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The Phuket Gazette

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Airport boss uneasy over zero landing fees

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET (Gazette/The Nation): The Director of Phuket International Airport has expressed reservations over a proposal to waive landing fees until the end of 2005 in an attempt to boost post-tsunami tourism.

Tourism and Sports Minister Somsak Thepsuthin told reporters that lifting landing fees at Phuket and Krabi airports could help in the recovery of tourism in the two provinces and the rest of the Andaman region.

The two airports charge between 60,000 and 120,000 baht a landing, depending on the size of the aircraft.

But Phuket International Airport director Sq/Ldr Pornchai Eua-aree told the *Gazette* he was uneasy about the proposal, because it was not yet clear how it would be implemented.

He said: "Will it be like Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Malaysia, which waives fees for certain airlines



Phuket Airport: Slashing landing fees to zero may be attractive to airlines, but will it induce more visitors to fly to the island?

– the ones that start flying into KLIA or increase the number of flights to the airport?

"Which airlines would be exempt at Phuket? How would this affect the income of the airport authorities?"

"I don't think it's a good idea right now."

Since the tsunami, the number of flights through the airport has slumped to 35 a week, compared with 192 during the last low season. Ten charter companies

have suspended services to the island.

K. Somsak said he wanted the airports to waive the fee until the end of this year; he did not say when the Cabinet was expected to consider the proposal.

Meanwhile, in another indication of the sad state of tourism on the island, Hong Kong-based Dragonair has announced that it will close its Phuket City office, on Phang Nga Rd.

Sutthisak Pungtamawatthanakun, Manager of Dragonair Phuket, explained that flights between Hong Kong and Phuket were suspended on January 5 due to the "post-tsunami effect" and that unrest in the deep south of Thailand, particularly the bomb at Haad Yai airport, had resulted in an even sharper decline in air passengers.

"There will not be a scheduled service anymore – just ad hoc charter flights when there is sufficient demand during seasonal holidays," K. Sutthisak said.

Governor lays out plans for war on 'taxi mafia'

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET CITY: Governor Udomsak Uswarangura has unveiled more plans for cleaning up taxi and tuk-tuk services and reducing the influence of the island's "taxi mafia".

The Governor said the number of "limousines" allowed to operate from Phuket International Airport should be limited to 50-60 vehicles. All should be Mercedes-Benz cars, Toyota Camrys or Volvos, no more than five years old, and with engine capacities of at least 2 liters.

Three meter taxis at a time should be allowed to wait at the stand directly in front of the airport terminal; the rest should wait

outside the airport and be summoned in by walkie-talkie only when there is an opening for them at the stand.

Speaking on June 9 at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall with representatives of the Phuket Provincial Transportation Office (PPTO), the Airport and the Phuket Tourist Association, he reiterated the importance of having more meter taxis in the province.

Metering, he said, would help end the dominance of the Phuket "taxi mafia", which enables some drivers to claim areas of the island as their own private turf.

Gov Udomsak said, "In Kata-Karon, for example, the [tuk-tuk] drivers say they have agreed a good system among themselves,

which is fine, but the problem is that they won't let anyone else onto their patch."

Similarly, the Governor said, in Patong, tuk-tuk drivers had awarded themselves monopolies on operating outside certain hotels.

As things stood, the Governor said, registered taxis are effectively restricted to working to and from the airport. "But if every taxi were metered, it could stop the territorial arguments," he said.

He approved of a suggestion that police checkpoints could check that taxis had meters, and that drivers were using them.

The Governor estimated that it will take around two years to clean up Phuket's taxi services.



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Danish expert puts forward beaches plan

PHUKET: A Danish environmental expert has presented a radical plan for the restoration of beaches to Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura.

Poul Jakobsen, General Manager of the Skagen Innovation Center (SIC), told the *Gazette* after a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall, "We are a world-wide environmentally-friendly research company and have come to Phuket to help restore and maintain the beaches from Patong up to Khao Lak – an area that has suffered severe erosion.

"We have developed a cost-effective system whereby we drain and widen damaged beach-

es and improve them esthetically. This, we feel, will bring back tourists to the area. We have made a survey from Patong up to Khao Lak and it's possible to restore around 15 kilometers of this stretch."

He said that, if the scheme is accepted, he will team up with local contractors.

The scheme would cost a hefty 3.3 million euros (165 million baht), but, Mr Jakobsen said, "It is a relatively small amount compared with the going rates of construction companies.

"A normal firm would charge 3.3 million euros to clean up 1.5km of beach. We would like to offer 15km for the same price, with a yearly monitoring plan and evaluation report."

The Governor is reported to be interested in the project but on a somewhat smaller scale due to financial constraints. He is expected to make a decision after consulting Thai academics on the subject.

– *Athiga Jundee & Mayo Kishimoto*

IN BRIEF

Local pols to the rescue

PHUKET: The Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) has invited the country's other 75 *OrBorJor* to attend a meeting in August aimed at giving a boost to the island's tourism industry.

Phuket *OrBorJor* President Anchalee Vanich-Thepa-butr said, "The tourism industry in Phuket is in crisis, so it is important that provincial officials from around the country should help."

800 delegates are expected to attend the meeting.

Murder still a mystery

PHUKET CITY: Police have yet to identify an Asian woman found murdered near Sri Suchart Grand View 2 housing estate, off the bypass road, on March 22.

Pol Maj Aikasit Pinkaew told the *Gazette*, "It is difficult to investigate this case because we have no evidence and no relatives have come forward."



We Love Phuket sticker winner

Phuket resident John Kaplan, the latest winner in the *Gazette's* "We Love Phuket" sticker campaign, receives his prize of a two-night stay at Fisherman Way Holiday Homes & Country Cottages from Manasanan "Jeab" Bunto of the *Gazette* advertising sales team.

Phuket to host big gay street party

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET CITY: Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura has given the green light for the province to host Asia's largest gay and lesbian festival, the Nation Party, after the organizers' application for a license to hold the annual event in Singapore was turned down.

The three-day festival will now be held in Phuket, starting November 4.

Organized by the website *Fridae.com*, the festival has been held in Singapore for the past four years. It was dubbed the Nation Party because it was held on August 9, Singapore's Independence Day, which has long been used by the island-state's government to promote a sense of national unity.

The license application for this year's festival, however, was turned down in a faxed reply to *Fridae.com* from the Singapore Police, which described the event as "contrary to public interest".

Singapore's Minister of Health was later quoted as saying that concern about the spread of HIV among Singapore residents resulting from the influx of foreigners attending the festival was a factor in the decision.

Officials in Phuket, desperate for a reversal of the post-tsunami tourism slump, appear more than happy to host the festival.

Gov Udomsak played down concerns that it could result in a spread of the HIV virus in Phuket. "We already host one annual Gay Festival in Phuket, and nobody ever has any trouble with it," he said. "[The organizers] have the right to hold it here as long as they don't break any laws or engage in immoral practices."

Commenting on potential health concerns, Patong Hospital Deputy Director Padungkiet Utokasenee said that Aids is a health and behavioral issue affecting all people, not just gays.

He said that, far from opposing the festival, health officials would instead use it as an opportunity to promote Aids awareness. He said he expected 3,000 to 4,000 people to join in.

Fridae.com reported the results of an independent survey that showed that some 40% of the visitors to the 2004 Nation festival in Singapore were foreign tourists and that the event generated close to US\$6 million (244 million baht) in revenue.

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European Film Festival gets under way

PHUKET: June 16 saw the launch of Phuket's first film festival, a 11-day feast of movies from Europe organized by the Delegation of the European Commission to Thailand (DECT) and SF Cinema City Co.

The European Union Film Festival 2005, at the SFX Coliseum Cinema at Central Festival Phuket, co-sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*, is showcasing 31 movies from 25 countries.

The opening ceremony on June 16 was due to feature music from the band Ocastra and an exhibition about the films. It was due to be chaired by Dr Friedrich Hamburger, Head of the DECT.

All the movies are being screened with their original soundtracks and English subtitles. Tickets cost 70 baht.

The program for the remaining days is as follows:

June 18: 1200: *Beware of Greeks Bearing Guns* (Greece); 1400: *Nynke* (Netherlands); 1615: *A Girl* (Belgium); 1815: *Blind Spot* (Slovenia); 2015: *The Hidden City* (Spain).

June 19: 1215: *She Kept Crying for the Moon* (Slovakia); 1400: *Squint Your Eyes* (Poland); 1600: *On the Other Side of the Bridge* (Austria); 1815: *Dream Car* (Hungary); 2015: *Tsatsiki Friend Forever* (Sweden).

June 20: 1200: *The Son* (Belgium); 1410: *I Always Wanted to be a Saint* (Luxembourg); 1610: *Some Secrets* (Czech Republic); 1830: *Young Kees* (Netherlands); 2030: *The Hundred Steps* (Italy).

June 21: 1200: *If I were a Rich Man* (France); 1400: *Dream Car*; 1600: *Getting My Brother Laid* (Germany); 1800: *The Root of the Heart* (Portugal); 2025: *One Hand Can't Clap* (Czech Republic).

June 22: 1200: *A Girl*; 1400: *Pleasant Days* (Hungary); 1610: *One-Way Ticket to Mombasa* (Finland); 1800: *Shades of Happiness* (Finland); 2000: *French Men* (France).

June 23: 1200: *One Man Up* (Italy); 1400: *The Hundred Steps*; 1620: *Blind Spot*; 1815: *Beware of Greeks Bearing Guns*; 2015: *On the Other Side of the Bridge*.

June 24: 1200: *Aftermath* (Denmark); 1415: *The Discovery of Heaven* (Netherlands); 1700: *The Son*; 1910: *I Always Wanted to be a Saint*; 2115: *Some Secrets*.

June 25: 1200: *Song for a Raggy Boy* (Ireland); 1400: *Science Fiction* (Belgium); 1600: *Head-On* (Germany); 1830: *One Hand Can't Clap*; 2045: *If I were a Rich Man*.

June 26: 1200: *One-way Ticket to Mombasa*; 1400: *Ae Fond Kiss* (UK); 1610: *Schultze Gets the Blues* (Germany); 1830: *Pleasant Days*; 2045: *Getting my Brother Laid*.

Synopses of all the movies may be seen in the *Gazette* website at www.phuketgazette.net/filmfestival.asp

Writer recounts last moments of doomed dive boat

By Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

PHUKET: *Gazette* diving writer Chris Cruz has described the dramatic moments before the dive boat *Bubble Blue* sank during a heavy storm on June 7, leaving a Thai woman dead.

The 24-meter boat, with 18 people on board, was on its way from Chalong to the Similans for a seven-day coral survey when it was hit by bad weather.

Speaking from his bed in Wachira Phuket Hospital the day after the boat sank, Mr Cruz said: "The storm was really very, very bad, so we had to slow down. It lasted for about three hours; the wind was 15-20 kilometers an hour and the waves were be-

tween four and six meters high.

"We got caught in the middle. The waves kept smashing into the boat and water was coming inside, and slowly, slowly, we started sinking."

As the boat listed to port, the skipper told everyone to move to the starboard side so that there would be less chance of them being hit by heavy items falling to the lower side of the boat.

"Suddenly we were in the water. Luckily it happened in the daytime. If it had happened at night, it would have been a disaster."

A 36-year-old woman, Sukonthapan Weerawan, who had inhaled a lot of water, went into shock and died. K. Sukonthapan,

from Bangkok, 36, was a writer who had volunteered to help on the trip because she was a friend of one of the divers.

She could not swim. Mr Cruz said, "She told me this was her first time on a boat, but we didn't know it would be her last."

"We did everything we could to save her. We put her in the dinghy - it had capsized but we managed to get it the right way up - and we performed CPR [cardio-pulmonary resuscitation] on her, gave her mouth-to-mouth, but she didn't make it."

He continued, "We shared food and tried to hydrate ourselves. I was telling my friends to eat as much as they could because we didn't know how long we would be in the water."

"Everyone helped each other and all were very calm, though I think they were a bit scared."

"But considering there were 18 of us and only one person died, it shows that we were doing the right things."

After two hours in the rough sea, the group was spotted and picked up by a Thai fishing boat.

Mr Cruz said he had had nightmares about not being able to save K. Sukonthapan, but added: "Thai people have told me that, because of the Buddhist way, she is happy she's gone."

'Slow' ODPM Chief moved

PHUKET CITY: Phuket Office of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (ODPM) Chief Nakorn Tipsat has been transferred to Surat Thani after failing to meet a deadline to present Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura with a report on the ODPM's response to the tsunami.

When K. Nakorn failed to present his report at a meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall, the Governor demanded that he be transferred out of Phuket.

On June 8 the national office of the ODPM ordered K. Nakorn to move to the ODPM office in Surat Thani.



SMASHING TIME: Panom Noppon, Chairman of the Committee for the Prevention & Suppression of Intellectual Property Infringement (left) and Pol Lt Gen Boonrith Rattanaporn, Assistant Commissioner of the Royal Thai Police, smash up fake watches and CDs, to the amusement of Phuket Town Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana and Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura. They were taking part in the mass incineration on June 14 of fake goods with an estimated street value of 37.6 million baht, all seized in Patong and Karon.

Cops face probe over money

PHUKET: Pol L/Cpl Panya Dee-On and his superior, Pol Lt Col Peerapan Meemak, of Chalong Police Station, have been temporarily transferred to police regional headquarters in Surat Thani pending investigation of allegations that they accepted a bribe from Supa Nilwadee, a female construction foreman in Rawai.

Thai TV station iTV on June 8 broadcast footage showing L/Cpl Panya asking Supa Nilwadee for 6,000 baht.

The next day, the Superintendent of Chalong Police Station, Pol Col Chalit Kaewyarat, demanded an explanation.

The officers reported that they were acting as arbitrators between K. Supa and another contractor, and the money was

handed over to them as compensation to be paid to the other contractor.

Nevertheless, the two officers have been charged with wrongfully exercising their functions, an offense carrying punishment of up to 10 years in prison.

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Brightening up the beach are, from left, Miss Belgium Beauty 2005, Cynthia Reekmans, and models Kathleen Claes and Sasja Beullens.

Belgian beauties pose to help tsunami kids

PHUKET: Bang Tao Beach has had more than its fair share of glamor over the past week as Miss Belgium Beauty 2005, Cynthia Reekmans, along with models Sasja Beullens and Kathleen Claes, posed for fashion photographer Henk Van Cauwenbergh in the shooting of the annual *Showbizz* calendar.

