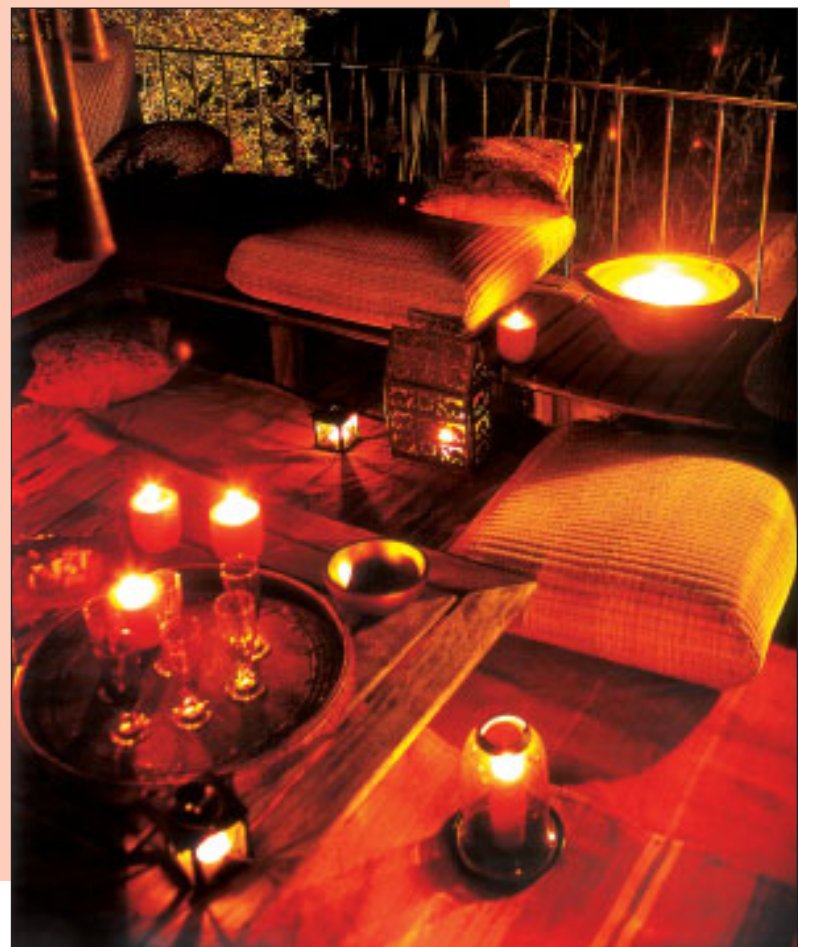
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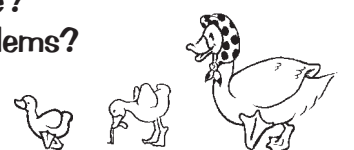
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Home Pro <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Se-Ed Book Center 	Central Festival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Books (3rd floor) B2S (3rd floor)
Big C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Se-Ed Book Center (Ground floor) Kiosk in front of MK Suki (1st floor) 	Index Living Mall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Se-Ed Book Center (1st floor)

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Project Owner: Phuket Seaview Company Limited, Registered Capital: 50 Million Baht, Registered Address: 2098/676

Ramkamhaeng Road, Huamark, Bangkok, 10240, Site Location: On part of title deed no. 46613, Soi Malikeaw, Srisutas Road, Tambol Rasada, Muang District, Phuket Province, Project Area: Approx. 8 rais 215 square wah, Construction Permit No.:

Being processed, Project's Construction Date Start: October 2004, Completion (approx) Mid June 2006

"Juristic person will be registered after project completion and common area fee will be paid by unit owners to the project juristic person."

Head Office Bangkok: Telephone no. (66) 2718 4032-3 or (66) 2300 1322, Facsimile no. (66) 2718 3091

Head Office Address: 2098/676 Ramkamhaeng Road, Huamark, Bangkok, 10240

Website: www.phuketmarinaresidence.com

On the menu

with
Andy Johnstone

Jenny's

Have you ever played "12 Famous Belgians"? The idea – as the name suggests – is to list a dozen well-known people from the northwestern European monarchy.

Players often include Dr Evil (from the *Austin Powers* movie series), Tintin and Hercule Poirot on their lists, although these are of course fictional characters.

What about singers Plastic Bertrand, Jacques Brel or The Singing Nun? Or Formula 1 drivers Jacky Ickx and Thierry Boutsen? What about painters Magritte and Bosch – also famous for his range of power tools? Musicians Django Reinhardt and Toots Thielemans or ace DJ Psychogene? Then there's fashion designer Anne Demeulemeester, and who could forget action man Jean-Claude Van Damme?

Phuket has recently become home to a couple of Belgians well known in Gent (or Ghent) for their three restaurants. Like so many before, Jenny De Gent and Steven Van Veve Gelde fell in love with Phuket after just one visit.

They returned in October 2004 to reconnoiter for a suitable site, found one in a prime spot in Euroville (Nai Harn) and were en route to Phuket when the tsunami struck. Hardly an auspicious start, one might think.

However, having burned their bridges in Belgium – and suffered the burning of one of their restaurants – there was nothing to do but knuckle down and set up their charming restaurant.

It is a stylish place, undoubtedly head and shoulders above other respected spots in the area, with an occasional memento from Belgium gracing the walls among the fine pieces of Thai art and crafts.

Jenny and Steven picked up many of these items – including beautiful small glass vases used as water vessels – from Chatuchak weekend market in Bangkok.

"Tonic in a can on a table



GENT-LY DOES IT

Above, Pork Filet with Honey and Thyme Sauce. Below, red means hot – Prawns Diablo.



looks vulgar," notes Jenny, "But simply decanting it into a vase elevates it to something far more attractive."

Slightly fruity, slightly spicy and cold, the Leffe Blond beer is welcome on a sultry night, and goes splendidly with the pre-starter of salmon crostini we enjoy. This is one of the special treats at Jenny's: diners are given

a little morsel dreamed up by Steven to excite the palate before the main courses arrive. Not expected, and all the better for it.

We make the switch from beer to wine with a bottle of Château Aiguilloux 1998 Corbières, and Jenny and Steven find the time between hosting and cooking, to stop for another chat with us.

"Is everything okay?" asks Jenny. "Couldn't be better," I reply. The atmosphere is pleasant, the service excellent, the music discreet.

Things improve – there are even gasps from our table – as the mains arrive.

I have plumped for the Belgian Beef Stew with brown beer, salad and homemade French fries

served in true European style with mayonnaise.

I don't care that even at 9 pm the temperature is hovering around the 28-30°C level; this stew, cooked for hours until a sweet, malty flavor infuses everything, pushes my buttons.

The beef – Steven buys all of the ingredients fresh every day – flakes beneath my fork. It's great; he does the hard work and all I have to do is enjoy.

The Prawns à la Diablo are cooked in a spicy, creamy sauce. We crane our necks to catch their scent before their recipient – rather uncharitably – hogs them to herself. I am told that they are fresh and as hot as Hell but she has eaten them before I can beg or trade a taste of them.

However, I do manage a smidge of both the Pork Filet, which has been cooked to perfection and served with a honey and thyme sauce, and companion No 3's Tagliatelle with Smoked Salmon and Fresh Spinach.

Simple dishes often prove the most difficult to get right, but Steven has the art. The presentation cannot be bettered, and the balance of flavors and textures he creates demonstrates that he is a master chef.

Do we have room for dessert? No, but we ask for some anyway. Jenny wisely advises a taste of the three offered: Chocolate Mousse with strawberry sauce and Cointreau; Dame Blanche – vanilla ice cream with hot chocolate sauce; and tiramisu.

We have given up speaking by this stage, and are instead emitting whistles, squeaks and other sounds of rapture, a bit like R2-D2 on acid.

So enjoyable is the food that barely a week later I'm back there again, delighted to see the addition of mussels to the menu. They are cooked in the Belgian style with wine, onions, celery and batons of carrot, and the liquor left in the pan is as good as the mussels themselves.

Inspired by my continuing rapture, another dining duo orders the same. A very palatable domino effect.

It must be said that Belgium's loss is most definitely Phuket's gain.

Jenny's, 39/18 Viset Rd, Moo 1, Nai Harn. Open 6 pm until late although currently closed Sundays. Tel: 04-8404214. Email: jennysphuket@hotmail.com

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KIDS

THE FUN PAGE
FOR ALL
THE FAMILY

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are the names of at least 20 rodents. 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: 10 or more, good; 15 or more, very good; 20 or more, excellent.

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

Brain Buster!!

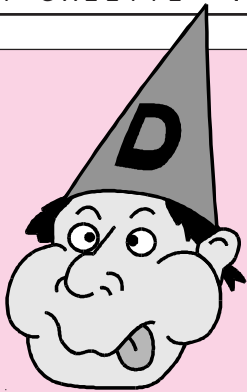
A group of spiders and flies went to a disco together. Between them there were 48 dancing legs. How many flies and how many spiders were at the disco?

A. Four flies (24 legs) and three spiders (24 legs). No other combination will work.

Solution
to last week's
crossword

M	E	R	I	T	O	C	R	A	C	Y
L	S		A		N		A			
E	V	I	L		T	A	R	T	A	N
E		E		H		O		K		
T	R	U	T	H		O	N	C	E	
R		N		O	N	E		Y	E	
A	Q	U	A			D	U	M	A	S
F		S			T		N		R	
F	A	U	L	T	Y		I	R	O	N
I	A			P		O		M		
C	A	L	I	F	O	R	N	I	A	N

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



1. The Brenner Pass links which two European cities?

2. Who wrote the epic poem *Paradise Lost*?

3. In the Middle Ages, what was the term given to a person who made written copies of documents?

4. "Scribe" is the stage name of which New Zealand rapper?

5. He recently guested on which single by P-Money?

6. King Midas, who reputedly turned everything he touched to gold, was king of what country?
7. Author Samuel Langhorne Clemens used which pen name?

8. What wartime atrocity was committed May 7, 1915?

9. *Evening and Port* by *Moonlight* are paintings by which 19th century German romantic artist?

10. Elizabeth Siddal was the preeminent muse of which artistic movement?

11. Who authored *The Brave Little Toaster* and sequels?

12. When and where was singer Shania Twain born?

13. What does the word *shania* mean in the native Chippewa language?
14. Which city's center is located at 32°14'43" North, 95°23'33" West?

15. Who or what is the national symbol of Sweden?

16. Soccer player Gerard Pique began his professional career with which team?

17. What, at 2,730 meters, is the highest point of El Salvador?

18. Who is the president of Lithuania?

19. What is a *shakuhachi*?

20. Who is credited with inventing holography in 1947?

Answers next week

Never a Cross Word!

ACROSS

1. Stick a knife into.

4. Kick off the throne.

7. Between tee and green.

8. Stick one's nose into something.

10. 3.14159 etc.