Brigitta Callens, Miss Belgium 1999 and make-up artist, told the *Gazette* that the *Showbizz* calendar is comparable with the famous Pirelli calendar but appears only in Belgium.

Ms Callens said, "Part of the profits from the *Showbizz* calendar will go to the Light After the Tsunami Foundation, a project set up to help orphans of the tsunami in Khao Lak."

She added that she has been coming to Thailand for 11 years and has a deep affection for the country. She hopes to promote the region as much as possible.

"These are pure and sensitive people. Thais have warm and open hearts and this makes me want to come back and help Thailand and the Thai people."

Mr Van Cauwenbergh, who founded the fund-raising program, explained, "There are five children in the project, all of them girls, aged from four to 12 years old. We've pledged them scholarships until they graduate with degrees, and we are building houses for them in Khao Lak."

He added, "We have also donated 1.8 million baht and eight fishing boats for tsunami victims."

He and the models will be based at the Surin Bay Inn for a month. Five other Miss Belgians (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2005) and a contingent of actors from a TV mini-series, were due to arrive in the following week.

- Athiga Jundee & Mayo Kishimoto

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Queer News

Rabbiting abbot

SARABURI: Ever wonder why clergy refer to non-clerics as "laypersons"? Perhaps it's because those who are not in the priesthood seem to find it easier to get laid.

But 59-year-old Phra Prapat Thammarat, Abbot of Wat Rongsaeng in Nongkhae District, apparently didn't view his position as temple head as any reason not to bring his girlfriend back to his temple quarters for a game of hide the sausage.

In fact, Phra Prapat and his love interest, Malika "Maew" Srikulthorn, a 25-year-old hairdresser, were both getting the best of both worlds. Malika received a new motorbike and other items bought by Phra Prapat using temple funds. For his part, Phra Prapat got what almost every man wants, and by using his temple quarters as a love shack he didn't have to pay extra money for a short-time hotel.

Unfortunately, such agreeable situations seldom last long. At about 1 am on May 21, a mob of angry villagers and volunteer police – knowing full well that the young woman was in the abbot's quarters – surrounded his room, yelling for Phra Prapat to open the door and agree to be defrocked for his scandalous behavior.

The crowd was led by none other than Phra Prapat's own niece, 35-year-old Wandee Aekanitsri, head of Tambon Nongplamaw's Village 2.

When police arrived to investigate the situation, they found the lights extinguished and the room silent. Surrounded and with no way to escape, the abbot and his girlfriend played possum.

After the police identified themselves, however, Phra Prapat had no choice but to open the door. When he did, police, reporters and angry villagers surged into the room. One reporter noticed the monk kick a pair of women's shoes under the bed. But it was in vain, because the villagers soon found Maew behind a bookcase, shaking with fear and clad only in her underwear.

After dressing, the pair were taken to Wat Bua Loy, also in Nongkhae District, to see the Chief District Monk.

Under questioning, Maew admitted to what everyone else already knew, but Phra Prapat, clearly a man of great faith, continued to proclaim his innocence and steadfastly refused to leave the monkhood.

It wasn't until Saraburi's chief administrative monk was sent out to Wat Bua Loy to join in the investigation that the villagers handed over a CD-ROM containing graphic photographs, clandestinely snapped, of the monk and the hairdresser making the Beast with Two Backs.

After viewing just a few of the images on the temple computer, the investigator could not bear to see any more and ordered the machine turned off.

Only after this did Phra Prapat admit his mistake and consent to being defrocked. As he left the temple side-by-side with Maew, a large crowd of villagers rejoiced with cries of *Chaiyo! Chaiyo!*

K. Wandee later told a reporter that she had pushed for the defrocking of her uncle because he had spent so much temple money on the young woman that he had left the wat thousands of baht in debt.

Source: Kom Chad Luek



PUT ON YOUR ROBE SO WE CAN DEFROCK YOU! Abbot Prapat just minutes after he was caught with a semi-naked hairdresser in his temple quarters.

Medical hub plan

After two years of construction, the 200-million-baht Outpatients Department (OPD) building at Bangkok Phuket Hospital (BPH), begun in 2003, is now 90% complete. Already offering some services to patients, the building should be fully operational by next month.

The hospital's Emergency and Referral Center, along with many of its outpatient departments, will soon move into the new building.

Patients expecting the cold, clinical feel of most medical facilities might be in for a surprise when they walk into the lobby of the OPD Building, which Hospital Director Dr Suraphong Lookhanumanjao describes as a "hospital" because its design includes features more commonly found in luxury hotels than in hospitals.

The three-story OPD building has 9,000 square meters of floor space. In the future, this could be expanded further to include a fourth floor above the existing roof, currently the site of the hospital's helicopter landing pad.

Dr Suraphong explained that since the hospital's opening 10 years ago, it has treated an average of 500 to 600 outpatients daily and has had an inpatient capacity of 150 to 200 beds.

The new OPD building is intended to meet an expected increase in demand for outpatient services – much of it coming from "medical tourists" — to as many as 1,000 patients a day by 2008, according to the hospital's projections.

BPH is also planning to expand its maximum inpatient capacity of about 200 beds to some 320 beds by adding three more

Phuket International Hospital and Bangkok Phuket Hospital, the island's two largest private hospitals, both remain optimistic about the prospects for continuing the island's development into a regional medical hub.

Both hospitals share the goal of offering medical services comparable in quality with those available in Bangkok and Singapore – but at more affordable prices. The two hospitals have somewhat different marketing strategies, however, with Bangkok Phuket Hospital more actively promoting its services abroad while Phuket International Hospital continues to see its primary role as that of a more community-oriented healthcare provider.

Here, the *Gazette's* Anongnat Sartpisut and Stephen Fein review current expansion plans underway at the two hospitals.

floors to the top of its five-story Building 1. Design work on that project is expected to begin by year's end.

Because much of the hospital's former parking area is now occupied by the new OPD Building, the hospital has also acquired two rai of land behind its administration building and will begin construction of a 600-car parking lot there by the end of this year or in early 2006, Dr Suraphong said.



'We see our role as being able to provide normal medical services to every member of the family. Right now, 95% of our business is related to such services'

– Dr Anuroj Tharasiriroj, President, Phuket International Hospital.

strolling about the waiting area, which will have such amenities as a coffee corner, a Bangkok Bank outlet and even wireless Internet access.

In addition to the Reception

and Customer Service desks, the OPD building's first floor will also house the Emergency and Referral Center (ERC), Joint and Spine Center, OPD office and waiting area. The ERC, which houses X-ray equipment, is already operational with doctors on stand-by.

The second floor, accessible by an escalator, will house the cardiac care unit, which will offer full 24-hour services for heart patients. Other facilities to be housed there will include a dental center and a health promotion center.

The third floor will have three meeting rooms with seating for 300, 100 and 50 people, respectively, as well as administration offices and a service quality and development center. The floor is expected to play host to medical research meetings and health seminars.


BPH is privately owned, but is operated as part of the Bangkok Dusit Medical Services (BGH) group, which has a share of about 15% of the Thai medical services market.

Dr Suraphong said BPH's 2004 revenue was approximately 700 million baht, with expected revenue growth for 2005 of 15%. Revenue for the first quarter of 2005 was about 12%, slightly behind that target, he said.


Before the tourism slump that followed the tsunami, some 40% of BPH's patients were foreigners. That figure has now



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The gleaming, new lobby of Bangkok Phuket Hospital's new Outpatients Department building, which has been described as a "hospitel" by Hospital Director Dr Suraphong Lookhanumanjao.

fallen to about 30%, with resident expatriates now making up 80% to 90% of the foreign patients in recent months.

Meanwhile, Phuket International Hospital (PIH), which began its operations in downtown Phuket City in 1982 and moved to its current 10-rai site on the bypass road in December 1993, has begun work on an ambitious 340-million-baht renovation and expansion project.

Hospital President Anuroj Tharasiroj told the *Gazette* that renovation work on the hospital lobby and main waiting area is already complete.

Apart from making the hospital look more modern and attractive, the work is also intended to ensure that the hospital's existing facilities match those of a new 240-million-baht building that is scheduled to open in September 2007.

Construction of the new building was originally scheduled to get underway in March this year but the hospital chose to postpone the work for a year after the tsunami hit Phuket.

Dr Anuroj, one of a group of 10 shareholders who collectively hold a majority interest in the hospital, said the new four-story building will house both inpatient and outpatient services.

On the first two floors will be a number of specialty services, such as gastrointestinal and hemodialysis clinics. On the third and fourth floors will be 56 individual patient rooms that will increase the hospital's capacity from 90 beds to 145. The total floorspace of the new building will be about 14,000sqm.

The new building, which will also have a car park in its basement, will be built on what is now a garden area between the existing main building and the Index Living Mall's property to the north. In addition to the 280 million baht for construction, the building will also be fitted out with some 60 million baht in new medical equipment.

Despite the hefty price tag, Dr Anuroj said that the hospital has no plans to add highly-specialized services that would ne-

cessitate investment in expensive medical technology.

"We see our role as being able to provide normal medical services to every member of the family. Right now, 95% of our business is related to such services, and only the remaining 5% is what could be described as 'specialized' treatment.

"We don't expect this role to change and will continue to refer cases that require more specialized treatment to other medical facilities that are better equipped to handle them, such as when we send cardiac cases requiring difficult surgery to Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok," he said.

The new buildings at both PIH and BPH by no means comprise the full extent of the boom in Phuket's medical services sector. Clinics for Lasik surgery, cosmetic dentistry, plastic surgery, hair removal – and more – seem to be springing up everywhere on the island to cater to an expected boom in medical tourism.

Perhaps only time will tell if and when this "build it and they will come" investment approach



The site of Phuket International Hospital's planned 240-million-baht, four-story building. Work on the project will begin in March next year.



Phuket International Hospital's main reception area received a facelift as part of a 40-million-baht budget for renovations.



The main arrival area at Bangkok Phuket Hospital's new Outpatients Department (OPD) building.

will pay the hoped-for dividends and lead to Phuket's emergence as a true medical hub for the region.

In the meantime, residents

of Phuket will perhaps be the biggest beneficiaries of the impressive and growing range of low-cost, high-quality medical services available on the island.

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By Orashun Sethichaiyen

New Thai crafts business is an international hit

Mention Thai handicrafts, artifacts and attractive household goods, and people tend automatically to think of Chiang Mai or Bangkok.

But it's time to think again: Phuket is now the base for a successful exporter of innovatively designed household items – all made in Thailand from Thai materials.

The Phuketnia, a two-floor showroom in Kathu that recently opened to the public, features an array of colorful household objects, all aimed at brightening up people's lives and homes. The products are the creations of an international lineup of designers located across the globe.

The shop is owned by KSI International, a broad-based international concern run by an Indian entrepreneur based in Tokyo, Sumanta Bhattacharya. Mr Bhattacharya learned his business in Japan, where he spent more than 17 years coordinating imports from Europe, India and Thailand.

About five years ago, he made a trip to Phuket and recognized the island's potential as a center for exporting goods as well as a lucrative outlet for retail sales. Not only that, but traditional Thai handicraft skills, cheap materials and a "can do" attitude made Thailand, and especially Phuket, a winner in his books.

Materials are sourced and items are made in Phang Nga, Rayong, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ayudhaya and Lampang, and the goods are then shipped to Phuket for display in the shop opposite the Go Kart track in Kathu.

The products range from candles, rice-paper lampshades

and wonderfully carved wooden artifacts to crystal, glassware, flowerpots and ceramics. The materials used are traditional – teak, cotton and silk – but the designs are far from old-fashioned.

With 15 international award-winning design companies working on the creations one

might expect success to come almost instantly, but the company found the going hard to begin with.

Three years ago, in its first year of exporting from Phuket, KSI International had a miserable turnover of just 100,000 baht. Things have improved greatly

since then, however. Mr Bhattacharya said that last year the company turned over a more-than-comfortable 20 million baht.

The Phuketnia's main target is still export markets in Europe and Japan, but this dovetails well with local ambitions to sell to tourists and hotels, which is

why anyone interested is now welcome to visit The Phuketnia. A grand opening is planned in the near future.

The Phuketnia is at 46/202-205 Moo 5, Phra Barami Rd, Kathu; Tel: 076-323903; Fax: 076-203-188.



Comfortably at home in his shop, Sumanta Bhattacharya surrounds himself with some of the good things in life. Inset pictures show some of the unusual artifacts for sale at The Phuketnia.



WARNING: SELLING ALCOHOL TO PERSONS UNDER 18 YEARS OLD IS ILLEGAL

*When the taste is perfect,
it can be the start of a friendship.*



Malaria cases soar in the South

More than 400 cases of malaria have been reported in Yala Province amid a fresh outbreak in the region, with the Public Health Ministry laying the blame partly on immigrant laborers from Burma.

Dr Boonchai Phumboplap, Director of Vector-borne Disease Control Center 12 in Songkhla, said malaria rates in seven southern provinces were higher than in previous years, especially in Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla.

A health report for Yala said that from January 1 to May 31, the province recorded 407 cases of malaria.

However, the problem is not confined to the Deep South. Officials in Ranong said that 345 Thais in that province had been diagnosed with malaria, compared with 1,000 cases among 6,000 immigrants in Ranong.

The Ranong outbreak was due to the local tropical-mountain terrain, authorities' failure to spray residences with insecticides in March and April, and residents neglecting to use mosquito nets, an official there said.

In Chumphon, a new testing center checking about 100 people a day has found that 20% are positive for the malaria virus.

From last October through April this year, some 9,100 Thais and 5,040 foreigners were diagnosed as infected with malaria.

Assisted suicide: Khunying Dr Pornthip Rojanasunan, Deputy Director of the Central Institute of Forensic Science, has disclosed evidence showing it was unlikely that a murder suspect surrounded by police committed suicide by firing five bullets into himself.

The pathologist inspected a house in Nonthaburi, where police said murder suspect Sun-



A trawler with full crew pulls away from a pier in Satun Province on a two-week fishing expedition. The Ministry of Public Health recently issued a warning to fishermen in the region to guard against beriberi, a vitamin B1 deficiency that has killed two crewmen in recent months.

thorn Wongdao went into hiding after allegedly shooting his wife and father-in-law on May 2.

Police surrounded the home and were reportedly negotiating Sunthorn's surrender whereupon, according to the police report, he fired four bullets into his left chest and one into his right temple.

Justice Ministry Deputy Permanent Secretary Manit Suthaporn, who accompanied Dr Pornthip, said the likelihood of the suicide theory proving accurate was almost nil.

"It is unlikely that anyone could kill himself by firing five shots at such critical spots. He would have died after just one shot," he said.

Capital punishment: Cigarette

smokers in Bangkok may soon have to pay as much for their smokes as the rest of the country, thanks to plans by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to levy a tax on cigarettes sold in the city.

Bangkok Deputy Governor Panit Wikitset said that the BMA required more income for its development plan and was seeking approval to charge additional taxes on cigarettes, hotel room revenue and fuel.

The BMA is the only province-level organization in the country that has not levied a tax on cigarettes and, as a result, a pack of cigarettes in the provinces is about two baht more expensive than in Bangkok, K. Panit said.

Mr Buffalo Universe: After winning top prize at the National Buffalo Festival last month, the value of a swamp buffalo named "Num" has shot up to 300,000 baht, 20 times the normal price, as would-be buyers vie for the right to breed the animal.

The swamp buffalo from Nakhon Sri Thammarat beat 60 rivals at the 11th annual Thai Buffalo Festival held recently by the Livestock Development Department in Surin Province.

The prize-winner weighed 780 kilograms, was 1.5 meters tall and had top breeding characteristics, such as white hair on the front of its four legs, a white V-line on its chest, plus a big skull and large hooves.

Sommaia Klaibanmai, head

of Nakhon Sri Thammarat's livestock research station, said that as Thai swamp buffaloes have been praised as the best swamp buffaloes in the world, the Thai champion could rightly be considered world champion.

The Thai press have already dubbed the animal "Mr Buffalo Universe".

Virtual reality: Two teenage boys in Nakhon Pathom confessed to killing an old man with an ax in order to rob him of money to spend on playing computer games.

The teenagers, 13 and 15, told police that their 60-year-old victim, identified only as "Som", regularly bought stolen goods from them. On the night of murder he had asked them to steal a pig at a nearby farm in exchange for 200 baht, they said.

The boys said a 16-year-old friend hatched the plot to kill the man as he slept.

After carrying out the grisly murder, the boys fled the scene, later dividing the money among themselves and spending it on playing online computer games.

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

Rak Mak! Awards

This week's winning numbers:

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ภูเก็ต

Silver Mitsubishi

กค 9138
ภูเก็ต

Gray Nissan NV

บจ 4083
ภูเก็ต

Gray Nissan

กจ 1191
ภูเก็ต

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กก 6743
ภูเก็ต

Dark Gray Mitsubishi

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Blue Ford

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Pattaya lends a helping hand

Low season in Ao Nang is like a wet blanket and business is at rock-bottom. Many shops, restaurants and hotels that are still open are operating at 50% or lower staff levels. Unemployment has become a serious social issue.

Many transient workers in the tourism industry have moved to Pattaya, Koh Samui or other areas with better job prospects. But for locals with families, this is not an option.

Whether they are longtail boatmen, hotel staff, tour agents or taxi drivers, the locals depend on the tourist trade in the Krabi area. Most have seen their incomes drop dramatically, others have lost their jobs and means of support entirely.

Meanwhile, most of the tsunami and relief projects have packed up and gone, while the most important phase of the recovery looms before us.

A major reconstruction of the economy resulting in long-term benefits is the most difficult and expensive phase in the recovery

from the tsunami. Handing out money is easy, but creating long-term projects to benefit the residents through job creation, occupational training or other projects takes more creativity.

One group with a long-term view of creating employment and self-sustaining projects that provide long-lasting benefits is Helping Hands Pattaya (HHP). HHP recognized that Wat Koh Lanta School has 250 students and the municipal funding was covering only 30% of the school lunch budget.

After the tsunami, parents were unable to come up with the remaining 70%.

Several aid agencies had donated rice and other food supplies, but HHP was looking for something to provide assistance for years to come. After a study of community needs, HHP approached the Population and Community Development Association (PDA), whose expertise was put to good use in setting up lunch farms in rural Thailand.

The PDA put together a



Now that the international aid agencies have gone, Helping Hands Pattaya is helping to make sure the kids at Wat Koh Lanta School (pictured) still receive adequate school lunches.

proposal to build a farm with water supply, irrigation, chicken farms, fishponds, and mushroom and vegetable production.

The staff trained locals in farming techniques, and employed them full time for various jobs throughout the farm.

HHP provided the funding, and the PDA the expertise, and together they are providing training and employment opportunities and have created a project whose benefits will be felt for years to come. For information

on the work of the HHP group, email helpinghandspattaya@yahoo.com.au.

Scouts' honor: Another project whose goal is to provide long-term employment and training is the Krabi International Scout Camp and Community Center.

This project, spearheaded by the Sriphong Phukaoluan Foundation, aims to create jobs, open an occupational training center and provide facilities for the elderly.

The facility would sponsor international scout camp activities, provide lodging for visiting scouts' parents and raise the profile of Krabi as a tourist destination.

The training center would have an in-house library with courses in English, first aid, arts and crafts, and music.

In addition, periodic occupational training courses would be held to aid in the re-training of those who have lost their jobs. These programs would be open to the public of all ages, and additional clinics and classes would be held for the elderly.

The goal of the camp is to integrate people of all cultures, ages and religions with a common bond, through the use of athletics, cultural events, continued education and strong morals.

For more information on this project and others supported by the Sriphong Phukaoluan Foundation, please email info@krabirelief.com.

Correction: In my May 21 article about Khun Choy from Phi Phi Island and his recovery from total loss, I inadvertently gave an inaccurate email address. For those who want to contact him, his email is junglebar_koh_pp@yahoo.com. Sorry for the mix up.



ACROSS THE BAY

By Gus Reynolds



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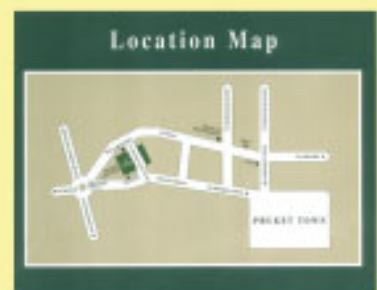
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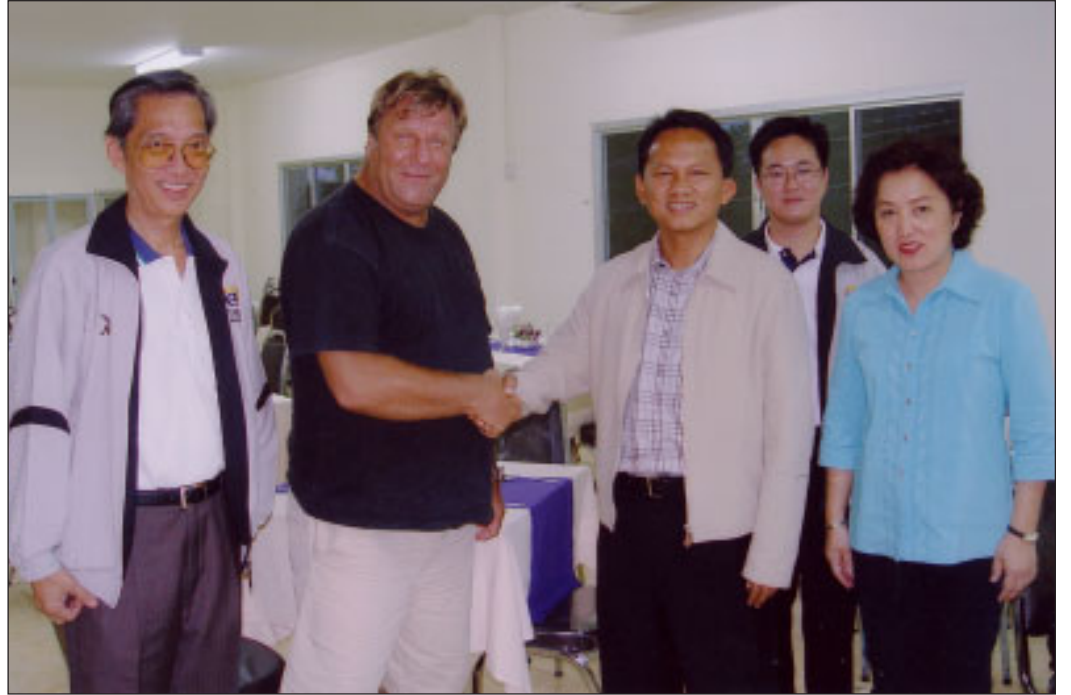
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This week



ROOTING FOR A GOOD CAUSE: Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura (right) and Tongchai Saowapong (left) of the Phuket Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment plant a Golden Shower tree as part of World Environment Day celebrations held recently at Suan Chalermparakiat 72 Punsu Maharachinee BE 2547 Park in Phuket City.



SOCCER SHAKE: Tourism and Sports Minister Somsak Thepsutin (3rd from right) shakes hands with Johan Boskamp, Manager and Trainer of the Anderlecht youth soccer squad, during qualifying rounds of the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) youth soccer tourney, which were played recently at Surakul Stadium in Phuket City. Phuket Sports Association President Eam Thavornvongwongse (left) looks on.



FULLY BROOKED: Miss United Kingdom Brooke Johnston (2nd from right), in Thailand for the Miss Universe beauty pageant, poses with staff at Mom Tri's Villa Royale during her recent stay in Phuket.



JOB TO DO: Gary Thomas (2nd from left) of the UK Disaster Victim Identification team hands a donation of equipment for identifying victims of the tsunami to Pol Maj Gen Bhandit Singhasilarak, Commander, Forensic Police, Region 4, at the Hilton Arcadia Beach Resort & Spa on June 7.



LATIN LOVERS: (from left) Richmond Residence Director of Sales Ritt Marasri, Managing Director Graham Bibby and Marketing Co-ordinator Rasamee Samarnsee take a break during the weekly Latin dance night at the Red Room in Cherng Talay.



THE FINAL CUT: Models show off the winning hairstyles at the "Thai Air Asia Summer Hair Design 2005" hairstyle show for cabin crew, staged recently at the Patong Bay Garden Resort.

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It seems that smiles are returning to Phuket faces, with parties and celebrations marking a return to normal life on our beautiful island.

Daniel Meury, General Manager of The Chedi, moved into the fun side of 40 with an extravagant costume ball and all-night dance party.

Meanwhile, **Linda Cumming**, who served as the Phuket International Women's Club President for many years, showed that turning 60 can be a lot of fun at her birthday brunch celebration at Twin Palms.

FOR THE KIDS: On June 18, Villa Royale, home to noted Thai architect **Mom Tri Devakul**, was due to throw open its doors for a benefit dinner and sale of paintings and sculptures to raise money to provide scholarships for needy local Thai students.

It will be an event not to be missed, with three of the island's hottest women artists joining their talents to make for what promises to be an unforgettable evening.

Sandra Marquis, perhaps best known on Phuket for her sensual belly dancing, will present for auction a collection of her voluptuous and earthy ceramic sculptures of women with large hips, breasts and nipples. Anyone delighted by the female form will find these images fascinating and irresistible – so bring your wallet.

Donating a number of canvases for sale will be **Isabelle Ott** – who expresses her talents as a healer through her spiritual paintings – and popular seascape and landscape artist **Marilyn Band**.

THE CREATIVE



LEFT: Sam Fauma (right), outgoing President of the Rotary Club of Patong Beach; incoming President Arnaud Verstraete (left) and incoming President-elect David Arell (rear left) enjoy a social evening with Miss Davey at her La Diva bistro.

Jazz Singer **Carole Marco**, who recently held the stage at Pizza on the Park in London, will perform her sultry repertoire of what she calls her Smooth and Sexy ballads during dinner.

The menu for the event will highlight Thai and international "wellness" foods, prepared from pesticide-free ingredients, many of which are grown on Mom Tri's organic farm outside Chiang Mai.

"We are opening Villa Roy-

ale to the local community to share what we've built in the past couple years," said **Adisak "Dan" Pitukrojanant**, the new General Manager of both Villa Royale and Mom Tri's Boat-house.

"We've added luxurious guest rooms, decorated with the

finest art to be found in the region, and have one of Phuket's most extravagant health spas," Dan said.

He started work with Mom Tri back in 1989 at what was then the Phuket Yacht Club at Nai Harn Beach, now Le Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club.

He then worked assisting three GMs until finally assuming the top position himself.

Tickets for this major event – and some may still be available – cost 800 baht. They can be reserved by calling 076-330015.

JOCULAR JABS: Next Wednes-



Off the WALL

With Bruce Stanley

RIGHT: Vachira "Yen" Thitalohakul presents departing Dusit Laguna Resort GM Sam Erik Ruttmann with a parting gift.



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ART OF KINDNESS

day evening, June 22, belly laughs will return to the Watermark Restaurant at the Boat Lagoon when three very funny comedians from the Punchline Comedy Club provide an evening of fun.

Before the guffaws, I'm looking forward to sampling the cuisine of Chef **Scott Slaxman**, who recently joined the Watermark after 10 years working in some of the finest kitchens of London.

Scott spent his early life in Zimbabwe, so I anticipate a rather exotic menu. Starting at 7 pm, a three-course menu will be available for two hours of dining pleasure before the comedy starts at 9 pm. These comedy nights are always sold out, so get your tickets early.

SOCIAL SCENE: The Rotary Club of Patong celebrated a social evening at one of Patong's great hot spots, La Diva. **Miss Davey**, La Diva's beautiful mistress, flew in from her home in Switzerland just to welcome some of the island's most important movers and shakers.

Members of this Rotary Club chapter should be congratulated on their successful effort in convincing Rotary International to throw their support behind an initiative to provide clean and safe drinking water at schools in the six Thai provinces hit by the tsunami.

FOND FAREWELL: **Sam Erik Ruttman**, the GM at the Dusit Laguna Resort, has bidden farewell to his hotel staff and many friends on Phuket. Sam has been promoted to Vice President for Development for Dusit Hotels, based in Dubai.