11. Become pals with someone.

12. Blueblood.

14. In Rome, yes.

15. Wildebeest.

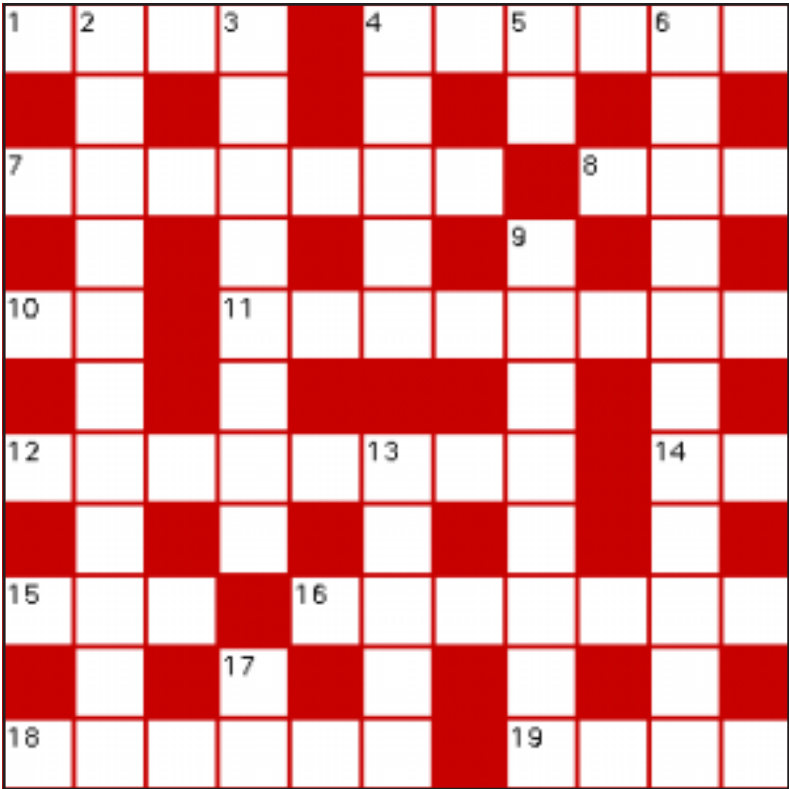
16. Front-row soccer player.

18. Jacket for school, maybe.

19. Sicilian spouter.

DOWN

2. Following the old ways.



3. Riding without a saddle.

4. Small person.

5. Italian river.

6. Bruce the Boss.

9. Furious speech.

13. Say.

17. Dorothy's land.

Solution next week

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S MONSTER QUIZ

1. Sails; 2. The Raveonettes; 3. Alan Bond; 4. Beijing; 5. Clew; 6. Morse code; 7. Lothar-Günther Buchheim; 8. U-96; 9. Silent Hill; 10. Hernán Cortès; 11. Spain; 12. A lozenge; 13. Maidstone; 14. The Order of the Golden Dragon; 15. The Chincha Islands, off the coast of Peru; 16. To roll something into a ball; 17. Staraya Derevnaya; 18. Pangram; 19. Stuffed sheep's stomach; 20. Bugs Bunny.

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In The Stars

by Isla Star

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Travel is on the cards for you. Family reunions will be joyful, particularly if your birthday is being celebrated at the same time. A romantic offer is not to be sniffed at; give this person a chance to show his or her true colors, as shyness will be an obstacle to a worthwhile relationship developing. Financial matters are well-starred, but remember to boost your savings account.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): If you need a second chance to make a relationship work, whether of a business or personal nature, keep your eyes open this week. Family life will benefit from a more mellow atmosphere, and this is the perfect moment to pay a surprise visit to a relation you haven't seen in a while. Wish upon a star this Sunday and your dream stands a good chance of coming true.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): Inspiration to be more creative will strike this week. If you have been bogged down in boring practical matters, you will see a chance to fulfill your artistic side. Your partner needs understanding mid-week when a problem is encountered; you may need to offer financial support. If you're single, certain ghosts from the past need to be laid before new relationships can be embarked upon. The color orange will help to unblock.

LEO (July 24-August 22): Leos are advised not to give up on cracking a problem that seems insoluble. Answers are about to come out of the blue, and Pisces has some valuable advice to offer. You could still come out on the winning side. Adverse weather conditions should be taken advantage of; some spring cleaning at home will allow new energy to flow through your house.

Make space for more plants inside your lair.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Virgoans are about to be surprised by a romantic overture. If you're already involved, take special care this week because this approach won't come from your partner. Someone has got you in their sights and is determined to take a platonic relationship to a more sensual level. Flattery could get them everywhere if you're not careful. Regarding business or work matters, next Thursday is your best day to put ideas forward.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): This weekend you will discover that every cloud has a silver lining, when a negative situation magically turns out to your advantage. After Monday, the pressure is on to make a decision on a domestic matter. This is not a time to listen to well-meant advice; you have to make up your own mind using experience accumulated so far this year. The number 8 is lucky on Wednesday.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): The luck of the draw falls in someone else's favor this week, causing you to suffer a momentary bout of jealousy. Don't let this green-eyed monster damp your spirits for too long; your turn to receive a boost of positive energy is coming soon. A dream on Sunday is significant, especially in relation to a romance recently started. Wear scarlet to make a statement.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Sometimes it only takes a brief shower to freshen up a parched landscape. Early next week you will be cheered up by a modest bonus. This weekend, you are right in thinking that someone's honesty is transparent. At least you will know who not

to trust in the future. If you're looking for romance, a stranger rocks your socks on Saturday.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Capricorns who don't believe they're up to a business challenge should try to be all that they can be. The rest will take care of itself. Success is assured if you're considering moving into a new work-related landscape this month. A rocky romantic period is about to be transformed; commitments could be made this week. On Tuesday, a chance meeting gives you serious food for thought. The number 3 is promising on Thursday.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): You should consider stocking up on indoor entertainment, ready for the rainy season. If your idea of fun involves outdoor pursuits, you could find yourself down in the dumps when it's raining cats and dogs. The long-term viability of a new attraction looks shaky; living for the moment is the key to this relationship. Wear navy blue to impress a prospective boss.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): If you believe you have been sending out all the right signals but still haven't got the desired response, you should look at this situation more closely. Your insight on Tuesday is particularly strong; act accordingly and answers will flow. Toward the end of next week, domestic economics occupy your attention. Consider innovative ways of making cutbacks, but break the news gently to your partner.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): Allow yourself the luxury of a few days away from the pressures of life; it will do wonders for ensuring you have enough energy to deal with an intense period later in May. The key word is indulgence, so be prepared to lavish some extra cash on a carefree break. A miracle of nature is revealed later in the week which should remind you that most worthwhile things are free.

JELLY

I was about 25 meters below the surface at Elephant Rock in the Similan Islands. Just below me, six filefish were biting at a transparent, nearly colorless jellyfish. The jellyfish swam away and eventually succeeded in squeezing into a broad crack between two boulders, beyond the reach of the predators.

Jellyfish are among the oldest animal species on earth. Jellyfish fossils dating back some 700 million years have been found in the Ediacara Hills of southern Australia.

All jellies belong to the phylum Cnidaria, along with other stinging sea creatures such as anemones, corals and sea pens. Most jellyfish belong to the class Scyphozoa; their deadly cousins the sea wasps, aka "box jellyfish", are separated into the class Cubozoa, so named because they appear to have a square shape.

True jellyfish are radially symmetrical, usually with a bell-shaped cap rimmed with dangling tentacles. The bell contains the body cavity, or coelenteron, in which food processing and most other body functions take place. There is no brain or central nervous system, only a primitive nerve net.

The tentacles contain stinging cells called cnidocytes. These contain curled-up, harpoon-like structures called nematocysts, which, when discharged, sting the unfortunate prey or enemy. In some jellyfish, these are highly toxic, often quite painful, and can be fatal to a swimmer who is stung too many times in the face, throat or chest.

Jellyfish are found in all oceans, warm and cold. When reproducing they migrate vertically in the water column, but as adults they can move horizontally over great distances. Migrating jellyfish often travel in large numbers, much like aquatic swarms. These sometimes result in thousands being washed up on a beach, or stranded in shallow water – where they plague swimmers.

All jellyfish are carnivores. Feeding tentacles sting and cap-



EARTH WATCH

By Robert Cogen

ture small creatures, mainly fish and plankton. The tentacles pull the prey to the mouth on the underside of the bell, where it is swallowed whole into the coelenteron.

Digestion is aided by various specialized cells that produced digestive enzymes and mucus. A soupy broth results, from which nutrients are absorbed. Undigested wastes are expelled through the mouth.

Reproduction processes vary among the genera, but follow a general pattern. A fertilized egg is released into the water. It hatches into a tiny free-swimming larva that eventually falls to the ocean floor and attaches itself to a hard object, where it becomes a polyp.

These polyps sometimes remain attached to the bottom for years, feeding and reproducing asexually in a process known as budding, which gives rise to identical "daughter" polyps.

Over time grooves appear

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BELLY

in the body of the polyp. These become deeper until they finally cut all the way through its body. The result is a number of structures resembling upside-down cups, known as ephyra. These become tiny, free-swimming jellyfish, growing to the adult form, known as medusa, thus completing the life cycle.

Reproductive strategies can differ markedly between species, however, and in some species the attached stage is skipped altogether and the larva matures directly into an ephyra.

The Sea Wasp is one of the cuboid jellyfish. It has a colorless body with four flattened sides and groups of tentacles hanging from each corner. Its often fatal sting may now be countered by a newly developed antivenine. Fortunately these jellyfish are rare in Thai waters, although they are common near Australia.

One highly venomous jellyfish that is found in the Indo-Pacific and is occasionally spotted in Phuket waters is the bright blue Portuguese Man o' War.

Fortunately, most jellyfish are either totally harmless or have only a mild sting. One such species common in Phang Nga Bay is the Upside-Down Jellyfish, or *Cassiopeia andromeda*.

This species has eight branched tentacles that are short and elaborately fringed. The bell is predominantly white, with areas of green that are created by

an alga that lives within its tissue in a symbiotic relationship.

Cassiopeia andromeda orients its body so that sunlight can reach the algae. In return the algae produce oxygen, thus allowing this jellyfish to survive in stagnant water where most other jellyfish could not.

Another common species, *Phyllorhiza punctata*, has a bell with white spots on a green or brown background. The edge of the bell is scalloped and fringed, but lacks tentacles. It is a common resident in muddy bays or in shallow water with a rubble bottom.

Once, when we were leaving Kaw Thaung (Victoria Point) in Burma to visit the Mergui Archipelago, we encountered pairs of fishermen in tiny boats at the western edge of the bay.

One man ran the boat while the other harvested pale jellyfish with a long handled net. These jellyfish had bells about fifty centimeters across and meter-long tentacles. They were unceremoniously tossed into the bottom of the boat, later to be sold at market as food.

Small jellyfish are a standard item on the menus of many of Phuket's *sukiyaki* restaurants – perhaps giving jellyfish-stung swimmers a chance to bite back.

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

In some jellyfish, the stings are highly toxic, often quite painful, and can be fatal to a swimmer who is stung too many times in the face, throat or chest.

SKETCHY SCRIBBLES

As soon as I read Alexandra Fuller's magnificent memoir about her childhood in Africa, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, I went out in search of her second book, *Scribbling the Cat* (The Penguin Press, New York, 2004, 256pp).

"Scribbling" is one of the many words used in the old white Rhodesian army for killing, along with "culling", "plugging", "slotting", "taking out", "drilling", "wasting", "stonking", "hammering", "wiping out" and "snuffing".

Fuller's second book is subtitled *Travels with an African Soldier*. The soldier is a man Fuller calls "K", who did an awful lot of killing during the Rhodesian war. Intrigued by him, she is warned by her father about "curiosity scribbling the cat".

Fuller is 33 now, married to an American and living in Wyoming with their young son and daughter. But she makes frequent trips back to Africa to report for magazines and newspapers.

She is still in love with the sights and sounds and smells of Africa, with all its "incongruous, lawless, joyful, violent, upside-down, illogical certainty".

On a trip back to Zimbabwe to report on the latest predations of the Mugabe government, Fuller drives to Zambia to stay at her parents' farm and work up her story. There she meets K, a neighboring banana farmer. The attraction is immediately physical:

"Even at first glance, K was more than ordinarily beautiful, but in a careless, superior way,

like a dominant lion or an ancient fortress. He has a wide, spade-shaped face and wary, exotic eyes, large and khaki colored. His lips were full and sensual, suggesting a man of quick, intense emotion. His nose was unequivocal – hard and ridged, like something with which you'd want to plow a field ... He looked bullet-proof and he looked as if he was here on purpose, which is a difficult trick to pull off in this woolly climate. He looked like he was his own self-sufficient, debt-free, little nation – a living, walking, African Vatican City. As if he owned the ground beneath his feet, and as if the sky balanced with ease on his shoulders."

K lives alone on his farm, divorced, his young son dead of meningitis. Unlike his hard-drinking neighbors, he's a born-again Christian, quickly prone to tears for the past atrocities he'd committed.

He had been a very accomplished killer with the Rhodesian Light Infantry, an all-white outfit that would insert four-man patrols into enemy territory in Mozambique, emerge from the bush three weeks later with a "huge kill ratio" and helicopter off to the beach for a riotous week of boozing and dope-smoking before heading back in.

Fuller comes up with the idea that he revisit his old battlegrounds in Mozambique and that she accompany him for the story.

Thus it is that she winds up

on an island in a lake in the deep Mozambique bush with K, two fellow half-crazed Rhodesian veterans named Mapenga and St Menard, and a half-grown, half-tamed lion named Mambo.

She is the first white woman they have spoken to for some time and, as her photos show – the pages are illustrated with two dozen snapshots – quite a beautiful one.

"So we took the wine and a tiger fish outside and built a fire and cooked our meal under the stars. The lion lay next to Mapenga, contentedly licking fish flesh off the edge of Mapenga's plate, and we talked softly about other nights when we had sat around fires in Africa – with different people – listening to wild lions, or hyenas, or to the deep,

singing, anonymous night. Above us the sky tore back in violent, endless beauty, mysterious and unattainable. There is no lid on this earth and there is nothing much fettering us to the ground. Eventually we will die and be wafted back into the universe. Bones to dust. Flesh to ashes.

Soul into that infinite mystery."

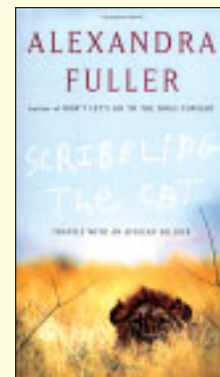
Misunderstandings and jealousies arise but Fuller and K make their peace before she returns to her parents' farm. "I thought he held shards of truth," she concludes. "He thought I held love."

This is a slight story of failed connections, a picaresque tale of a couple of weeks, compared to Fuller's first book which covered the better part of three decades. Inevitably, perhaps, it's a disappointment.

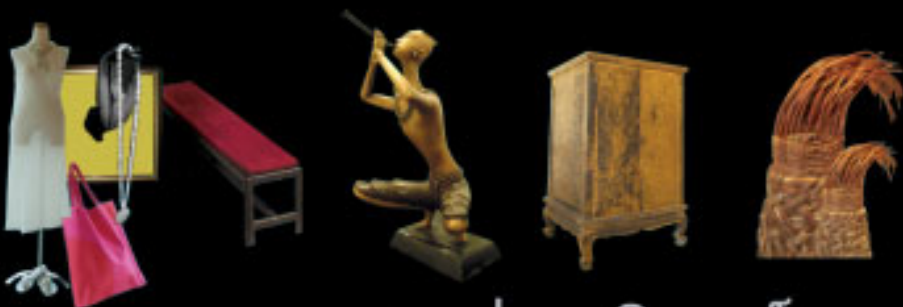


Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt



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In the running for first place

There was a distinct element of theater about the Patong evacuation drill of April 29, with politicians, diplomats and members of the press almost outnumbering the "evacuees" in their souvenir T-shirts.

But the intent was undeniably serious, and the drill was definitely a good start. Procedures will need to be improved upon in subsequent exercises in order to ensure the safety of people living or vacationing along Phuket's shoreline. These exercises should include drills at night, when the possibility for confusion is that much greater.

Phuket should not allow itself to be lulled into a false sense of security by the knowledge that, historically, tsunamis have been rare in the Indian Ocean. The March 28 quake, measuring 8.5 on the Richter scale, was a reminder that history is no guide to the future.

Theatrical though the drill may have been, Thailand was the first of the tsunami-hit countries to stage such an exercise. It is also the first among them to get an alarm system up and running.

When, just after the tsunami, the three countries most badly hit – Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand – discussed setting up an Indian Ocean tsunami warning center, the concept was immediately dashed on the rocks of national pride. Each country wanted to be home to the headquarters, and none would consider allowing itself to be upstaged by another.

Now, however, Thailand is so far ahead of the other two countries that Nonthaburi, where the National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC) will be situated, looks likely to become the regional center by default. Already the Indian press has noted comments by Thailand's tsunami czar Dr Smith Thammasaroj that once the NDWC is ready at the end of 2006, Thailand will have the capability to warn other countries around the Indian Ocean of impending disaster.

But if this is to happen, the one essential factor will be that Thailand follows through. Other national initiatives in Thailand, such as road safety campaigns and drives against narcotics, have tended to suffer from lack of sustained interest. This must not be allowed to happen with the NDWC.

If Thailand does establish itself as the headquarters for warning its neighbors about approaching tsunamis or other potential disasters, the political will and the funding must continue indefinitely, or at least until something better – a global disaster warning system, for example – comes along.

Failing that, Thailand could find itself in the same situation as the Thai Meteorological Department in the aftermath of December 26, 2004 – blamed for causing huge loss of life – but in this case on an international scale.

– The Editor

The Phuket Gazette

In association with The Nation Multimedia Group PCL

Editor: Rungtip Hongjakpet

Managing Editor: Alasdair Forbes

Deputy Editor: Chris Husted

Chief Reporter: Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

Editorial Team: Stephen Fein, Andy Johnstone, Anongnat Sartpisut,
Alison Winward, Athiga Jundee

Managing Director: Rungtip Hongjakpet

Marketing Manager: Oranee Pienprasertkul

Website Services Manager: Natthira Susangrat

Distribution Manager: Passara Kaewbumroong

Publisher: The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd

Contact us

Advertising Sales: adsales@phuketgazette.net

Classified Advertising: classads@phuketgazette.net

Website Services: anna@phuketgazette.net

Shopper Card inquiries: shopper@phuketgazette.net

Gazette Guide inquiries: guide@phuketgazette.net

Telephone: 076-236555 (10 lines) **Fax:** 076-213971

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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.

Quality control

Do you want to lose your readership? Are you now targeting the dirty raincoat brigade? Is the editor on holiday? Does he, or anybody else, bother reading what an idiot of a reporter has decided to write?

Just what was the reason behind the publishing of such garbage as "In Very Poor Taste" [Queer News, issue of April 23]?

Do you think all expats in Phuket are dirty old pedophiles?

You need to get out of your office and get some fresh air occasionally.

Roger Neill
Chalong

Hard times ahead

A few large hotels and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) proposed boosting the season by attracting Australian and British customers. This is, at best, wishful thinking.

We still get emails asking whether it is safe to come, and whether the water is contaminated with bodies.

Even in the best low season, without bird 'flu, one can hope only to break even, pay all bills and perhaps eat out once a week. Who in their right mind can even think we will get more people this season?

The low season started exactly three months ago and will last 12 months. Every tourist-related business will lose at least a year's income. Wake up, government, and face the reality.

Who is to say that the next high season will be business as usual or better? Bali still has not fully recovered [from the bombing].

Unless the government pro-

vides financial support such as tax, fee and utility breaks – at nearly no cost to itself – to businesses now, the people with the least resources, reserves or flexibility will be wiped out within months.

Phuket is not involved in the decision making, nor is Krabi and probably not Phang Nga. Several fine leaders have just been elected to represent Phuket. We need to let them know what the priorities and problems are. Send emails, letters and petitions – these people must be included in the tsunami planning in Bangkok.

We should get organized at the local level and stop fighting with neighbors about noise, parking and dogs.

Petitions work wonders; let's start communicating with the local and provincial authorities, who have powerful voices and (eventually) budgets too.

We should stop dropping prices and hassling the few customers we have; start giving superior service and agree consistent pricing with fellow businesses. I have seen 200-baht aircon rooms and 70-baht barbecues. This is insane; there can't be any profit in this and all it does is cause price collapses everywhere else.

We can't wait for the TAT to spread the real image of post-tsunami Phuket.

We should put up web pages with weekly updates and pictures; email or call last year's customers and tell them the facts; make sure that every tourist who leaves Phuket spreads the news.

We should not wait for a miracle but should get organized. Farmers from Isarn and the North have successfully lobbied the government; why can't we?

This is not a six-month problem we can wait out.

Steve
Phuket

The Gazette delivers

The *Phuket Gazette* is the only newspaper from which we can get information and news in English. Particularly since the tsunami, this is very important not only for those who live here but also for potential tourists.

Junko Tagachi
Phuket

Night exercises

I heard that a magnitude 6.3 earthquake occurred close to Simeule, Indonesia at around 9 pm on April 28.