Sam is best known for his



CHARITY ROYALE: (back, from left) Jazz Singer Carole Marco, Sculptor Sandra Marquis and Painter Isabelle Ott, pictured with Villa Royale General Manager Adisak "Dan" Pitukrojananont, are pooling their talents to help provide scholarships for needy children.

dedication to developing the Thai Way of Life theme used throughout the Dusit Laguna for the past years.

His sensitive interpretation of Thai culture, and how it can be used in a resort setting, was so successful that Dusit management decided he was just the man to head up their operations in the Middle East.

"Phuket has been a great experience but I'm ready to tackle new opportunities," he told me.

It is perhaps interesting to note that the Dusit Hotels and Resorts have chosen a native of Finland to represent Thai culture in the Middle East, but I guess it's just another example of globalization.

FARE GO: Now that I have broached the topic, one example of globalization that I *do not* appreciate is the vagaries of having to deal with super-fantastic new

airports and Internet hotel booking sites that often leave the traveler frustrated, if not stranded.

Recently, I decided to attend one of **Graham Doven's** informative Phuket property events in Hong Kong, and made the mistake of taking an evening flight from Phuket.

My 8 pm departure from Bangkok landed me in Hong Kong around midnight, when the currency exchange booths and tourist information counters were closed.

My traveler's checks and currency were no good. Fortunately, through the kindness of strangers, I was able to take a local bus to Wanchai District, the location of the hotel I had booked though the www.directrooms.com website.

Arriving bleary-eyed at 2:30 am, I found that the hotel staff had no record of my reservation and wanted double the Internet price to let me sleep in one of their rooms. I found myself in a big, unfamiliar city with no money and no place to stay in the middle of the night. Fortunately I had brought my credit cards and was finally able to secure a room.

Several days later, I received an email apology from directrooms.com explaining that they had exceeded their quota with that hotel and had failed to notify me.

A lot of bloody good that was. Be careful with these Internet hotel reservation sites, especially when making last-minute reservations.

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FASHION

by Rungtip Hongjakpet

HOW TO DRESS TO

IMPRESS



Are there days when you wake up and simply don't have a clue what to wear to work? Worse still, you try something on and you're not quite sure if your boss will raise an approving eyebrow or give you the evil eye.

Asking around, we found many women who say they face the same dilemma regularly. So cheer up; now you know you're not the only one with this problem.

To help sartorial ditherers

everywhere, the *Gazette* sought out some top managers in Phuket and quizzed them as to what kind of clothes bosses actually like to see their public relations executives to wear to work.



Patra Tansiroj,
Administration
Manager,
Phuket
International
Hospital

I like picture **C** because it's

perfect for PR Executive wear. The outfit is smart, appropriate and it stands out. Wearing this, you would feel confident either walking or sitting. I think it's important not to wear too revealing outfits.

The dress in picture D is inappropriate. It's not for a PR executive and doesn't look respectable, plus, if you wore it, no one would take you seriously at work.

It's not really a dress one would wear in the workplace as it's too revealing. Wearing this dress you would also lose your flexibility of movement.



Oranee 'Ann' Pienprasertkul,
Marketing
Manager,
Phuket
Gazette

I like the outfit in photo **E** and dislike photo A. A person who

represents us at the *Phuket Gazette* should wear clothes that suit her age and her job. It's as simple as that.

The main controlling factor here is the weather. In this climate, you don't want to wear clothes that will make you look too warm. If you yourself feel uncomfortable in a particular dress or style, others will feel the same.

I like E because the outfit is

beautiful and perfect for the job. I don't like A because jeans aren't appropriate for our work place. Don't get me wrong, I like jeans and wear them on the weekend, but they're not business wear.

The batik shirt is definitely not for us; it's for the beach, although it might work if the person is working in a tourism-related field.



Jeanette Skelton,
Marketing
Manager,
Royal Phuket
Marina

I chose photo **F** as my favourite. A PR executive in

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D



E



F

Phuket does not need to look so formal but certainly needs to stay smart.

Hair pulled back and off the face is not only tidier but easier to manage in a hot climate. She has very simple and elegant low-heeled slip-on shoes that don't require stockings and are easy to walk in.

The skirt is a little short so she needs to be careful when getting up and sitting down.

But it is a light, lined fabric so it will be a comfortable fit, plus

she has the legs to carry it off.

The top has three-quarter length sheer sleeves which are soft, flowing and elegant in a flower design. Nothing is overstated or too overpowering.

She appears to be a very confident woman who can carry herself in any situation. She is also able to adapt from daytime to the evening in this simple, soft and comfortable outfit. Photo A is my least favourite outfit. The pants look too tight and hot for the office. The shirt

is really beachwear and too masculine. The shoes are too elegant for the pants or the top.



John Sim,
Manager,
Thailand,
SilkAir
(Singapore)
Pte Ltd

I would select photo C and reject D because, al-

though Phuket is a resort island with a more casual and laidback atmosphere, business is business.

You need to dress up a little to be taken seriously, especially if you are trying to sell something to a prospective client. Photo C is not terribly formal – it's more smart-casual and elegant – but it's definitely better than the rest. For the same reasons D is the least appropriate as it is way too casual. It's more appropriate attire for shopping or going to a party.

*Model:
Athiga
Jundee*

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A tough choice

By Andy Johnstone

Boston Whalers are among the best exemplars in the maritime world of function over form.

They are not luxurious gin palaces with barstools covered in elephant foreskin, nor are they sleek racing vessels where speed is the prime concern.

No feature of a Boston Whaler is a purposeless added-on embellishment and there are no concessions to style over content. They are built to be used, end of story.

Their reputation is legendary, and few in the maritime field have not seen the famous photograph of a Boston Whaler sawed in half – across the beam – and still afloat on the level, with company founder Richard T Fisher sitting in one half and looking remarkably at ease.

Equally impressive was an exercise conducted by the US Marine Corps, in which more than 1,000 rounds of .50 cal and 7.62mm ammunition were fired into a Whaler.

She remained afloat, and the range became the first choice for many law enforcement and military units in the US.

Boston Whalers are now available here in Phuket at the Royal Phuket Marina (RPM), home of the first Boston Whaler dealership in Thailand.

Bearing in mind the occasionally parlous state of some of the vessels putting to sea these days, one can but hope that a few companies around the island will invest in these remarkable craft, advertised as “the unsinkable legend”.



Beverage and rod holders; what more could one want?

Craig Murphy, Yacht Sales Manager at RPM, does not saw a boat in half nor does he pepper one with high-velocity ammunition for the purpose of this review. He does, however, begin by saying that he always feels safe in the Montauk 170 (17 foot or 5.18 meters) model we are about to enjoy a ride in.

He opens the throttle of the 90hp Mercury OptiMax outboard – standard on this 17-footer – all the way to 4,000rpm and 27 knots (50kmh).

This seems exhilarating enough, but Craig then pushes the stick to 5,500rpm and we surge to 34 knots – 63kmh.

This is quite a “rush” and is like being in a floating go-kart, with handling characteristics to match.

The Montauk goes through a series of tight turns with barely any reduction in speed nor any excessive pitching from one side to another.

Admittedly, the water is almost millpond smooth, but even

at these impressive speeds barely any spray comes into the boat. This demonstrates ably that the modified “V” hull design, with a 6’ 10” (2.08m) beam and center console, really works.

Although Whalers are working boats, they do have the comforts needed for family fun.

This Montauk comes with a stereo, drinks holders and a cooler under the console seat, ready to keep a catch of fish, beers or even iced tea chilled.

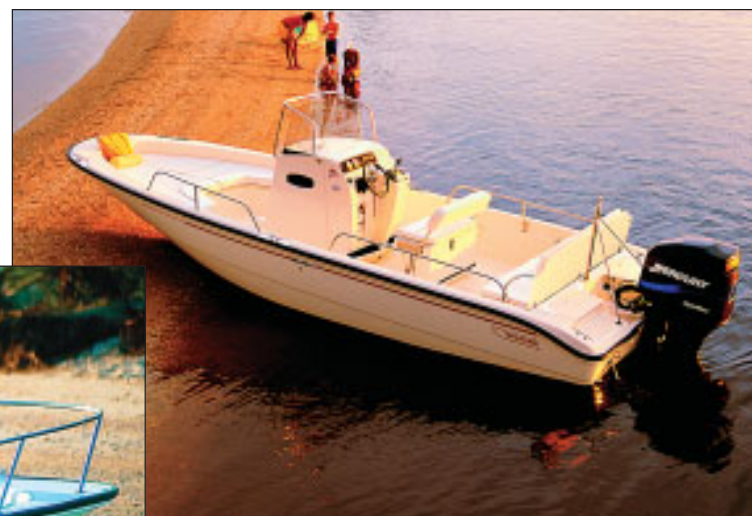
She also comes with a sun

top – equally good at keeping a moderate shower off passengers – a combined swim platform/boarding ladder, and fishing-rod holders.

“Legend” is a word perhaps applied too liberally these days, but in the case of the Boston Whaler range, the epithet fits.

It would be hard to find a vessel of this size that better combines fun and safety.

The boat as reviewed is available from the Royal Phuket Marina for 1.159 million baht.



For business or pleasure, one can have a whale of a time in a Montauk.

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TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters

Rafting combines the heady exploration of trekking with the delirious rush of hurtling downstream on foaming water gushing from the mightiest mountains on the planet.

In the quiet stretches there is time to sit back and observe life in the countryside, while in the rapids there is nothing to do but cling on for dear life. There are few more stimulating ways to travel in Nepal or to see everyday life at first hand.

"Far more than a wet roller-coaster ride, river journeys are the essence of escapism," says David Allardice, whose company Ultimate Descents has pioneered rafting on what is known as "the roof of the world".

He said, "On a river journey there are no hassles, and only a very convoluted sense of time. Life is dominated by the simple and basic necessities of food, sleep, fun and sun, as we drift through a succession of beautiful beach campsites separated by miles of gravity-powered adrenaline and water-induced reflection."

All river rafting has to be carried out with a recognised company, and the choice falls between "paddling-your-own-canoe" or sitting in state while being rowed.

At the bottom end of the market, you will be expected to pay for your own bus ticket to the put-in point, while the up-market companies will drive you there, erect your tent at the end of the day and serve afternoon tea into the bargain.

The rivers fall into two categories: "White Water, White Knuckle"; and others that involve little more than messing about on the river.



PAY ATTENTION: (Left) A party gets ready to ride the river with the Himalayan mountains (above) forming a spectacular and silent backdrop to the frantic action on the water.

Roller-coasting the 'roof of the world'

The most sedate is the Trisuli, which flows past Kathmandu down to the plains and alongside the main road down to India. While this makes the river highly accessible, it does mean that your raft will never be more than a few hundred meters from civilisation.

Better is the Bhote Khosi, with 38 kilometers of white water slicing its way through steep canyons and valleys. Both these rivers are suitable for short excursions from

Kathmandu, and could be combined with a mountain biking trip or jungle camp excursion.

Alternatively, further afield,

the Sun Khosi and the Karnali are the sort of rivers that appear in the dreams of white water fans. Rafting either of these involves a major expedition that takes up the best part of a fortnight.

The Sun Khosi is reckoned to be one of the world's top 10 rafting rivers, while the Karnali boasts 70 or so rapids in the first three days of rafting.

Rapids are graded for their roughness, and the more tricky are awarded nicknames like Jailhouse Rock, Rear Entry and Humans For Lunch.

Good guides and safety kayaks come into their own at "keepers", water holes that can grip a raft like a vice. Support crews with ropes wait on the bank at the most treacherous points. Rapids aren't given names like High Anxiety for nothing.

From the river, there are



HOLD ON: Shooting the rapids is one way to get the heart thumping.

unlimited opportunities for observing Nepal close-up, from gold panners laboring at the water's edge to holy men sitting in rapt contemplation; from villagers tending their fields or perhaps distilling illegal liquor out of view of the authorities, to a wedding pro-

cession, or even just a crocodile of schoolchildren eager to practice their English on waterborne visitors.

The wildlife is no less diverse, with fresh water cormorants, scarlet minivets, flycatchers and kingfishers in abundance.



REAL MEN: Not just handy for getting up big mountains, local sherpas are also superb guides for heading downriver.

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Phuket Diary

Jun 16-26

The SFX Coliseum Cinema at Central Festival Phuket will host an 11-day festival of films from the European Union, starting June 16. The event is co-sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*.

The opening ceremony, between 5 pm and 10 pm on June 16, will feature music from the band Ocastra and an exhibition about the films. The event will be chaired by Dr Friedrich Hamburger, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Thailand.

A full program and synopses of all the movies may be seen at www.phuketgazette.net/filmfestival.asp

June 22

Punchline Comedy Club brings top UK acts Paul Zerdin, Richard Blackwood and Andy Askins – from London's Comedy Store – for a one-night adults-only show, also co-sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*.

Details can be found on www.watermarkphuket.com and www.punchlinecomedy.com.

Torkeling around the Web

Yachties have a canny way of finding out quickly just what's going cheap; how, when and where. The excellent yachtie site www.longpassages.org/thailand_destination.htm is only a part of a much larger web of information shared by our sun-garled, beer-swilling friends so, theoretically, we should be able to trust its opinions on this island:

Phuket is a delightful area [but] frustrating immigration and customs practices are a major downside to this cruising paradise. Immigration and customs are quite bizarre; tourists may stay only 28 days and then exit (one minute is enough) but it usually takes a whole day to get to the border and back."

Darn right it's "quite bizarre".

Staying on a nautical course, and noting that the annual Cobra Gold military exercises in Thailand in May apparently went off without a hitch, it may come as no great surprise that, at www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/thailand, the brass have been doing exactly what this column was up to a couple of weeks ago – comparing Patong and Pattaya – but in terms of US Navy "access":

So you think you know Phuket? So do a lot of other people – and they are out there on the Worldwide Web telling everyone. Sometimes, as the *Phuket Gazette's* weekly update of how the world sees us demonstrates, the "knowledge" they impart can be more than just informative.

OUTSIDE IN

By Lis Kinswoman

Phuket can accommodate liberty parties up to a maximum of 3,000 personnel. As a comparison, Pattaya can accommodate liberty parties of up to 10,000 personnel.

Liberty parties? Accommodate? This wouldn't be a euphemism for a bit of rumpy-pumpy in a short-time hotel room?