I wonder whether – had this been another magnitude 9 or greater earthquake – Phuket would have been able to evacuate at that time of night.

Richard Donaldson-Alves
Phuket

Another nail in Phuket's coffin

What a sad spectacle we have witnessed over the past couple of weeks as Dulwich International College and its counterpart in London fight for control of the Phuket college.

What both sides seem to be ignoring as they glare at one another across the negotiating table is the damage they are causing to the school's pupils, to its teachers and, in a wider context, to the economy and the international reputation of the island.

Coming so soon after the tsunami, this is a truly depressing spectacle. Roll on bird 'flu. Let's really kill off Phuket.

Pythagoras
Phuket City

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.

I think it is good that the police are going to be able to use this law to regulate the *win* [motorcycle taxi stands] and motorcycle taxi drivers in Phuket, and it is good that drivers will have a card to show that they are legal.

The Phuket Provincial Transportation Office estimates that there are 3,000 taxis in Phuket, but actually, it is more like 7,000, and at the moment, it is impossible to regulate the drivers.

Anyone can buy a vest and pretend to be a taxi driver. There are "ghost drivers", who don't work from a *win* or work with other drivers, but just drive round picking up fares. The new regulations should control them.

As things stand now, a murderer or other criminal, or someone who is here illegally can be a motorcycle taxi driver, even if he or she operates from a *win*. This law should change that.

Accidents are an occupational hazard for us, and sometimes we are threatened by passengers. But being regulated should help keep us safer. If everyone is registered, it will be easier for us to find out about our

What about us?

FIRST PERSON



Between May 11 and September 7, the thousands of motorcycle taxi drivers in Phuket will be required to register themselves and acquire a license for their motorbikes.

Supporters of the new law say it will make it easier to monitor and regulate existing, legitimate drivers, and, at the same time, make it more difficult for criminals to pose as drivers and commit crimes.

But some motorcycle taxi drivers are opposed to the regulations, arguing that the 300 baht-plus cost of getting licensed and registered is too high and that the system is unfair.

Here, motorcycle taxi driver "Santi" explains what he thinks of the new regulations.

colleagues; we will know who we are working with.

Also, if motorbike taxis have to be fitted with yellow license plates, then it is likely that only people who have an interest in looking after their bikes properly, because they own them, will become drivers.

It will no longer be possible for someone to rent a bike from

a shop and drive round touting for fares.

Drivers I know think that 365 baht is a reasonable price to pay to get licensed and registered; it's better than being fined 500 baht for not having a license or breaking the law. It's not too much for us; we can afford it.

There are some drivers opposed to the new regulations, but

I suspect that's because they don't have a driving license. Perhaps they got into trouble in their hometown, and they thought they would come to Phuket to make some easy money as a motorcycle taxi driver.

They thought that driving a motorbike taxi would be easier than being a construction worker, for example, especially as you

can buy or rent a bike quite cheaply.

Now, as well, people who have lost their jobs because of the tsunami have started operating as motorcycle taxi drivers. Even if you don't belong to a *win*, if you just sit on the street and wait for customers to come to you, you can earn 400 to 500 baht a day.

There are also people who do it part-time, after they have finished their regular jobs. But they don't operate from a *win*, and they take business from us, by picking up our passengers. Sometimes these part-time drivers are drunk or on drugs when they pick up fares, and that puts the passengers in danger.

I'd say about 200 of the motorbike taxi drivers in Phuket don't have driving licenses.

It is good to set standards, although I think it will only become clear in the long run how well the regulations work in controlling motorbike taxis.

I have a feeling that, right now, the regulations will only be 50% effective. Only 3,000 people turned up for the meeting at which the rules were explained, and I wonder how many of the drivers who didn't turn up, because they don't agree with the regulations, will obey them.

Who has responsibility for fixing potholes in roads?

There was a very bad pothole on Chao Fa West Rd. Motorbikes literally fell into it and had accidents, yet it was there for at least a week. As far as I know, the authorities made no attempt to warn anyone of this danger, let alone repair the pothole.

Does the government have staff who drive round checking the island's roads for potholes and other hazards? What is the phone number of the relevant department?

Can an individual sue the government for causing personal injuries and to get reimbursement for repairs to their vehicle.

DB
Phuket

Pramote Pirat, Chief of the Phuket Subdivision Highways Office [District 2], replies:

We are responsible for Chao Fa Rd, East and West. We inspect the areas we are responsible for every day, and if we find

a pothole, we fix it immediately. It is Department of Highways policy to fix every pothole.

If motorbike drivers have an accident caused by a pothole, they (or their families) can make a claim to the Phuket Highways Office for financial recompense in the event of injury or death. That said, it is also up to riders to drive carefully.

Anyone who finds a pothole should contact the Highways Office at Tel: 076-212179.

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

Why were my vitamins confiscated and destroyed?

For 25 years, people were consistently amazed to learn that I was 15 years older than I looked. I attributed this to the fact that I had taken a lot of time and effort to study the vitamins and other supplements that I took. These supplements allowed me to exercise vigorously, thus maintaining the health of my youth.

Since moving to Thailand five years ago, I have not been allowed to bring in many of these items, even though they are available over the counter in every EU country, in the US, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore.

I recently had a big shipment of such supplements sent here from abroad. These included brand-name products like Urban Night Charger, Isatori Metacel Orange, MHP Secratagogue One and ISS Advantage Matrix.

The entire shipment was confiscated and destroyed by Thai Customs at a total loss to

me of more than US\$600 (24,000 baht). I can buy these supplements in at least 60 other countries in thousands of shops.

In the past, I requested permission to buy Glucosamine, Chondroitin, SAME 200, L-carnitine 500, chromium picolinate 400, DHEA, Gingko Biloba, Yohimbine and several others. The entire shipment was refused entry and ended up going bad in the shipper's storage – a total loss of more than 48,000 baht.

The point is that these products are approved in every modern, industrialized nation in the world for over-the-counter sale. They have been extensively tested for safety and are used by millions of consumers – but not in Thailand, where untrained, petty bureaucrats seem to arbitrarily deny people the right to stay healthy, active and happy.

Why does the Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

believe it knows better than its counterparts in all those countries? Why does the Thai government feel that it has the right to tell me what I can and cannot ingest?

Wilai Bundittanugula, Director of Drug Control Division of the Thai FDA in Bangkok, replies:

With regard to the brand-name supplements that were destroyed, our agency has never received any request to register them in Thailand. For this reason, we don't have the details of their chemical composition and are unable to classify them as either food or medicine.

As for the others, Glucosamine is currently registered as a prescription drug for treatment of inflammation. Although also used as a food supplement by some, it is classified as a drug by the [Thai] FDA and therefore

cannot be imported as a food supplement.

L-carnitine 500 is used to remedy systemic carnitine deficiency. It is also used by some as a food supplement for controlling diabetes and weight control. The FDA has accepted it as a food supplement for many years.

Chromium picolinate is thought by some to be helpful in controlling blood sugar and body weight, and for building muscle mass. Thailand restricts its use to 130 milligrams a day.

The details regarding DHEA are less clear. An Internet search found that it stands for dehydroepiandrosterone, a male steroid hormone. Some use it as a food supplement, but because it is a steroid, it may not be used in this way in Thailand.

As for Gingko Biloba, if it is Gingko leaf extract, people may take up to 120mg a day as a food supplement. But in higher

dosages it is classified as a drug.

Yohimbine is a plant believed to improve male sexual performance. In the US, it can be taken as a food supplement. However, the Thai FDA has found it can cause low blood pressure and has therefore classified it as unsafe for use.

Many vitamins, minerals and herbs that are approved for use as food supplements in the US and Japan are not allowed here because they don't meet Thai labeling requirements ensuring that they state clearly, in Thai, that they are food supplements and not medicines.

The safety of Thais is the main issue for the Thai FDA. We are currently preparing an announcement regarding the correct procedures for registration of food supplements in Thailand to ensure that all such products are safe, beneficial to health and properly labeled.

TOT vs TT&T: Round 1

After months of waiting, TOT finally installed my two new ADSL lines, one at my home office and one at my bakery, both in Patong.

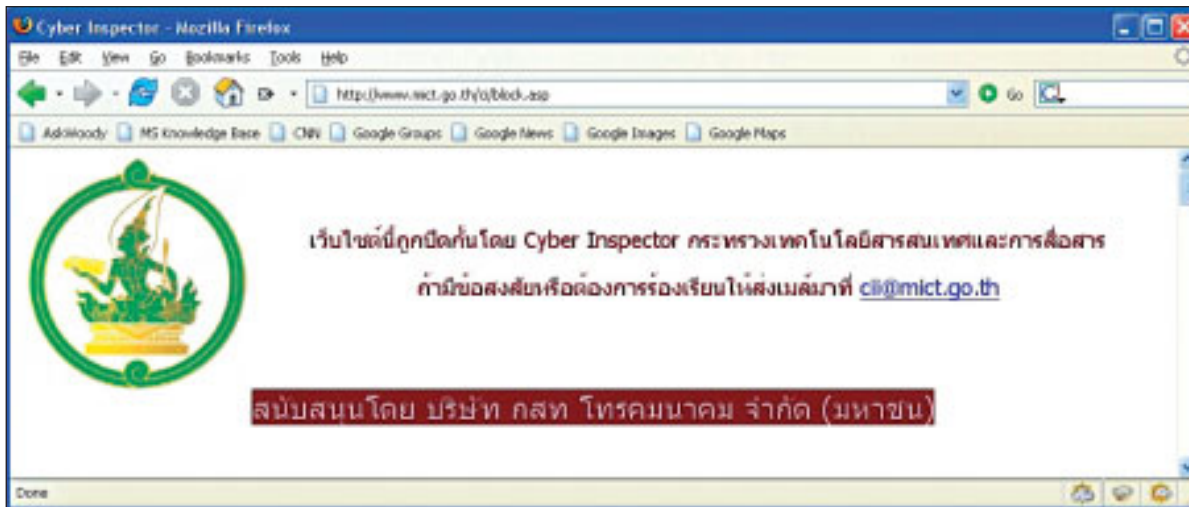
With my current configuration, I can hot-swap between TOT ADSL and TT&T ADSL, and compare the services side-by-side, running the same software on the same PCs: unplug one cable, plug in another, and everything switches from TOT to TT&T and back.

I haven't had time to do full tests – give me a few weeks – but what I've seen in just a couple of days has me shaking my head. Here's a prime example.

I've been using TT&T's Hi-Net ADSL broadband connection for almost a year, and it drives me nuts: up and down, fast and slow, inexplicable disconnections, all of which I've talked about in this column before.

A month ago, I started having trouble connecting to my website, www.AskWoody.com. I'd get a juicy scoop on some Windows insider gossip, run to my PC, crank up my web browser, type in www.AskWoody.com, and get the dreaded "404: The page cannot be displayed" page in Internet Explorer, or "AskWoody.com could not be found" in Firefox.

Very odd – and most frus-



The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology doesn't want you to get at The Cloak – from TOT's ADSL lines, anyway.

trating. It's hard to run a news website when you cannot even get to it. When I get a scoop, I have to post it online within a few hours or it turns into yesterday's news and birdcage liner.

AskWoody.com would be available for a few hours (or days), then it would be inaccessible for a few hours (or days). With local Web guru Paul Spring's help, I discovered that TOT's ADSL lines had no problem at all "resolving" www.AskWoody.com at precisely the same time TT&T's Domain Name Server couldn't find it.

As best as I can tell, CAT/TT&T's Domain Name Server is broken – or it goofs up intermittently – and at least one (probably many) websites simply aren't available every now and then. TT&T know about it, but they haven't fixed it. But wait, there's more to the story.

First, some background. There are dozens of free "anonymizer" sites on the Internet. They were originally constructed to make web surfing anonymous – so if you want to look, say, at an anti-communist Web site while you're sitting in the People's Socialist Paradise of China, you go to an anonymizer site and type in the web address you want to see. The anonymizer goes out and retrieves the page you want, leaving its own footprints in the

digital sand, steals the page you asked for, and sends it to you.

Anonymizers work well if you're concerned that The Bad Guys will find a way to trap addresses of all the people accessing a particular anti-communist website. Even if the Politburo sucks in all the addresses, they can never trace anything back to you – only the anonymizer's address appears in the logs. As you might imagine, anonymizer sites are primarily used for rather more, uh, recreational pursuits – but you get the picture.

When I discovered that the TT&T/CAT servers weren't working, I had a hunch that an anonymizer might get through – I would get on the anonymizer via TT&T's ADSL line, but then the anonymizer would reach out with its own service provider to find AskWoody.com.

It worked. I went to www.the-cloak.com/login.htm, asked The Cloak to go to AskWoody.com, and I was back at my webpage – no problem. By using a middleman, I bypassed TT&T/CAT's buggy server and went straight to my website.

Wait. There's still more to the story. After I got my TOT line, I started swapping between TOT and TT&T lines with wild abandon. AskWoody.com came up

every time with TOT. It didn't work about half the time with TT&T, but using The Cloak I could work around the problem.

Then I made a mistake. I thought I was on the TT&T ADSL line. A friend shot me a juicy news item, and I went to The Cloak to get on to AskWoody.com. But I couldn't bring up The Cloak.

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (and Public Morals) had blocked the webpage (see screen grab). I discovered my mistake. In fact, I was on the TOT ADSL line. And that's how I discovered that The Cloak is blocked on TOT ADSL lines by the Thai Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, while TT&T goes right through. Bizarre, eh?

I'll continue with more comparisons of TOT and TT&T service in a couple of weeks. I'd like to thank Paul Spring (www.ThaiServers.com), who conducted exhaustive tests both here and in the US to pinpoint the problem.

I use ThaiServers to host AskWoody.com – great support, 2GB storage, all the frills, at just 600 baht a month. Thanks, Paul.

– Woody Leonhard
woody@khunwoody.com

KHUN WOODY'S COMPUTER

ON THE MOVE



SAMRARN YOTHAYAI, 46, from Lamphun, is the new Chief Judge of Phuket Provincial Court. A graduate of the National Institute of Development Administration, where he earned a master's degree in political administration, he was Chief Judge of Surat Thani Municipal Court before his move to Phuket.



Australian TIM HADDON, 37, has returned to Phuket as Director of Golf and Events at Blue Canyon Country Club (BCCC). A professional golfer since 1989, he was Director of Golf at BCCC until 2000 before returning to his native land to become a parent and manage Elsternwick Park Public Golf Course in Melbourne, Australia.



Phuketian WIPA PUTKAEW, 33, has been appointed Accounting Manager of the *Phuket Gazette*. K. Wipa holds a degree in accounting management from Ramkhamhaeng University, and was Chief Accountant of Laguna Grande Ltd for eight years before her move to the *Gazette*.

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B1.3bn land sale highlights ongoing land price boom

By Anongnat Sartpisut

RAWAI: A site covering almost 150 rai at Laem Ka Beach has been sold for 1.325 billion baht – 8.8 million baht a rai – an indication that Phuket's continuing land sale boom is far from over.

The beachfront site has been bought by US-based Phuket Capital Resort Co Ltd (PCR), which, with the help of a 2.97-billion-baht mortgage from Siam City Bank plc, intends to build a hotel there.

PCR, a subsidiary of the Thai arm of international investment bank Lehman Brothers, declined to comment for the time being on its plans for the site.

Beachfront land, or land with a sea view, is in such demand that it is now commanding between seven and 10 million baht a rai, according to Phuket Provincial Land Office (PPLO) Chief Supoj Suwannachote.

K. Supoj added that while land is selling all over the island, tracts on the west coast are still in greatest demand, especially from property developers.

"Most of the people investing in land [in Phuket] are property developers," he told the *Gazette*.

"Around 51 property developers signed contracts at the PPLO during the October 2003-September 2004 financial

year and the PPLO collected 900 million baht in taxes and fees.

"Already, 26 developers have signed contracts in the first six months of this [fiscal] year and we have collected 487 million baht in taxes and fees."

He continued, "We think there will never be a lack of demand for land for hotels, and maybe people are paying even more than [the prices] we have estimated. I think prices will continue to rise."

People are indeed paying more than the PPLO's estimates. Bob Andrews, Managing Director of Phuket Land Search, says that land in Patong is changing hands at around 20 million baht a rai.

Larry Cunningham, the Managing Director of PhuketOne Real Estate, agrees, adding that even areas that were not in demand in the past are now becoming attractive to developers.

He said, "Phuket is still a small island. Rawai is becoming popular now because, even though it is on the east coast, it has the best beaches on that coast."

"Beachfront land prices have increased 100% over the past three years. In general, property prices have doubled every seven years, but in Phuket the prices have doubled every three years, and I see no reason why prices will not continue to rise."

Cutting off my own arm to offer advice

Since I wrote a column on Orbis last year, many readers have contacted me about this group. As an independent financial adviser, I am able to deal with the investment houses that deliver the best returns on a consistent basis.

To find these investment houses is not as easy as it may seem; in every area of investment there is a dismally low level of consistency.

Star performers suddenly become also-rans, and nowhere is this more evident than among equity fund managers.

In many cases this can be caused by an outstanding fund manager leaving a company, but even in situations where the fund manager does not change, the investment performance can.

But this is a big world, you may say. Surely someone can demonstrate a consistent high level of performance?

After many years in this business, I have found only one example: Orbis.

Orbis manages only equities and has a very limited number of funds. But compare the investment returns of any group you know with Orbis and you will see who is the best. If you can find any group that comes close, please let me know.

In answer to your question,

No. Orbis deals directly with the public – so in a sense, I'm cutting off my own arm here. It's just that I believe that Orbis is exceptionally good.

The "core" fund is the Orbis Global Equity Fund. Originally it was available only in US dollars, but following the creation of the euro, investors now have a choice.

Those who placed their money in this fund at its inception have enjoyed an average annual return of 14%. To put it another way, each US\$10 invested has grown to US\$80.

Some managers perform well, but how many can say that their investments have doubled their money over the past five years? In reality, the average fund manager's clients have still to recover all the money they had five years ago.

Orbis Global Equity has a distinctive investment approach: it invests in shares of companies that trade at a significant discount compared with the assessed "intrinsic value" of the business.

The company believes the share prices of such firms will eventually appreciate to reflect their real intrinsic value. Orbis is a patient investor, prepared to wait three to five years.

In terms of pure stockmar-



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

ket funds, Orbis offers two other choices: Orbis Africa Equity, which invests in the South African stockmarket, and Orbis Japan Equity.

The former is available only in South African Rand. Its performance since inception on 30 June, 1998, can be described only as spectacular, with average annual returns of 35.7%, compared with the benchmark FTSE/JSE Africa All Share Index of 13.7%.

The Japanese fund is not exactly a laggard, either, with an annual average return of 12.8% in Yen and 13.1% in US dollars.

When this is compared with the performance of the TOPIX (Total Return Index), it is even more impressive. The TOPIX made only 1.2% in yen and when hedged into US dollars, 4.7%.

The most common index quoted is the Nikkei Dow, but this covers only 225 companies, many of them large exporters. The TOPIX is a much broader index, representative of the whole Japanese market.

The Yen and US dollar classes date back to 1998. A euro version of this fund was launched in January 2003 and is up 23.8% to April 7 this year.

Orbis offers two other funds that were launched at the beginning of 1990. They are the Orbis Optimal Fund and Orbis Leveraged Fund.

Originally available only in US dollars, both funds had euro classes added on June 30, 1998.

From inception, the Orbis Optimal US Dollar Fund has averaged a 12.3% annual return and the Euro Fund 11.3%, while the two versions of the Orbis Leveraged Fund have returned 16.3% and 20%, respectively.

These are what are known as absolute return funds. In other words, it is the aim of the managers to make gains every year, regardless of stockmarket conditions.

The investment approach is simply to invest in the Orbis Global Equity Fund, Africa Fund and Japan Equity Fund.

The absolute return funds also sell stockmarket index futures and buy stock market index put options. The aim of this is to give the ability to profit from falling markets as well as rising ones.

The Orbis Leveraged Fund is identical to the Orbis Optimal

Fund in which it solely invests, but for each dollar or euro of investors' capital it borrows and invests the same amount.

The investment minimum is US\$50,000 and there are no entry or exit charges. Smaller investments are accepted by Orbis via offshore insurance companies.

Orbis's very user-friendly website is at: www.orbis.bm

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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Surakul to be venue for Asia-Europe youth soccer tourney

PHUKET CITY: Surakul Stadium will be the venue for the soccer matches of the 1st ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Youth Games, which are set to be played from June 2 to 8.

The announcement was made by Somsak Thepsuthin, the Minister of Sports and Tourism, during an inspection of the facilities on April 29.

The Cabinet on April 19 approved a budget of 65 million baht for the games, which also include tennis, swimming, badminton, athletics and table tennis. Competitions in these five sports will be held in Bangkok.

ASEM is an interregional forum comprising the 10 member states of ASEAN (the Association of South-East Asian Nations), China, Japan and South Korea, as well as the 25 member countries of the European Union.

K. Somsak made it clear that the objective of hosting the games in Phuket is to demonstrate that Phuket is ready for business following the disaster of December 26.

The minister said, "We know that soccer is very popular in Phuket, and recent international competitions, such as the Group C round of the FIFA Under-19s Women's World Cup held here last year, drew praise from many countries."

He added that 24 of the 38 member countries of ASEM had already shown their intention to send teams to the games.