Fortunately, 30-something blogger "Thai girl" at www.geocities.com/voicefromthaigirl clears the matter up:

This kind of military "training"... always boosts local businesses, especially the naughty one. I saw many US navies [sic] walking around Patong and they looked like high school children. Is it common to have beer around mid-day?

Take my wife... This just in from an unidentified contributor at www.phuket-info.com/forum:

Back home it would be unthinkable to marry a prostitute (would you pay your own wife for a hand-job behind the bottle bank?). In Thailand, however, to ask a stranger how he met his partner would be crassness bordering on Tourette's Syndrome. Ex-hooker wives and girlfriends seem to be the norm here.

As the legendary Trink would say: "Any comment would be superfluous." But wait, there's more:

Nice Thai girls tend to be as conventional as their parents. They may even collect stamps... Those sincere about taking a [Thai] wife should seek out the nicest one they can find and accept no substitute – or anything that rhymes with it.

Nowhere to run: Amateur descriptions of Patong on the Internet ["The Viagra capital of the world"] are always good for

a laugh, but when serious travel sites have a go, their efforts sometimes sway worryingly between priggishness and downright confusion.

The rather staid travel guide publishers Frommers have their own website, www.frommers.com, which proves the case:

In the downtown it's all touts catcalling and the beeping horns of passing tuk-tuks wanting to take you for a ride (quite literally); but Patong has tons of services and some good accommodations (the best find creative ways to make you feel like you're not in Patong).

This begs the question: why go to a flipping place if you don't want to be there?

Perhaps "Jaypride" at www.islands.com has the answer when he comments on whether or not to see the PhuketFantasea show in Kamala: *I didn't go because I wanted to go.*

So if you're thinking of not going to Phuket Orchid Farm because you want to go, please be aware that www.tourist.com/travel has the ultimate word on the matter: *Phuket has a big Orchid Farm with ... butterflies torkeling from flower to flower.*

Uh-oh, is that the time? Time to torkel on out of here.







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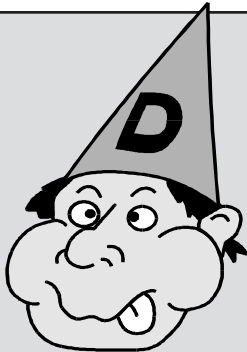
THE FUN PAGE
FOR ALL
THE FAMILY

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are the names of at least 20 hotel chains. The names 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.

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

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



1. When was the League of Arab States formed?

2. What are the prime numbers between 1 and 30?

3. Mumbai is the capital of which Indian state?

4. Which famous battle was fought June 18, 1815?

5. Who described the battle as "The nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life"?

6. Which dish was named after him?

7. Which US heavy-metal band released the album *The Glorious Burden* in 2004?
8. Which island chain in the Indian Ocean celebrates its national day on June 18?

9. What is the international dialing code for the Republic of Ireland?

10. Brother Kaine and D-Roc form which Atlanta-based rap duo?

11. In which year was dynamite invented?

12. Roughly what percentage of the world's population is contained in the United States?

13. If you met an accipitrary, what bird would you expect to see with him?
14. What is the correct term for a male skunk?

15. Which US state was once called Kanawha?

16. How long did Noah Webster take to compile his dictionary?

17. Which drink was described by its inventor as an "Esteemed Brain Tonic and Intellectual Beverage"?

18. Who was the inventor?

19. Who said, "What scientists have in their briefcases is terrifying."?

20. Where, at home, might you find europium, cerium and yttrium?
- Answers next week

Never a Cross Word!

ACROSS

1. Foresail.

5. Measure of rotational speed.

7. Copy.

8. A quick swim.

9. River that flows into the Sea of Azov.

10. Inn essential.

12. Rubbed out.

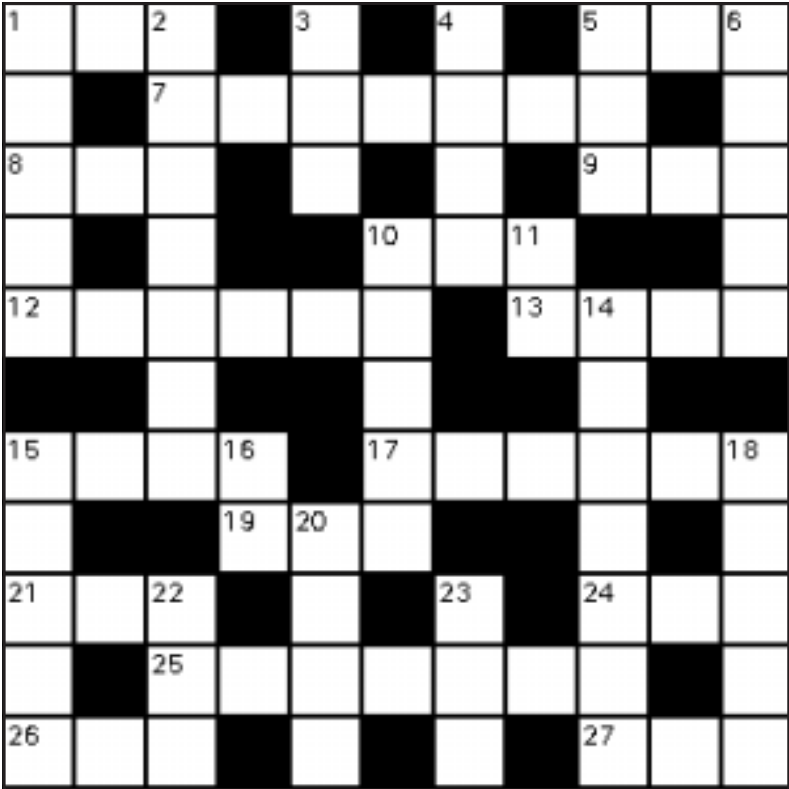
13. Trial.

15. Leg joint.

17. Author of *Animal Farm*.

19. Argon or helium, for example.

21. Actress Ms Lupino.



24. Edge.

25. High-note chorister.

26. Sixth sense, maybe.

27. Beat the others.

DOWN

1. Boss of the court.

2. Typical WWI aircraft.

3. Lively dance.

4. 1 across, for example.

5. Communist color.

6. French impressionist.

10. Farewell, Señor.

11. UFO pilot?

14. It's raised in surprise.

15. Sharp instrument.

16. For example.

18. Yellow fruit.

20. European range.

22. Cleopatra biter.

23. Cooking vessel.

Solution next week

Brain Buster!!

If AGMOLIE is code for LEOPARD, what, using the same code, are these animals?

1. EMX; 2. QLN; 3. FLTZNGI;

4. XRILWWG; 5. WALTRSXM

A: Dog; Cat; Hamster; Giraffe; Flamingo.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S MONSTER QUIZ

1. Aumbry; 2. Tokyo; 3. 3,106 carats (621.2 grams); 4. A shaman; 5. The Shamen; 6. Forward-looking infrared radiometer; 7. Pretoria; 8. Vagner Love (Vagner Silva Nascimento); 9. Korean; 10. Bialystok, Poland; 11. Slipknot; 12. Timbuktu, Mali; 13. Pet Shop Boys; 14. Faithless; 15. Across The Universe; 16. Dominique de Villepin; 17. The Kaiser Chiefs; 18. South African football team Kaizer Chiefs FC; 19. Katherine Paterson; 20. Bahia.

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD



Reaching the crossroads

What do you do when all you've grown accustomed to comes to a screeching halt?

Once again, the rainy season is starting to wash over us, and I remember my articles from last year complaining that there was nothing to do when the rain came. I realize now that I was wrong – we had school.

I had been looking for fun activities for my friends and I to do, although I would have never dreamed – then – of considering school as “fun”.

In retrospect, however, school was probably some of the most fun we had.

There's no denying that there is a lot of work, but if it hadn't been for the school environment, we wouldn't have had nearly so many friends to share experiences with, both in and out of the classroom.

But why am I talking about school as if it is in the past?

Because it is around this time of year that high school stu-

dents – including some from Dulwich International College – graduate.

It is strange to think that we expectant graduates will no longer be children but young adults, graduating with respected qualifications and having to commence the next chapter in our lives.

It's a daunting reality that I thought would never come true.

You see, when you're in school, it never occurs to you that one day it's all going to end, and that there will be no teachers around to spoon-feed you knowledge.

True, when it's over, you feel the most amazing euphoria because of your accomplishment and success, but eventually real-

ity kicks in – everything you've known about your daily life no longer exists.

You no longer have a safe path to walk down that you know will lead you to where you want to be.

This uncertainty about the future means you have thousands of decisions to make that determine the course your life will take. This is where the next challenge arises: what about the coming months and years?

Very few people know exactly what they want to do after school and those who do, I feel, are very lucky.

Most teenagers haven't got a clue as to what they want to do. They may have an idea of their strengths and weaknesses

and what they enjoy doing, but is that really enough on which to base a decision that will affect your life?

Fear of the future preys on you. If you make the wrong decision, can it be rectified? It's intimidating to face the future, and yet at this precise moment we're dying to find out what is in store for us as we move on.

I know there are a lot of teenagers who are very confused and seemingly overwhelmed by the countless possibilities and endless paths that they could take.

These next months are crucial and will help to shape us into the adults we will become.

And this is where each of us is different. You can choose to take a safe, simple route on which most events are predictable and almost predetermined.

Or you could take the road less traveled, become independent and learn from your mistakes and revel in your successes.

Either way, it's going to be interesting. Our childhood is nearly gone and we should look

forward to becoming responsible, active adults giving back to the community and the world that taught us to be the people we are.

When I arrived here two years ago, I wasn't ready to graduate, nor were any of my fellow students.

Nevertheless, as time has gone on, we've learned so much, not just in terms of education, but about life in general as well.

Events like the tsunami, conflicts at Dulwich and other factors have taught us just that little bit more and no doubt everything we have learned will be put to good use.

So if you are one of those students who are worried about things to come, don't be!

We are as well prepared as we shall ever be for whatever may happen, thanks to family, friends and the support that we have around us.

With these foundations to build upon, the sky is the limit in terms of what we might achieve.

This is something none of us should ever forget.



Youth 'n ASIA
By Lauren Moorhouse

Parking problems and politeness

Dear Momma Duck,

A little guidance if you would. We have a home in the countryside with quite a bit of land around it. We bought it a year ago and have lived there for four months. On both sides are rubber plantations.

Yesterday morning and again this morning, a pickup truck drove onto our land.

The driver, a woman, parked it and, without a word, walked off to one of the plantations and came back later with two workers laden with rubber mats.

Once these were loaded onto the truck, the woman drove away, again without a word to us.

I could, of course, have gone

up to her and said, “Hi, how are you? Who are you?” It's just that I feel she – as the one who wants to use our land as a short-cut – should be the one to make the first move.

In her place, I would have knocked on the door, introduced myself and asked whether it was okay.

Had she done this, we would have said, of course, she could drive onto our land – it's not as if she is damaging anything.

Am I missing a cultural point here? Is it acceptable, indeed normal, in Thailand for complete strangers to drive onto one's land without a word or a by-your-leave?

They act as if it is their right and you simply don't exist.

Good Manners,
Pa Khlok

Dear Good Manners,

I have to assume various possibilities for the actions of this woman. One, she may have been in the habit of parking there for several years before you bought the property, and simply didn't think to approach you.

Another possibility is that she's aware that the property now belongs to a foreign man and his Thai wife and did not want to knock on your door because she's afraid that you might answer and be unable to speak Thai with her.

I don't know if you speak Thai or not but many Phuket people (those who don't speak English) don't feel comfortable approaching foreigners.

It's also a possibility that, if you have dogs, she's afraid of them or, if she's Muslim, she doesn't want to come into close contact with your dogs.

Additionally, traditional Thais are not very worried about other people simply walking across their land because, in most village societies, you have to walk across someone else's land to get to your own.

There is also a strong tradition of villagers helping each other and being used to being on others' land. For example, I belong to the Phuket Hash House Harriers, who go on cross-country runs every week, and although we always ask permission for the use of the land where we park our cars and picnic, we freely run across many peoples' land during the run and nearly always receive cheerful waves and greetings from the landowners as we go running by.

Although Thais may be more relaxed about land rights, of course it is not normal for complete strangers to drive a vehicle onto someone else's land without

a word or a by-your-leave, so I must assume there are other factors such as those I've mentioned above.

It may be that you, as the new resident, need to take the initiative to go greet her (and other “locals”) and initiate communication. I'm sure she would not be offended if your approached her with a smile, introduced yourself and asked her curiously about what she was doing. She might even be your neighbor or perhaps a neighbor's employee.

I am seeing, however, a sea change in some people's approach to “trespass” with “no trespassing” signs appearing in several places as well as a vast number of barbed-wire fences announcing the borders of property ownership.

With Phuket quickly turning into a true cross-cultural mix of residents, I'd like to see a future that preserves the traditionally relaxed Thai approach to situations (such as crossing other people's land if no harm is done) but which also includes a growing awareness of what foreigners also consider as polite behavior.

Last, do not let this little thing destroy the beautiful day ahead of you.



Momma DUCK

By Wanida Hongyok
momma@phuketgazette.net

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Why a paper trail makes sense

Mr A, a regular visitor to Thailand, and in the habit of staying each year for a few months at a time, decided to invest in a home with a long-term lease in a quiet housing project.

Mr A therefore agreed to buy a building in the name of his ex-girlfriend with the intention of her leasing it back to him by a registered 30-year lease.

He and his ex-girlfriend had a good relationship and everything went well. He transferred funds to the developer for extensions to the house and registered the building at the land department in his ex-girlfriend's name.

Mr A moved into the house and proceeded to furnish it in the belief that this was to be his home for at least the next 30 years.

After some years, his ex-girlfriend fell pregnant (not by Mr A) and having lost her apartment, called him and asked if he could help her. Mr A agreed to her request that she be allowed to stay at his house until the child was born.

After the child was born Mr A wanted – as per their agreement – her to leave his home.

His ex-girlfriend had, however, different ideas.

She changed the locks on the doors and, on his next visit to Thailand, Mr A could not enter his own property because breaking the locks would have meant

that his ex-girlfriend could file criminal charges against him.

Mr A secured legal assistance and filed a court order to force her to vacate the house and return his possessions.

His ex-girlfriend filed, in her defense, that Mr A had never paid her rent, thereby canceling the agreement, which of course Mr A could prove was not the case.

Luckily, Mr A had kept all his receipts and copies of money transfers to the developer as proof of payment.

Some payments even went to his ex-girlfriend's account to be paid on to construction companies for additions made to the house.

After more than two years, Mr A won the case, partly because he could prove that payments through the lessor (his ex) had gone to the developer and construction companies. These companies had accepted payment on behalf of the lessor for part of the lease payments.

After having received a written court order in his favor, Mr A will still have to have the order executed, which will take even more time.

Even then, Mr A will have to assess his damages and decide if he wants to file additional compensation charges against his ex-girlfriend. The chances are that he would win.

However, it would be a lost cause if – as is likely – his ex-girlfriend is without sufficient funds or assets to pay.

LAYING DOWN THE LAW

With Friedrich 'Sam' Fauma



Killer Surf Pounds Phuket's Beaches

– Gazette, June, 1995

As is the case every year, the surf came up last month and with it at least two lives were lost.

On May 14, Pol Capt Sommai Ornkan, Duty Officer at Chalong Police Station, received a report that a foreigner had gone missing off Karon Beach.

The police were told that German Derrick Stict, 29, entered the sea but had not returned.

On May 17, Marine Police received a report from Pratum Thamrat, 37, captain of the fishing vessel *Pamorn-sinnawa*, that he and his crew had found a body off Bang Tao Bay.

After recovering it, police confirmed it to be that of Mr Stict, then missing for four days.

Organizers furious as auction fails

– Gazette, June 15-30, 2000

The controversial auction of two of the largest plots of land on Racha Yai Island, planned for June 1, was canceled after all the potential buyers stayed away.

The auction, scheduled to begin at 2 pm in The Metropole hotel in Phuket Town, was called off half an hour later by auctioneers Harrison Realty Co.

An angry Apichart Archadej, Managing Director of Harrison Realty, told the *Gazette*, "There will definitely be another time, but I don't know when. It is up to the owners of the plots."

He said that although there had been great interest, the bidders had failed to show up because of "stories about the land deed ownership published by newspapers".

THE TIME machine

News from the past

In The Stars

by Isla Star

Discover your tomorrow today!

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Most of you will have been spending more than you can afford recently. Although July promises to be a month when money will flow your way, it is advisable not to splash out for the rest of June. Your ability to charm the snakes out of the trees comes in useful on Tuesday when you have to deal with a bad-tempered bureaucrat. The color peach will help kindle romantic interest.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): This weekend, one of your deepest desires will be realized. If you are celebrating a birthday, you are especially likely to find yourself floating on cloud nine. For the remainder of June it seems that you can't put a foot wrong, so dare to aim higher in all areas of your life. A dream on Thursday can shed light on a long-standing mystery. Number 7 has special meaning on Wednesday.

LEO (July 24-August 22): Cupid is preparing to shoot an arrow in your direction. Single Leos will be delighted at the outcome, but those already in a relationship are advised to resist seemingly harmless flirtatious advances. If you feel as though a crossroads has been reached in your working life, decisions made this week are likely to lead in the right direction. The scent of vanilla will encourage confidence.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Do not be taken in by someone's apparently altruistic advice early next week. It's not usually easy to pull the wool over your eyes, but you appear to be rather vulnerable at the moment. This weekend could turn out to be something of a social whirlwind; compensate by taking it easy after Monday. You are inclined to reject a travel opportunity for next month, but should give this matter deeper consideration.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Life will be a little busier than you would like this week. Last-minute appointments will need to

be made midweek, which will be irksome. Your partner reveals a new and unexpected side to their character. Clarify aims carefully when negotiating business-related deals; misunderstandings are likely on Monday and Tuesday. The color apple green encourages a crisper outlook on life.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): You are advised to continue on the same path you've been following since the beginning of this month. Important projects will be seen in sharper focus as June draws to a close, which will restore your confidence in others. Your social skills will be much in demand this weekend and new introductions are forecast to lead to a romantic connection. Number 1 looks promising on Saturday.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Your load will soon become lighter if you allow others to share the burden. If you have been determined to go it alone, you should start delegating soon. Start by allocating some mundane tasks and you will be amazed at one particular person's ability to catch on. Personal relationships are subject to stormy conditions on Wednesday; take your partner's words with a pinch of salt.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): You are in danger of acting the sourpuss this weekend when a melancholy mood causes you to doubt the honesty of someone close. Your suspicions are unfounded, so don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Peace prevails after Tuesday and you will wonder why you made so much fuss. Reluctance to be a team player is likely to prevent promotion; a social outing with work colleagues will enable smoother communication.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): It's time to get tougher regarding an unpaid debt. Early next week you will learn that the person concerned has been splashing out recently. Set up a meeting to strike while the iron's hot. Tuesday is the undoubtedly the best day to attend to this matter and Thursday is the most auspicious day for discussing other financial issues. If you are chasing a romantic dream, you will receive evidence that it is going nowhere.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Stay out of the midday sun this weekend to preserve your cool. You are not usually inclined to temper tantrums, but a situation on Saturday morning could add fuel to a fire that has been smoldering quietly for some time. The best way to lay this matter to rest is to arrange a meeting on neutral territory. Later in the week, a blast from your past makes contact.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): Listen to minor details on Monday as a piece of trivial information will turn out to have value later in June. Romance is confusing; the green light that was evident last week will become amber this Sunday. If you need to know exactly where you stand, you should ask a direct question. Aquarius is about to make a tempting employment offer. Leave valuables at home on Thursday.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): You are advised to refrain from charging in on Tuesday. Such an approach won't help you get what is rightfully yours. The best solution to this dilemma is to summon up some of your legendary patience and sit quietly in the background. Virgo is about to make an appearance in your life, bringing some wet-season romance.

✠
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Devolve for efficiency

Readers may recall, a few years ago, there was considerable discussion of the possibility of Phuket becoming a special zone, and even having an elected governor.

That was all swept away by the election of the Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, which buried all talk of devolution of power to the provinces, instead reinforcing control from the central government.

While there are advantages and disadvantages to both systems, Thailand – and Phuket especially – now suffers from serious gaps between centrally-appointed local government officials and elected provincial and municipal bodies.

This has given rise, it appears, to confusion over who does what, which in turn has resulted in certain problems receiving no attention.

Take the garbage incinerator in Saphan Hin, now woefully inadequate to handle the hundreds of tons of trash produced on the island every day. Its manager (see First Person, opposite) is plainly frustrated at the lack of action to expand the facility, and has had to approach both the Phuket City Municipality (which he says ignored him) and the Provincial Governor. Clearly, there is something wrong when a matter as important as this falls between two stools.

Similarly, the complex relationship between various bodies has caused severe delays in getting road projects finished. This is not simply a matter of corruption, inefficiency or idleness, though no doubt all of these play a part. It is also a problem of appointed officials and elected politicians having to work together to buy land needed for new roads and then to get the roads built. (See Construction column, page 28.)

Education, too, appears to be a hybrid these days, with schools officially being run by the Ministry of Education, which has disastrously cut the number of teachers, and with extra teachers being hired and paid for by the elected Phuket Provincial Administration Organization.

In many other democracies, governments long ago conceded that they cannot run everything and that, indeed, locally-elected leaders have a much firmer grasp of what is needed, and can react much faster to fulfill those needs, than officials in the capital hundreds of kilometers away are able to.

Perhaps now that the TRT is in its second term, it should look seriously at loosening the reins and, in some cases, handing them over to provincial leaders. For this, it will also have to loosen the purse strings in line with plans laid years ago and reinforced in the Thai Constitution of 1997. And it should do so sooner than later.

– The Editor

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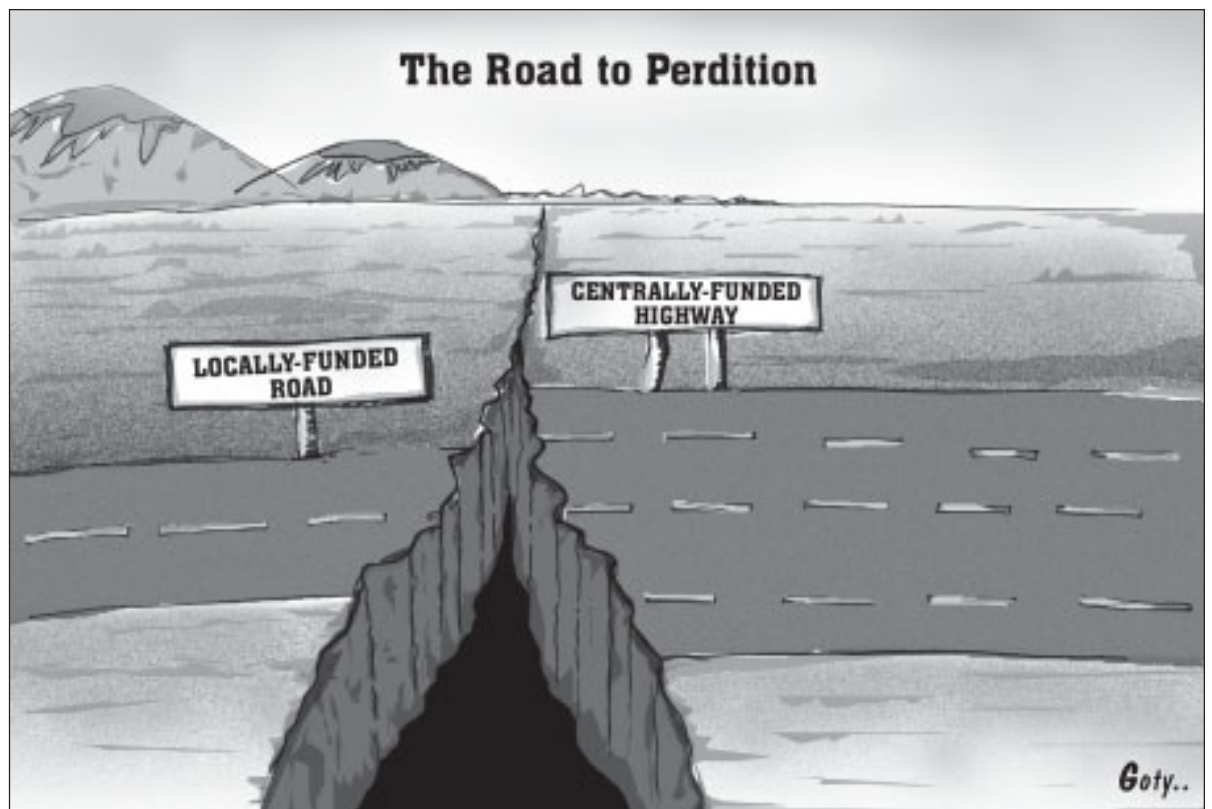
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Letters

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.

A crash course in shock tactics

As the government has chosen to use shock tactics in its war on cigarette smoking, one wonders why Thailand's shocking road accident record is not confronted in the same manner.

If we are to be confronted with pictures of damaged lungs, stained and deformed teeth and babies sharing daddy's tobacco habit every time we go shopping, surely we should also be visually abused by photos of road accident victims as we queue up to buy fuel.

Siobhan Wallinger
Rawai

Who is to blame this time around?

On May 10, 2005, all boat tour companies received a by registered letter from the Similan Islands National Park confirming that the Similan Islands were closed from May 15 until November 15. [See News this issue.]

If the islands are officially closed during the rainy season, I do not understand why an official Thai survey boat [chartered from dive company Bubble Blue] is able to shortcut the rule in dangerous seas and, in particular, during a tropical storm predicted by the meteorological department.

As the boat was borrowed or rented by the Thai Government for an official survey, I would be curious to know who will be blamed for this sea disaster.

The captain? The owners of the boat? The National Parks Division? Phuket Aquarium, who supervised the survey?

And who will pay for the damage to life and property? Do the National Parks or government departments have any insurance to cover such a case?

In my opinion – which may be shared by most seafarers – if the Marine National Parks such as the Similans and Surin are closed to tour boats, they should be closed to all boats except official vessels from the National Parks, the Marine Police, Customs, the Fisheries Department and the Royal Thai Navy to fulfill their duties and responsibilities 365 days a year to protect national interests and help prevent disasters.

Guy "Charlie" Lidureau
Seafarer Divers
Rawai

Another bright idea

If the government really wants to save energy, the best manner would be to advance the official time in Thailand by one hour all year round.

Most European countries do this during summertime, and for Thailand, adopting such a plan would bring benefits, such as:

Saving a lot of energy. In Europe, they have calculated the energy saved so Thailand can have a solid reference point with true data.

Thailand would be on the same international time as Malaysia and Singapore, so there would be a better business link.

People will wake up just after sunrise so workers will not feel the heat of day on their way to work.

Because workers will finish one hour earlier, they will enjoy a full three-hour period of daylight to relax before sunset instead of two hours at the moment.

Workers and young students will go to bed one hour earlier and will be more in line with their biological clock.

Tourists will be happy to have a romantic sunset dinner at 8 pm, which is a more traditional time to have dinner. Foreigners hate to dine at 6 pm or 7 pm as we can see in most hotels across Thailand.

The list would be longer if we thought about it a bit more.

A M Père
Chalong

Rubbishing Patong

I am very saddened by the current state of the Patong shoreline and promenade.

At the southern end of the beach there is an insurmountable array of debris ranging from concrete to plastic and even prophylactics.

However, the north end of the beach towards Kalim has very little debris.

The once-beautiful pre-tsunami beach sidewalk is buried under tons of sand and mud, which could very easily be moved back to its proper location.

We should take a leaf from the book of the volunteers of Khao Lak where after every high tide a group of people walk the shoreline and collect what is reported to be between 500 and 1000 kilograms of rubbish a day in order to return the beaches to their once-pristine state.

I appreciate the fact that funding can be a problem, but all that is needed to collect rubbish is a little organization and effort. The beach will then be a pleasure to stroll along once again.

Martin
Patong

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

New incinerator a burning issue

FIRST PERSON



Rubbish: Phuket is making more of it than it can handle, and the problem is set to get worse as the island develops. In an ordinary high season, the island's residents and visitors generate 400 tons of waste a day – but the sole incinerator has a capacity of just 250 tons. There is precious little room for landfill, and recycling facilities are at best rudimentary.