— *Athiga Jundee*

B7m feasibility study for sports complex

By Anongnat Sartpisut & Athiga Jundee

PHUKET CITY: The proposal to build an international-standard sports training complex in Phuket appears to be limping ahead with seven million baht being earmarked by the Ministry of Sports and Tourism for a feasibility study.

Confirmation that the study is to receive funding was given on May 2 by Promchote Traivate, Head of the Phuket Office of Sports and Recreation Development (POSRD).

The plan to build a world-class sports facility, including a shooting range and a stadium, was first proposed in October 1998. That original plan called for the use of 220

rai in Tah Chat Chai, in Tambon Mai Khao.

More recently, in October 2003, Phuket Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura suggested that 2,000 rai — again in Tah Chat Chai — should be developed into a training facility to encourage "sports tourism" among athletes keen to escape cold climes.

"Who knows?" said Gov Udomsak at the time, "Perhaps one day David Beckham will come to practice soccer in Phuket."

The *Gazette* understands that the facilities to be studied would include a soccer pitch, athletics track, and basketball, tennis and badminton courts. The plan also includes provision for an unspecified number of townhouses to be built on the site.

But the latest development in the saga

has not pleased all in Phuket. Eam Thavornvongwongse, the President of the Phuket Sports Association, said that he has proposed a 126-rai plot close to Suan Luang Park in Phuket City. "It will be a disgraceful monument to Phuket if the sports complex is built in Mai Khao," he said.

"Mai Khao is mangrove forests and too far away from anywhere [to make it worthwhile]. A sports complex must have easy access to accommodation for the athletes, ideally within 20 kilometers or so.

"It is simply not feasible to site the sports complex in Mai Khao," he concluded.

Responsibility for the feasibility study will fall to the POSRD. No date has yet been set for when the study should be completed.

Shifting winds catch dinghy racers off guard

AO YON: Racing on May 1 at Ao Yon was a typical transition-season regatta, with a light and variable wind, veering consistently.

Michael Hallager and Andrew DeBruin started well in every race: on the line, at the gun, with pace. But Robert Buckminster and Richard Warnes were the first to understand the wind shift; they went to the right side of the course, rounded the top mark well ahead of the pack and went on to win.

In Race 2, Hallager/DeBruin battled Buckminster/Warnes from the start. Both teams were left behind.

Phil Lawson and Nid Chookate finished first and Alistair Purves and Russell Lerman came second, an awesome feat as Lerman had never before sailed a 59er and had never trimmed kite on any boat.

In Race 3, everyone was working the right side of the course, but Buckminster/Warnes



Andrew DeBruin (left) and Michael Hallager sailed well, but only manage to finish second overall after four races in veering winds.

were fastest downwind and went on to win the race.

The breeze built up a bit for Race 4 and the teams were showing signs of exhaustion.

Every boat capsized in the last race. Buckminster/Warnes lost their tiller extension while under spinnaker and lasted a few

minutes before capsizing just ahead of the finish line. They managed to get righted, and carried on to win the race and the day.

Overall results for the day: 1. Buckminster/Warnes; 2. Hallager/DeBruin; 3. Lawson/Chookate.

Richardson, Munger top PEGS tourney

KATHU: A field of 71 players took part in the Phuket Expat Golf Society (PEGS) annual club championship held on April 28 and 29.

On Day 1 at the Loch Palm Golf Club, zero-handicap Matt Richardson shot a seven-over-par 79. In contrast, Freddy Munger in B division shot a 12-under-handicap to lead the field by 10 shots going into Day 2.

On the second day of play, at Phuket Country Club, Richardson shot a one-under-par 71 to win the A division with a total of 150 for both days' play, which put him eight shots ahead of his nearest rival.

Although Munger could not repeat his stellar performance on Day 2, he did manage to squeeze two under his handicap to take the B division trophy with a total of 170 strokes, beating his nearest rival by 13 strokes.

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ITF tourney draws top young players

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET CITY: US\$55,000 (about 2.5 million baht) in prize money is up for grabs this month when as many as 400 tennis hopefuls from around the world are expected to fly to Phuket to compete in four one-week International Tennis Federation (ITF) events being held, one after the other, at the Phuket City Tennis Courts on Damrong Rd.

The first three competitions will be US\$10,000 (350,000 baht) ITF Men's Futures events, important for players seeking to acquire computer ranking points to get into the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals). These will be held May 2-8, May 9-14, and May 15-21.

Following these will be the six-day ITF Women's Circuit ranking event, from May 23, with US\$25,000 (875,000 baht) in prize money on the line. All events are being organized jointly by the Lawn Tennis Association of Thailand (LTAT) and the ITF with the cooperation of the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

Admission for spectators will be free, though the Phuket City Tennis Court complex has very limited spectator facilities.

Play will take place on the daily from 8:30 am to about 6 pm.

Entrants from 40 different countries are expected, including young talents from Australia, Russia, France, Japan, the US, Britain, Spain, New Zealand, India, South Africa, Germany, Austria, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, along with Thai tennis players from around the Kingdom.



World No 296 Napaporn Tongsalee (foreground, left) will be back in Phuket to compete in the ITF Women's Circuit event starting on May 23.

Napaporn Tongsalee, who recently played doubles in the FedCup match in Patong, has confirmed entry in the women's competition.

Four other top Thai players – Bhee Witoonpanich, Weerapat Doakmaiklee, Kirati Siributwong and Peerachai Chaiyaphan – will compete in the men's singles.

Tournament Director Som-

bat Euammongkol of the LTAT said, "This match will generate more than 1 million baht in revenue for the province, as many of the players will spend the entire month here," he said, adding that Phuket could stage more such events in the future if the provincial government would build more tennis courts, preferably six of them.

Patong FedCup court to go

PATONG: The three-million baht tennis court built in Patong for the Thailand-versus-Croatia Group 2 quarter-finals of the FedCup held late last month, will be demolished in a few weeks.

Although the court meets International Tennis Federation standards, the Lawn Tennis Association of Thailand (LTAT) has instructed that it be dismantled.

The spectators' stands that were trucked in and installed especially for the FedCup matches have already been dismantled and removed.

Sombat Euammongkol, a member of the LTAT technical committee, said that LTAT could give the court to the municipality, or the province, if either asked for it, but so far neither has.



LOT OF BOTTLE: The aim of this game was to get a golf ball into a hole. Not so simple: instead of a club, competitors had to hit balls with bottles swinging from cords tied around their waists. Other events included tug o' war and sack races.

Fun for all in Kathu

KATHU: Adults and children, men and women from 14 villages in Kathu are currently taking part in the annual Kathu Cup competition.

The festival of sport – intended to build community spirit as well as celebrate the May 5 coronation of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej – started on May 1 and is due to end on May 17. The festival is organized by Kathu Municipality and Kathu Tambon Administration Organization and is taking place in the grounds of Kathu District Office.



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Home of the Week

Patong

Soi Sansabai's hidden secret

Located in the Baan Benjamas Estate at the secluded end of Soi Sansabai in Patong, this two-story European-style home comes fully furnished and complete with nautical-themed decorations.

The house is a concrete-and-wood construction, and the owner insisted that all aspects of construction were of the highest quality, from soil preparation to the foundations to the walls, electrics and water storage.

Finished in teak throughout, the interior includes a European-style kitchen, living and dining areas, and three bedrooms and three bathrooms, two of which are ensuite.

Features outside the home include a sauna and 8x4-meter pool with powerful counter-current swim jets for exercise, as well as a separate Jacuzzi, all surrounded by landscaped gardens with a covered outdoor barbecue and eating area.

Residents have access to all the amenities in Baan Benjamas Estate, including a large swimming pool with terrace, landscaped gardens and 24-hour security. The home is only minutes' walking distance from all the amenities offered in central Patong.

This property could be a primary residence or a rental income property; it is currently available for rent at 100,000 baht a month, giving a potential annual return of 1.2 million baht.

The asking price for the home, including a Thai holding company with complete tax records, is 25 million baht.

The land area is 380 square



Above: Lush gardens hide the home from the hubbub of central Patong, which is just minutes' walking distance away.



Above right, and right: The covered outdoor barbecue area provides a haven from the midday sun, while the gardens offer full privacy around the pools.



meters, and the utilities include well water, water heater, three-phase electricity supply and cable UBC TV.

At the time of writing, the land title was NorSor 3 Gor, but was about to be upgraded to Chanote.

For more details, contact Mark at Phuket Paradise Group, Tel: 076-313298 or 01-6776103, Fax: 076-313319, Email: info@paradisepg.com Website: www.paradisepg.com

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Trees are a bit like people really. Not in the sense that they're always arguing with their mother-in-law or wondering which shampoo to buy in the supermarket, but in the baldness department.

People of more senior years may start to notice that they don't have the head of hair that they once had. For several of my friends, that process started years ago, well before they reached the autumn of their lives. Indeed, in the more temperate regions of the world, autumn is when many trees lose their leaves, in the same way as their "follically-challenged" human counterparts.

In Phuket, it seems that most plants feel that letting their leaves, well, leave, is a waste of time. But some have decided that pattern baldness is for them, and have decided to lose the lot.

Every dry season, the coral tree, or *Erythrina indica* or *tong-long* in Thai, becomes half-hearted with its leaf production, and by the time things really dry up, there's not much green left on its branches. Phuket is coming to the end of its dry period, so the leaves on these trees on the island have mostly disappeared, as they do every year.

Unlike its human counterparts, however, the coral tree has a winning card up its sleeve – with no leaves, the time is per-

Blooming baldies

GETTING AHEAD:
The *erythrina*, or coral tree, makes the most of any prolonged drought, by shedding its leaves and replacing them with bright-red blossoms.



fect for it to bloom. The scarlet blossoms that follow this leaf-shedding habit are so magnificently showy, it almost seems to be bragging.

Before the redeveloping work wreaked havoc at Nai Harn Lake, there used to be dozens of these trees around the banks. From a distance the vivid scarlet color is very much like the flame tree, but up close the flowers look like giant red tigers' claws, which accounts for another of its names.

Originally from Brazil, the *erythrina* is a genus (a set of closely-related species) containing some 100 trees and shrubs, most with spiny trunks and branches. There are a number of

family members that produce dazzling flowers. The most common *erythrina* seen in Phuket grow up to 15 meters tall.

This tree is also heliotropic – the flowers follow the sun as it moves across the sky. Apparently, most species of the *erythrina* show daily heliotropic movement of the leaflets, and it even has a night orientation. You'd have to be pretty bored to put this theory to the test though,

as it doesn't exactly move at a breakneck pace.

Another variation of the *erythrina* has boldly patterned variegated leaves with bright yellow veins running through them. If you're considering putting one of these in your garden, you'd better have plenty of space, or be prepared for a battle of wills between you and a plant.