Last week, Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura backed plans for a second incinerator here, and this would seem to be the ideal solution to the island's garbage problem. But many environmentalists are opposed to incineration, arguing that incinerators can release dioxins – some of the most toxic substances on the planet – into the atmosphere.

Here, **Bandit Jantawut**, Manager of the Solid Waste Incinerator Plant Phuket (SWIPP), argues the case for a second incinerator.

Also in 2001, the Municipality gave a private company permission to build a 103-million baht waste separation plant. It opened in October 2002. The idea is to separate wet waste from dry waste.

The wet waste can be buried, reducing the amount of waste that needs to be incinerated by 30%, and the dry waste alone will burn more efficiently in the incinerator than it would if it were still mixed with the wet waste.

The plant can also separate the dry waste as well – plastics from paper waste, for example. It has a maximum capacity of 300 tons of dry waste, but this is re-

duced by around half if there is still wet waste in there.

Before the tsunami, the island was generating 411 tons of waste per day. After the tsunami, the figure dropped to 350 tons, but it has climbed back up to 370 tons now. Most of the garbage is food, paper and plastic.

The Municipality is running out of time. If nothing is done now, there will be a big problem in two or three years.

We don't have space for landfill, but we do have room for a new incinerator. And, after asking every year for the money to build one, this year we may finally have succeeded, as the Gov-

ernor has agreed to ask Bangkok for a billion baht to build one.

I know people will be concerned about the environmental effects. The existing incinerator runs at 900-950°C, and it does emit substances such as hydrogen, nitrogen oxide, sulphur dioxide and dioxins into the atmosphere.

According to Thai law, dioxin emissions should be no higher than 0.5 nanogram I-TEQ [ie one thousand millionth of a gram] per cubic meter of stack gas – and many countries around the world restrict emissions to one-fifth of that – or 0.1 nanogram I-TEQ.

However, the existing incinerator here emits dioxins at between two and five nanogram I-TEQ [up to 10 times the maximum emissions allowed by Thai law], because the incinerator went into operation before the new standards were set.

We've asked for 50 million baht to bring the incinerator up to the legal standard but, again, we have heard nothing.

Our priority, though, is still the new incinerator, especially as it should be able to produce up to 3.5 megawatts of electricity a day, and we can sell this to the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand at 1.74 baht per unit [kW/hour].

We already make around 10 million baht a year from selling electricity generated by the existing incinerator to the Municipality.

In the longer term, the Municipality and the Governor should get residents to do more to ease the problem of disposing of the island's waste. They could, for example, try to persuade them to separate wet and dry garbage. In some countries, if people don't sort their domestic waste, the garbage truck won't take it from their home.

The authorities could also try making people pay more to have their waste collected if they haven't separated it.

Whatever happens, though, if Phuket's tourism industry is to thrive, we need to keep the environment attractive, and so we need this new incinerator.

– *Compiled by Anongnat Sartpisut*

Ramifications of renting out a condominium

If I buy a condo or an apartment to use as vacation accommodation for myself, can I rent it out to other people taking a holiday when I am not there?

Would the rent I derive from letting the apartment be regarded as "earnings" and, if so, would I need some sort of visa that would allow me to "earn" money in Thailand?

Finally, could I open a bank account for the agent to pay the rent into?

Frank Pelagic
Saudi Arabia

Pratuan Thanarak, LLB, of the International Law Office, Patong, replies:

Yes, you could legally rent out your condominium unit. It's up to each individual bank whether or not it allows you to open an account to receive rent payments.

Your agent would have to deduct withholding tax from the rent before paying it into your account. However, you would not

need to hold a visa in order to pay tax.

For information on personal income tax on earnings in Thailand, you should talk to a tax consultant.

Spokesmen for Krung Thai and Siam Commercial Banks, in Phuket City, reply:

In accordance with Bank of Thailand policy, we allow only foreigners with work permits to open accounts.

A customer relations officer at Bangkok Bank replies:

We allow foreigners to open accounts here. They should bring along their passports as identification.

The Thai Revenue Department on its website (www.rd.go.th) states,

Personal Income Tax (PIT) is a direct tax levied on income of a person.

A person means an individual, an ordinary partnership, a

non-juristic body of person, a deceased person and an undivided estate. In general, a person liable to PIT has to compute his tax liability, file tax return and pay tax, if any, accordingly on a calendar year basis.

Taxpayers are classified into "resident" and "non-resident". "Resident" [for tax purposes] means any person residing in Thailand for a period or periods aggregating more than 180 days in any tax year.

A resident of Thailand is liable to pay tax on income from sources in Thailand on a cash basis, regardless of where the money is paid, as well as on the portion of income from foreign sources that is brought into Thailand.

A non-resident is, however, subject to tax only on income from sources in Thailand.

[Assessable income includes] income from letting-out of property on hire, and from breaches of instalment sales or hire-purchase contracts

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

Work permits for volunteers?

Wachira Phuket Hospital recently appealed to foreigners to help in liaison work between the hospital and foreign blood donors. Do I need a work permit to do this?

David
Patong

The head of the Blood Bank, Sriroung Choophak, replies:

There is no need for a work permit. I will submit a list of volunteers names to the hospital director and he will present them with a certificate stating that they

are helping society. This certificate may help volunteers obtain longer permits to stay in Thailand.

Boonchok Maneechot of the Phuket Provincial Employment Service Office replies:

We have had no experience of this kind of volunteer before. Some volunteers must have a work permit. The hospital should present me with a statement outlining its objectives and I will discuss the matter with my superiors.

I get a lot of emails asking about everything from computers, the Web and the Internet (they're not the same thing) to home entertainment systems, smart homes and Internet telephony. One topic that is popular is online marketing. Here's a question I received recently:

We run two fairly large dive shops in Samui and Phuket. A few years ago we spent quite a lot of money on what I believe is a pretty darn good website.

Back then, it seemed that all we had to do was get a good website name, pay for an attractive design, write some good content and boom! An instant 35% increase in business.

Over the years, though, it seems that our online business has dropped significantly even though we often update the site. My techie friend says we are not well placed on search engines. What does this really mean?

This is an online marketing can of worms, but one that can be turned into a can of opportunities. With a bit of homework and a relatively small online-marketing budget, you can make tremendous improvements to your online business.

What the "techie friend" is talking about is "search engine optimization". Over the years this has become a technical art form.

Search engines use sophisticated methods to determine the relevance and the general usefulness of the information on your site.

One of these methods is the use of "spiders" – programs that "crawl around" the web gathering anything and everything on every site they come across. They store this information in massive databases then sort, categorize and give each piece of information points based on a complex set of computer algorithms.

Herein lie the opportunities and the keys to your online success.

Begin with text content on your web pages. It's important to

Getting search engines to give your website a good showing

use simple, descriptive words and phrases throughout your site.

In the case of the earlier example, obvious words to use would include "diving", "scuba", "ecotourism", "Phuket", "Samui" and "Thailand". Phrases might include "underwater sports", "reef diving", "coral gardens" and "fish watching".

Compiling these lists can be a daunting and frustrating task but can be made considerably easier by downloading software from www.digitalpoint.com (free) and www.rapidkeyword.com (paid). These are two very powerful tools that will help you determine the best keywords and phrases.

Next, you'll need to make good use of these keywords throughout your site. But be careful not to overdo it; spiders are pretty smart and can recognize indiscriminate use of keywords.

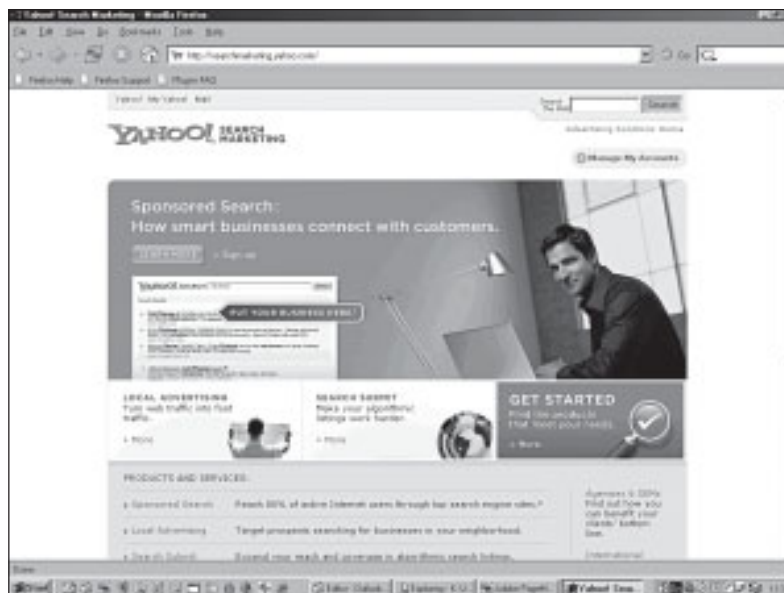
Here are just a few ways to use your keywords. Any webmaster worth his or her salt will know these.

1. Page Titles: this is the part of your site code where you can store the name of every page. Using keywords and phrases that best describe that page's content will get you some pretty good "credits" from the search engines.

2. Meta Tags: a hidden area at the top of every web page where you can list your keywords.



Two great sources for online marketing tools: above, www.nedstat.com will provide you with comprehensive statistics on visitors to your site while (below) Yahoo's Searchmarketing helps to lift you up the search engine listings – at a price.



3. Alt Image Tags: these are names that you assign to the images, logos and photos on your site; giving short descriptive names to these will have a very positive effect.

Here's a trick: pretend you are a customer and do your own search on Google, Yahoo or MSN, looking for "great diving".

Note which site comes up at the top of the list and look at the overall design and content. Then, in MS Internet Explorer, click on View | Source (in Firefox

it's View | Page Source) and you will be amazed at what you will find.

You don't have to be a webmaster to read and understand the top section of these pages. The page title, meta tags and descriptions are easily readable.

Now close the source code window so that you can see the web page again and right-click on any logo, graphic or photo. Choose "Properties", and you will see the Alt Image Tag for that image.

Okay, so now you've got your design, content keywords and image tags. What's next? A lot!

Good placement on search engines requires frequent and regular reregistration with each one. You already have a business to run so I suggest you shop around for a good provider of this service. These can be found anywhere in the world.

However, if you are a do-it-yourself kind of person, then try www.searchenginewatch.com. There you will find thousands of tips, tricks and resources for everything to do with getting noticed on the Net.

If you have allocated funds for online marketing, you should check out the "sponsored search" at www.searchmarketing.yahoo.com, which is one of the most powerful tools on the web for getting into the Top 10 search engine listings. But be careful – it'll cost ya.

Searchmarketing is an online auction site where you bid for placement in search results, based on your chosen list of keywords. Be careful, as this can get expensive pretty fast because you are paying the search engine each time someone clicks on your site from within its pages.

Take your time, read the explanations and instructions carefully. It's pretty simple but you'll want to be sure what you're doing here. Two pointers: choose your bid words carefully. "Thailand" may auction for 20 cents, "Phuket" may go for 10 cents and "Underwater Sports" could go for three cents.

Second, don't bid for the top two or three spots in a search results list, because every visitor, including those who are just kicking cyber-tires, clicks on the top three listings. You should shoot for fourth or fifth placement. This way, you can be sure that the person is really looking for something and you will pay about 80% less for the same keywords.

Last but not least, you'll want to know what effect all of this is having, and you probably don't want to wait until the effect appears on your bottom line – this whole thing is about CANI – "constant and neverending improvement".

For this, check out www.nedstat.com, my favorite web traffic site. Once set up, nedstat.com gives great, easy-to-understand reports and they're free! The reports tell you how many clicks you have; what country they came from; what keyword visitors use to find your site; where they were before they came to your page and after they left it; and how long they stayed.

Good luck, happy online marketing and contact me if you have any questions.

John Seebach has over 25 years consulting experience in management information systems and business process re-engineering. His company, Island Technology, serves businesses and individuals throughout Southeast Asia. Contact john@islandtechnology.com for more information.

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ON THE MOVE



Swiss national **Jorge De la Torre Koch** has been appointed Food & Beverage Director at Kata Beach Resort, Phuket. Before joining Kata Beach Resort he was project coordinator for La Salsa Bar at Impiana Phuket Cabana, Patong.



Montri Triratrakul, 54, has been appointed General Manager of Treasure Island Resort in Myanmar. K. Montri has more than 25 years' experience in the hotel business. He was previously General Manager of the Layan Resort, Phuket, and Executive Assistant Manager of the Golden Beach Hotel in Pattaya. He also worked at Rayong Resort, Felix Suan Thip Vana Resort in Chiang Rai and Grande View Hotel and Indra Hotel in Bangkok.



Trang-born **Kallaya Chuyruang**, 35, has been appointed Front Office Manager of The Aspasia Phuket resort at Kata Beach. K. Kallaya has more than 10 years' experience in the industry, including working at Jiva Resort & Spa as Reservations Manager and at the Impiana Phuket Cabana Patong as Front Office Manager.

'No' votes highlight Euro Zone woes

The "No" vote in Holland and France to the proposed new European constitution has raised many questions about the future of the European Union.

One of the most important issues has been the future of the Euro currency itself.

At a press conference, the Italian Welfare Minister, Roberto Moroni, called for Italy to return to its former currency, the lira.

He stated that, since adopting the euro, Italy had become linked to a currency that was non-competitively expensive in trading terms and that Italy had lost the ability to change monetary policy through its own central bank.

Roberto Moroni's speech was not a voice crying in the Italian wilderness. He is a leading member of the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) of avowed euro skeptics.

Neither is the dislike of the euro just an Italian singularity; throughout Europe there are millions of people who want to return to their old currencies. In Germany, for example, opinion polls show that substantial numbers of people want to return to the Deutschmark.

There are multiple advantages and disadvantages of having a currency union.

On the plus side, there is the simplicity of having one currency. For example, a Belgian plastics manufacturer can supply parts to a German industrial group without having to worry about currency fluctuations or the cost of foreign exchange transactions.

Intra-Euro Zone trade is so much more convenient and for many member states a huge percentage of their overall trade

takes place within the zone.

Tourism is also much easier, not only for Europeans in the Euro Zone, but also for foreigners who, perhaps, wish to visit more than one country inside the zone. Business travel is also simplified.