A friend once planted one next to his pergola so that he'd

have extra shade during the heat of the day. Despite hacking huge limbs off it on a very regular basis, he couldn't subdue its determination to take over his garden.

Eventually he decided that the only way he could triumph over this power struggle was to uproot it completely.

As with so many plants in this part of the world, the *erythrina* is yet another poisonous plant. The seeds of most types of *erythrina* contain alkaloids, so eating them certainly wouldn't be the brightest idea in the world.

The coral tree likes full sun and well-drained soil, and flowers best after any period of drought. Quite large cuttings root easily – just cut off a sizeable branch and put it in some moist compost. It will wilt a little for a week or two, but will quickly get its act together, and a clone of the original tree will result.

Follically-challenged gentlemen may want take a few leaves out of the coral tree's book. That said, attaching bright flowers to your head is probably not the ideal option.

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CERIS

Construction Update

by Anongnat Sarpisut

CHALONG: Construction of the 180-million-baht Phuket Private Lagoon residential estate is 30% complete, with 18 of 49 units already sold.

Sakwuth Udomsrisak, the Managing Director of developer Phuket Nature Home Co Ltd, explained that the 22-rai development, located near Wat Luang Phu Supha, is centered around a lagoon and has views of the hills to the west.

The plans for the development were drawn up with the main focus being on providing homes in a quiet, relaxing environment through three main themes: privacy and security, green surroundings and healthy living.

In terms of security, the project will have security guards on-site 24 hours with closed-circuit television cameras set up throughout the estate.

To maintain a natural atmosphere, 60% of the area will include natural features, such as large trees, the lagoon, roadside flower beds and a recreational park for residents.

To provide a healthy lifestyle, the development will have a clubhouse with fitness room, sauna, spa and massage services, a whirlpool bath and a large swimming pool, as well as a jogging track around the lagoon.

There will also be a small shopping center and a restaurant next to the lagoon.

Units are available in five designs. The Ing Mai design will be used for 18 units, offering six-



An artist's impression of the Ing Tarn design, the most spacious of the homes to be built at the Phuket Private Lagoon project in Chalong.

Lakeside living in Chalong

meter-wide, three-story townhouses each with a usable area of 174 square meters. The townhouses will be in three blocks, each with six units. Prices for the Ing Mai units start at 3.3 million baht.

Seven units will be in the two-story Ing Fah design, with

187sqm of utility area, including four bedrooms and five bathrooms. Prices for these units start at 5.4 million baht.

Only three units will be built in the slightly larger two-story Ing Pleuk design, which offers 195sqm of utility area, with four bedrooms and five bathrooms, at prices starting at 5.7 million baht.

Eleven two-story houses

will be in the Ing Phu design, with 211sqm of utility area, including four bedrooms and five bathrooms. Prices for these units start at 5.5 million baht.

The largest two-story design available, called Ing Tharn, offers 235sqm of utility area, with four bedrooms and five bathrooms. Ten units will be built in this style, at prices from 7.5 million baht.

Every unit, including the townhouses, will come with a private swimming pool, ranging in size depending on the space available.

K. Sakwuth explained that quality materials are being used in all designs, including *maka* wood floors and Nu-Style roofs with insulation.

Each unit will have a grease trap and a reserve water storage tank, as well as municipal electricity and water supply.

For more information about Phuket Private Lagoon, contact Phuket Nature Home Co Ltd at 20/43 Mae Luan Rd, Phuket City. Tel: 076-235171-2.

Enjoy

Last night, I woke up at 2 am to watch a football match – the first round of the semi-finals of the UEFA Champions League, the competition between Europe's top football clubs. This semi-final was between two English clubs, Liverpool and Chelsea.

For these two clubs to play each other is not unusual – they're in the same division in the English League. But the fact that they were up against each other in the European competition was cause for interest among those who follow these matters.

I'm not at all sure why I watched that football match at 2 am on the morning of a work day. It was probably because my mates support Liverpool, a club apparently of fine tradition (if they have something called tradition in Liverpool).

Personally, I would much rather watch a good game of rugby. If you watch a top-level game of rugby, then switch to soccer, it's a bit like watching a yachting regatta from 20 miles away.

Apart from that, enjoying sport is, for me, an essential part of enjoying life and relationships, especially when you live in a country other than your home, where you mix with people of many cultures and nationalities.

Sport is a common factor, something we enjoy together, even if we don't understand each other.

The differences between India and Pakistan are put aside to allow cricket matches to go ahead. Countries whose politicians, leaders and less intelligent population hate each other are brought together to enjoy a football tournament, or any other great sporting event. People of the same nationality working in some remote country come together to enjoy a satellite broadcast of a sporting event.

I was in Kazakhstan this time last year. In Almaty, the former capital of that former Soviet state, I watched the FA Cup final, the San Marino Grand Prix and the final of the Super 12 rugby tournament between a New Zealand and an Australian team, two countries that are

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this sporting life

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Graham Doven

“deadly enemies” in the matter of rugby, but almost the same people in most other matters.

Watching those events with a bunch of people at Mad Murphy's Irish Pub made me feel much closer to home. When you're a long way from familiar territory, it somehow seems comforting to know that your mates and family are watching exactly the same thing at the same time.

I guess that's why I feel sorry for people who don't care about sport. It's an essential part of life, playing it or watching it together. You get the chance to argue, in a good-natured way, with people of other nationalities when you're supporting opposing sides of a big match.

You get the chance to yell and scream at the TV, drink lots of beer and generally carry on in a way that would have you carted off to the looney bin any other time. But that's what supporting a team is all about, and I think that people who don't like sport do not make very good team players in other aspects of life.




Making mates while watching a sporting event develops social bonds that are valuable in many other facets of living abroad.

I'm looking forward to the second round of the semi-finals of the Champions League. By the time you read this it will already have been played, and we'll know who will be playing the other team from Italy or Holland in the final.

While I am not a fanatical

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Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

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PATONG SEAVIEW

3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms. Price: 8.5 million baht. 500sqm of land, option for extra land. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-477-5306. Email: patriklambert@hotmail.com

HOUSE FOR SALE OR RENT



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NAI HARN HOUSE

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BEACH LAND PLOTS



Half-rai (800sqm) with 15-meter white-sand beach frontage. Located on Naka Island, only 4 mins by boat from Phuket (Ao Por pier). Less than 30 mins to airport, major shopping centers and international school. For sale, only 2.7 million baht/plot. Tel: 01-3430777.

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CHERNG TALAY

house. 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 3 car parking spaces, garden, large living room, kitchen. Only 5.25 million baht ono. Tel: 01-9681164.

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RAWAI CONDO

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LAND FOR SALE



Land for sale, 119 sq wah, on Kwang Rd, just 3km from Central Festival. Price: 1.9million baht. Tel: 01-6078567.

RAWAI TOWNHOUSE

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1.4 rai, good location and electric + water available. Price: 4.2 million baht. Call for details. Tel: 07-88964017, 01-2712833.

PATONG CONDO

Beachfront, 56sqm, freehold, for sale: 1.4 million baht. For more info. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

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Property Gazette

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- GOOD COMMAND OF ENGLISH
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- PLEASANT PERSONALITY

PLEASE CONTACT KHUN TOI

TEL: 076-238131, 01-8939174,
 MONDAY TO SATURDAY
 08.00 - 17.00 HRS

OFFICE

administrator. The Asia Center Foundation requires an Office Administrator with good organizing and administrative skills. English and Thai-language ability a must. Position available immediately. Please contact Roelien for more information. Tel: 076-321235, 01-895-7016. Fax: 076-321235. Email: roelien@asiacenter.ac

HOTEL MANAGER

Small hotel with bar and restaurant looking for experienced Thai lady fluent in English. Excellent opportunity for the right person. With experience only, please. Please call for more information at Tel: 076-340464, 07-8871733, or email: whharris042004@hotmail.com

MEDIA SALES REPS

wanted. Good basic salary + commissions. Thai nationals only. Excellent spoken English essential. Please contact for more information. Tel: 02-6556070, 01-5357944. Fax: 02-6556070. To apply email resum to: terry@csloxinfo.com

HOUSEKEEPER

for Patong area. Live-in preferred. Good English, good cook of Thai/farang food, pleasant nature, good standards of cleaning. Good salary + conditions. Tel: 01-7473000. Email: admin@thaiservers.com

LAW FIRM

Looking for paralegal & Thai lawyer. Pls email resum to: scphuket@yahoo.com

ICECREAM SHOP

is looking to employ a good-looking young Thai woman with spoken English. Please call for more information. Tel: 06-9928026.

EXPERIENCED STAFF

wanted for property development company in Phuket. For more information check: www.immobilienplus.com/jobs



Chandara Resort and Spa, a unique five-star resort of 51 villas located at Ao Por on Phuket's northeast coast, is scheduled to open during June 2005.

We are looking for suitable, qualified persons for all positions.

- Front Office Manager/Assistant Managers
- Housekeeper
- Administrative Manager/Administrative Executive
- Reservations Manager
- Food & Beverage Manager/Restaurant & Bar Manager
- Executive Chef/Sous Chef
- Accounting Manager/IT Manager/Purchasing Manager
- Chief Engineer/Chief Security
- Spa Manager

All positions are for Thai nationals only, except for Executive Chef.

Please send resumé with recent photo and expected salary to:

Chandara Resort and Spa

Pre-opening office – c/o Tour East (T.E.T.) Ltd.
 99/39 Moo 5, Chalemprakiat Rama 9 Rd,
 Ratsada, Muang, Phuket 83000
 Email: admin@chandara-resort.com

INT'L SCHOOL TEACHERS

Looking for experienced native-English speaking teachers qualified to teach primary and/or lower-secondary international curriculum for September 2005. Horizons Learning Centre is a small, high-caliber English-medium schooling venture in Phuket. Please send CV, salary expectations and cover letter by email, stating interest in teaching in a student-centered, progressive, inquiry-based learning environment. All inquiries will be treated in strictest confidence. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-238 756, 01-8942560. Fax: 076-325-403. Email: pamela@greenhouse-phuket.com

MANAGER

nightclub. Female only, 30 years or over. 5-star venue in Patong seeks self-motivated, English-speaking, stylish woman with Phuket knowledge. Please contact Peter for more information. Tel: 07-0170135.

THAI COOK WANTED

Thai restaurant opening soon in Singapore needs a hotel-experienced cook (male only). Please call for more information. Tel: 01-7615711.

CRUISE DIRECTOR

Cruise Director wanted for Phinisi Charter operation. Good customer relations and English language skills. Apply by above email. Email: neil_dibb@litigold.com

SAILING SKIPPER

required. Kia Ora Catamaran Charters, located in Koh Samui, requires an experienced skipper to operate our 52-foot day-charter sailing catamaran. Please contact for more information. Tel: 077-425264. Email: mark@kiaorathailand.com please see our website at: www.kiaorathailand.com

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Development Manager. Your core tasks are to improve conversion rates of sales and repeat customers. Salary + strong commission incentives. Come work for a smart, reputable company. Tel: 076-236616, 01-895-2206. Email: siamuk@loxinfo.co.th

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Island Job Mart

The Phuket Gazette

The Phuket Gazette seeks to fill the following positions:

I. ARTIST

- ▶ Graphic-design skills and knowledge of Adobe Illustrator, PageMaker, Photoshop and Dreamweaver required
- ▶ Freehand drawing and web-design skills a plus
- ▶ Responsible, hard-working, attention to detail
- ▶ Able to work in a fast-paced environment and meet deadlines
- ▶ Good communication skills, team player
- ▶ English speaker

II. ADVERTISING SALES

- ▶ Thai
- ▶ Good command of written and spoken English
- ▶ Good management and organizational skills
- ▶ Car driving license a must
- ▶ Outgoing personality

III. ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

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

IV. PROGRAMMER

- ▶ Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science or Computer Engineering
- ▶ Solid experience of at least 2 years in developing web applications with Asp-Ms Sql or PHP-MySQL. (Working samples of previous work required.)
- ▶ Professional working knowledge of ASP, PHP, JavaScript, MS-SQL 2000 server, Microsoft Access, MySQL, IIS
- ▶ Ability to hand code clean & efficient HTML, CSS with notepad/editplus
- ▶ Ability to program web-based database connectivity
- ▶ Ability to program 'com component' would be a plus
- ▶ Ability to work independently with little supervision
- ▶ Dedicated, team-player attitude

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

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

SALES & MARKETING
assistant. We are looking for a female w/at least 3 years' experience, good English and strong presentation skills. Salary 20-25,000 baht per month. Pls contact for more information. Tel: 076-263737, 01-5354108. Fax: 076-224113 or contact by email for further details and to apply at: recruitment@bowentraining.com

RECEPTIONIST/
Assistant. International law office in Phuket seeks active, hardworking individual: Thai female, 18-30 years old, bachelor's degree or experience, good English, good computer skills, willing to take responsibility and work under pressure, service-minded. Tel: 06-5556602. Email: cv_staffs@hotmail.com

PROPERTY RENTALS
Manager. Siam Home Care requires self-starting, motivated Thai manager to run successful rentals division. Must have good spoken and written English and have car. Only ambitious people should apply. Tel: 076-288908. Email: info@siamrealestate.com For further details, please see our website at: www.siamhomecare.com

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Problems with an extra-marital affair?
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Read her advice in the *Phuket Gazette*.

Fax 076-213971 or email momma@phuketgazette.net



The PARADISE KOH YAO
Boutique Beach Resort & Spa

"The Paradise - return to nature"

New 70-room boutique resort (4-star+) on Koh Yao Noi Island - 60 minutes by boat from Phuket is seeking a highly-motivated person for a key management position, with emphasis on commitment to personalized customer service

Executive Assistant Manager (Room Division)

In charge of Room Division (Front Office, Housekeeping, Engineering, Recreation/Transfers, Spa) with additional duties in Personnel and Local Relations/Affairs.

- At least 3-5 years' experience in 5- or 4-star hotel/resort operation in similar position
- Exposure to and personal strength in Front Office, Lodging and Personnel work
- Thai national, 30-40 years of age

An Attractive remuneration package will be offered to the successful candidate.

Send your resumé with recent photo to:
e-mail: jhrassoc@ksc.th.com

The Paradise Koh Yao
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12/39 MOO 2, THEPKRASATTRI RD, KOH KAEW,
MUANG, PHUKET, 83000.
Tel: 076-238 081
Web site : www.TheParadise.biz

BURASARI

Restaurant Manager. Burasari Resort in Patong requires a dynamic restaurant manager. Ideal candidate will have an outgoing personality, proven experience in top-class hotels, knowledge of wine and strong leadership abilities. Excellent English-language skills and the ability to use a computer are also required. Please contact Ext #669 for further details and to apply. Tel: 076-292929. Fax: 076-294451. Email: hr_bj@burasari.com

JOB VACANCIES

Krabi La Playa Resort is now recruiting for the following positions:

- Reservations Manager
- Restaurant Manager
- Personnel Manager
- Sales Executives.

A minimum of 3 years' experience in the hotel field is required. Tel: 075-637500, 01-8812317. Fax: 075-695497. Email: worasuda@krabilaplaya.com For further details, pls see our website at: www.krabilaplaya.com

INTERNATIONAL LAW OFFICE

Secretary

- Female
- Bachelor's degree
- Good command of spoken and written English
- Computer skills
- Able to start immediately
- Experience in Agreements, Visa, Work permits will be advantage

Please do not hesitate to contact us at
Tel: 076 222191-5

Email: ohn@phuket-realestate-law.com

Employment Wanted

INTERNET EXPERT

I am looking for suitable work in Phuket. I have my own Web server with unlimited space, etc. I also have an easy-to-use e-commerce shopping cart package. I would be interested in working for a company that would benefit from my expertise and resources. Please contact by email at: mkewer@coastlineweb.net

DRIVER

I am 28 years old, male, from Trang Town. I can speak a little English. Now working with diving company in Phuket. I am looking for a new job from May 1, 2005. Tel: 05-0680190.

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367/2 Yaowarat Road, Phuket City
Tel: 076-236555 Fax: 076-213971

Tout, Trader & Trumpet

Articles for Sale

EXPAT MOVING SALE

Moving to Singapore. Need to sell before May 13: TV & cabinet: Sony Trinitron 20" in good condition: 5,000 baht. Magic Chef 1,000-watt microwave, does everything: 2,000 baht. Located at Mai Khao village, next to airport. Call David at Tel: 09-5867530.

MOUNTAIN BIKE

I am moving to Singapore and need to sell my mountain bike before May 13: Challenger, 21-speed, CR-MO, good condition, brand new Shimano gear set, great bike, 26", ridden by farang, new helmet and tools. 6,000 baht - great deal. Located at Mai Khao village, next to airport. David 09-5867530.

AMPLIFIER

with 2 extra speakers, TDK original from Europe. 3,500 baht with adapter. Would like to sell ASAP. Tel: 09-730-2656. Email: ginger_dave78@yahoo.de

YAMAHA DRUM KIT

Yamaha DTXpressII electric drum kit plus bass pedal, stool and 70-watt amp. Excellent for practice, teaching, and professional playing. 45,000 baht. Tel: 01-8957727. Email: info@axiominvestments.com

RESTAURANT

furniture. 12 tables and 48 chairs with white linen. Almost brand new. Cost 62,000 baht. For quick sale at very good price! Tel: 01-0798777. Email: micke_wallin@yahoo.se

BBQ FOR SALE

Oil drum barbecue. Cost 3,500 baht and used only once. 2,000 baht. Please email: jazzybyname@hotmail.com

LEFT-HAND CLUBS

Full set of graphite left-hand golf clubs plus extra driver, steel lob wedge, ball retriever and bag. 17,000 baht. Tel: 076-333244, 09-9091917. Email: porterat@phuket.ksc.co.th

BABY COCKATOOS

Electus parrots, sun, conures and many more birds for sale at Phuket Bird Paradise. Please call for more information. Tel: 01-5979255.

3-DOOR FRIDGE

Refrigerator, about 180cm x 200cm x 70cm. About 3.5 years old, in good condition. Good for restaurant or shop. Only 9,500 baht. Pls call for more information. Tel: 01-6912881.

Bulletins

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
01 788 6027, 06 745 8910
and 01 2732053.

Business Opportunities

BAR FOR SALE

Patong. Entertainment, Thai company, work permit. Please see our website at: www.homebarphuket.com

RESTAURANT/BAR

for rent. At tsunami-safe Surin Beach: 15,000 baht/month. Tel: 01-4151647. Email: tomshut@hotmail.com

RESTAURANT/BAR

sale. Kamala, main road. Aircon, 40 seats, well-established walk in. Take over: 6,000 baht/month; 900,000 baht for sale. Call after 4 pm. Tel: 076-385940.

KATA SHOP

bargain. Central, next to Little Star restaurant. Shop and upper floors ready to move into without delay; all perfect state. Rent 20,000 baht a month, no key money. 2 months' deposit. Tel: 06-690-2532, 01-3708074.

TOUR COMPANY

for sale. Established city tour company. Good prospect for overseas market. Ideal for foreigners wanting to work and stay in Phuket. Email: paradisetour@csloxinfo.com

TSUNAMI RESORT

Active investor/partner sought for redevelopment of eco-resort on Phra Thong Island in Phang Nga. Site is a world-class setting, with two beautiful beaches, abundant wildlife, years of successful operation based on a love of nature. Email: simi@losthorizonsasia.com

TOUR COMPANY

for sale. Incl Toyota Commuter, high roof, yellow, luxury interior; contract with many agents. For more info, call Steve. Tel: 06-6821310.

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www.PhuketVillaServices.com

RESTAURANT/BAR/

rooms. Lease for 5 years, 1.3 million baht. Good location 100m from the beach. Includes 3 rooms plus 1 for staff. Restaurant/bar has 46 seats. Fully furnished and fitted out with TV, aircon, etc. Rent at 35,000 baht per month. Tel: 04-8448381. Email: garyone1@hotmail.com

BAR FOR SALE

Large, successful, established bar in soi off Soi Bangla for sale. Pool table, sound system plus all fittings. Please call Tel: 06-2832285 for more information.

KATA CENTER

Siam Silk & Work of Art. For sale; urgent. 3 rooms and stock: 740,000 baht. Please call. Tel: 01-9798540.

BUSINESS FOR SALE

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users. 9 out of 10 computers are infested with viruses or spyware. If your computer is frustratingly slow to start, you are losing programs or your net browser does what it wants to do, your machine is almost certainly infected. I can clean it of all viruses/spyware and protect it from further infection. Personal or corporate inquiries welcome. Tel: 06-2770596. Email: thevirusdoctor@hotmail.co.uk

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Personals

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Retired businessman looking for backgammon players on Phuket Island. Please call if interested. Tel: 076-386113, 01-5778443.

ROMANCE

I am 52, physically fit, and traveling to Phuket early next month. Seeking to meet an attractive and sincere Thai woman 25 to 33 years old. Please email with a picture. Email: ydelk@hotmail.com

FEMALE FOR FUN

on Phi Phi. Looking for a female companion, romance, friendship, just to have a few days of fun on Phi Phi Island with me, around June 6. Pls send photo and more about you. Email: timesreporter@tsnet.com

USA MAN SEEKS

Thai lady. Businessman is traveling to Phuket in May and is seeking to meet a Thai lady for romance and companionship. Please email with details and a picture. Email: lmbjack60@yahoo.com

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