The disadvantages are that there can be only one central bank, in this case the European Central Bank (ECB). When the idea of a common currency was first considered, the Germans – as the largest economic power in the European Union – supported by France, wanted the future euro to be a strong currency.

Germany has an abiding horror of inflation which goes back to the days of the Weimar Republic of 1919 - 1933 when hyperinflation all but destroyed the German economy, and at one stage was so bad that workers had to be paid twice daily.

They would be paid at lunch and would rush out and buy necessities and would be paid again at the end of the day with a much higher sum of money which, in reality, bought no more than they had bought at lunch time.

Retirees saw the worth of their savings drop to nothing, leaving them to forage in garbage cans to survive.

More recently, Germany was prepared to enter into the



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

Euro Zone but simply did not trust other states to adhere to the strict monetary policies necessary to maintain a strong, stable currency. Distrust was aimed mainly at the southern European member states.

The ECB was given strict guidelines that inflation was to be limited to a maximum of 2%. Whenever it appeared that the limit was about to be breached,

monetary policy was required to be directed to maintain the 2% ceiling.

Monetary policy consists simply of setting the levels of short-term interest rates and altering the liquidity in the system.

Unlike the central banks of many other countries such as the US, Australia and Canada, the ECB was given no directive on economic growth – normally, central

bankers look at inflation targets but with reference to maintaining economic growth.

The European Central Bank is in an unenviable position as, apart from the aforementioned constraints, it has the problem of having to set monetary policy for

Interest rates reduced to low levels do not automatically produce amazing results, especially where structural rigidities exist in the system.

a growing number of countries.

The best analogy I can think of is if a school clothing outfitter was forced to distribute only one size of clothes for each class year of children.

It is truly a "one-size-fits-all" attitude that all countries in the Euro Zone are experiencing. The only "relief" that individual countries are allowed is to adjust their fiscal policies.

For example, if the economy of one member state is booming and inflation is becoming a problem, that member state is supposed to raise taxes to cool the economy.

The reader can imagine the future electoral chances of any government that tried to employ such a policy.

In the case of the countries that find that ECB interest rates are too high, they are allowed to reduce taxation or increase government spending.

There is, however, a ceiling of a 3% deficit compared to the country's GDP.

The problem is that nearly all of the member states, save Spain and Ireland, are experiencing low or negative economic growth. This, combined with huge unemployment, has the main economic powers exceeding the 3%-deficit ceiling.

The ECB is being blamed for all the woes of Europe. There are signs that, perhaps, the ECB will reduce interest rates later this year, but this is not going to produce economic miracles.

In a recent television interview, Hans Redeker, head of for-

eign exchange at the French bank BNP Paribas, pointed out that the ECB is already providing sufficient liquidity, and interest-rate cuts will not help.

What is required to solve the problem is fundamental restructuring of the Euro Zone economies.

Readers may wonder why reducing interest rates would not have a markedly positive effect. After all, the US Federal Reserve reduced base-lending rates to 1% to turn the economy around.

Economists, when they agree on anything, generally accept that in a free-market economy such as the US, UK and Australia, reducing interest rates produces almost immediate benefits.

But the Euro Zone economies are not really examples of free enterprise, although Ireland, once the Celtic Tiger, is an obvious exception.

Interest rates reduced to low levels do not automatically produce amazing results, especially where structural rigidities exist in the system.

Japan, for example, moved to zero-percent interest rates seven years ago and the jury is still out on any recovery.

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.

Property firms dominate new registrations

PHUKET: A total of 117 new businesses were registered with the Phuket Provincial Business Development Office (BDO) during May.

Almost half of the new companies are in property or real estate.

Of the 117 businesses registered, 99 were limited companies and 18 were partnerships.

Altogether, 49 property or real estate businesses were registered; 80% of these had foreign investors.

In addition, 17 new building contractors were registered, and five dive shops.

The other new businesses registered consisted of travel agents, restaurants and tailoring shops.

The total number of businesses registered between January 1 and the end of May this year is 590; 116 businesses have been deregistered.

According to BDO figures, there are 10,093 registered businesses in Phuket, of which 7,242 are limited companies, 2,836 are partnerships and 15 are private businesses.

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AO CHALONG: Some 26 entries – 18 confirmed and eight provisional – are lined up to take part in the second Phuket Race Week regatta, which will be held in Ao Chalong from July 28 to 31.

All races will start offshore from The Evason Phuket Resort & Spa in Rawai, under the organizers' "one regatta-one venue" policy. However, this year there will be four days of racing, compared with six last year.

Skippers from Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC) will be looking to repeat their performance of last year, in which they won every class in the regatta.

In the Racing/Sports Boat class, last year's winner Scott Duncanson will return on *Securicor Somtam Express*, as will Stuart Harrison on *Panic!* and Keith Moore on *Skiff Asia Pla Loma*, who finished second and third respectively in the class last year.

Also back to race will be Mark Horwood on *Image Asia Attitude 8*, though hoping not to broach twice in strong winds in the final race as he did last year, while Josh Lee's *Vino by Watermark* will make its debut in the regatta.

In the IRC class, big guns *Minx*, with Mick Kealy at the helm, and John Vause's *Ruby Tuesday* are looking to provide another final race showdown for top honors. Also vying for honors will be Martin Harris on

Island set for feast of sailing



John Vause on *Ruby Tuesday* will again be aiming to win the IRC class. – Photo by Guy Nowell : www.guynowell.com

Rhythm Stick, Andy Stephens on *Switchblade* and Joost van de Post on *Tag*.

ACYC veterans Stuart Crow on *Cinders*, Al Boon on

Blue Moon and John Fenn on *Four Winds*, who finished first, second and third respectively in the Club Cruiser class last year, will be back, with Peter Dyer on

Ava and Mark Trupp on *Maddalena* making their debut in the regatta.

In the Ocean Sports Multihull class, Mark Pescott on *Summersalt* will be looking to add another winner's trophy to his extensive collection, while Henry Kaye on *Charro* and Merv Owen on *Mumbo Jumbo* will do their best to stop him.

Others in the class are Sue and Michel Anulphy on *Cyrene*, Oli Reese on *Firefly* and a youth team on *Chimera*, who last year were skippered to third place in the class by Mathew Gow.

Lined up to race in the Ocean Performance Multihull class are Bob Mott on *Chameleon*, Chris Sieber on *Kilo*, Wolfgang Riessbacher on *Mozart* and Brent McInnes on *No Fixed Address*, with Frank Cusak's *Chakra* bringing the number of entrants to five.

On the weekend preceding Phuket Race Week will be the Quantum Naga Cup '05, for Phuket 8 sports boats only, with *Somtarn Express*, *Vino*, *Attitude 8* and *Pla Loma* all registered to race.

More top soccer action for Phuket

PHUKET CITY: Phuket's Surakul Stadium will host the Group B round of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Under-23 Youth Championship 2005 from August 29 to September 11.

In Group B are Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia and Laos.

Thailand, along with the other Group A teams – the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor) – will play their matches in Bangkok.

Entry for spectators to the Phuket matches is free. Contact the Sports Authority of Thailand (Phuket Office) at Tel: 076-250-110 for more information.

The AFC competition is part of preliminaries for the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, which are scheduled to take place in the Philippines in late November and early December this year.

Thailand is scheduled to host the SEA Games in 2007, the fifth time it has done so.

Skiffs to kick off the action

FOR THOSE WHO like to sail hard and fast, on July 27 Skiff Asia will hold a one-day dinghy event of three to five races.

After Phuket Race Week concludes on July 31, Skiff Asia will be heading up to

Hua Hin on August 1 for the Hua Hin Dinghy Regatta from August 3 to 7.

For more information about the two dinghy regattas, contact Mr Lawson at Tel: 06-9541915 or Email: info@skiffasia.com

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Telling the world: Kruze Motorsport's Courage C65, with the Phuket message along the side.

Phuket goes racing

PHUKET: While most people on the island tend to favor driving more slowly, one locally-based entrepreneur and property developer, Ian Mitchell, the Project Director of Paradise Bay Marina on Cape Yamoo on the east side of Phuket, feels a need for speed. So much so that Mitchell – Kruze Motorsport Team Director – will be one of three drivers for the Kruze Motorsports entry in the Le Mans 24 Hours – arguably the world's most famous sports car endurance race – this weekend (June 18-19), and promoting Phuket in the process.

The Kruze Motorsports

Judd-powered Courage C65, which will also be driven by fellow Britons Phil Bennett and Tim Mullen, will carry a large "Visit Phuket Tropical Paradise" slogan (see picture).

Kruze Motorsport, although new to endurance racing, have racked up a number of high placings, including second in their class at their ALMS (American Le Mans Series) debut at Sebring, Florida, in March as well as holding 13th overall in Germany's Nürburgring 24-hour race in May before mechanical failure cost them valuable time.

In addition to promoting

Phuket, Kruze Motorsport will donate a percentage of the revenue garnered from sponsorship slogans on the 3.4-liter V8, 550hp endurance racer to tsunami-relief projects in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Patong Beach.

Said Mitchell, "Le Mans is a huge event and gets massive global coverage, so if we are running well and are competitive during the race, we will have fantastic media coverage and TV exposure for Phuket."

The Le Mans 24 Hours begins at 4 pm Phuket time on June 18.

La Samudra does it again

AO CHALONG: David Lindahl's *La Samudra* took top honors in the Racing class of the third regatta in the Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC) Keelboat and Multihull Race Series on June 11 and 12.

Vino by Watermark, skippered by Josh Lee, came second in the class, while *Securicor Somtam Express*, with Scott Duncanson and Muzza Nordstrand on board, came third.

Mark Horwood on *Charro* won the Multihull class.

The next ACYC regatta will be on July 9 and 10. For more information contact Scott Duncanson at Tel: 076-354762 or Email: securicor@csloxinfo.com

Call for Aero Thai volley entries

PHUKET CITY: The Phuket round of the Aero Thai Mini Volleyball tournament will take place from August 15 to 20 at the Saphan Hin Sports Complex, building 1.

The tournament, sponsored by Aeronautical Radio of Thailand (Aero Thai) is for players aged 13 or under.

In the provincial competition, the winning team will receive a prize of 4,000 baht, while second place will merit a prize of 3,000 baht and the third-placed team will receive 2,000 baht. The team that places fourth will receive sports equipment.

The first and second-placed teams will go through to the regional competition in Krabi.

Winners and runners-up in

the regionals will go through to the finals in Bangkok, competing for the HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Cup.

Teams wishing to take part should sign up before the end of June. For details or to register, call Tel: 076-250110.

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63 Ft 1993 Wooden Penisi Ketch, 1xIsuzu 115 Hp	Reduced to Euro 65,000
60 Ft 1982 Wooden Penisi Ketch, 1xHino 175 Hp	USD 51,500
57 Ft 1995 Lagoon 57, Yanmar 2x45 Hp	USD 950,000
47 Ft 85/02 Sunkiss 47, 1xPerkins 50 Hp	USD 155,000
38 Ft 2003 Athena Cats (2 sister boats), 2xYanmar 19 Hp	USD 240,000 (each)

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THE NOSE KNOWS

Most scientists agree that one reason we have a sense of smell is to help awaken and recall memories. In fact, there is no more powerful way to bring back buried memories than an associated smell or scent.

Traumas, moments of joy, the drudgery of a boring job or hated task, even long-forgotten childhood memories can be recalled instantly through a whiff of a scent we associate with a particular experience.

For me, a hint of the aroma of my favorite childhood summertime food, the chili cheeseburger, or the pungent scent of pine needles drying in the sun, bring back vividly long-forgotten details of sunny boyhood days swimming in a nearby river.

For others, perhaps the heady, oily smell of fresh road tar recalls a grueling summer job in road construction, or the chemical odor of insecticide dip brings

back the memory of struggling to rid a reluctant puppy of its ticks.

While scientists work on unlocking the mysteries of how smell triggers memories like these, let's consider what the ability to smell means in wine appreciation.

First, smell is actually a part of our ability to taste: we can taste little unless we are able to smell too. This is why food tastes bland to those with a bad cold and blocked nose.

Second, when we taste food we have a visual clue that helps trigger our memories. Seeing a banana, for example, helps us to identify the smell of the banana because, through visual memory, we recognize it. But with wine we have no visual clues, and this is the

WINE



By Steven Roberto

greatest hurdle most new wine lovers face when trying to appreciate it.

Third, if there is no associated memory for a newly encountered smell, the smell cannot be identified. Thus, in order to describe the exotic aromas of fine wine, tasters often talk in terms of associated aromas, meaning the scent of something else that is similar to the smell encountered in the wine.

There are those who, either by genetic inheritance or through diligent practice, have a more developed ability than most to taste or smell. They are often the kind of people who go through life with a keen awareness of the natural world around them and who possess the curiosity to explore the smells and tastes that surround us all.

In our busy lives, most of us notice but a fraction of the smells, sounds and sights that surround us. By taking time to slow down and appreciate nature's beauty, even with a child's sense of curiosity, we become better wine tasters as our store of associated memories and our curiosity is enhanced. With wine, keeping a notebook containing details of wines tasted compensates for the lack of visual clues and helps to focus the mind.

Our sense of smell is the chief window through which we can peer into the mysterious truth of wine and interact with the natural world, and is the bridge between the evocative power of wine and the poetry of the soul.

Steven Roberto is a winemaker and restaurant consultant from California. He is the Managing Director of enVision Phuket, a Phuket-based wine importer and consultant. Email: stevenroberto@lycos.com

The mistress of the short story

Jonathan Frazen, who wrote *The Corrections* and is now the new wunderkind of American literature, recently declared on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*: "Alice Munro has a strong claim to being the best fiction writer now working in North America."

Munro has written one novel but her specialty is the short story, and she has written 11 magnificent collections of them.

Along with Margaret Atwood, she is certainly the queen of Canadian literature (since Robertson Davies died, there is no king).

When it comes to mastery of the short story form, her only competition is John Updike. A typical Munro story is rather fat – from 30 to 60 pages – and plays wonders with time, ranging freely over four or five decades, dipping in at random on her characters' youth, middle age and senescence.

Her latest collection of eight

stories is *Runaway* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2004, 335pp) and she is running as strong as ever.

You never forget an Alice Munro story and when you run across one again, as I did with *Passion* in this volume – the story of a poor waitress's romance with a wealthy family – it's like meeting up with an old friend.

The title story has a plot as tightly woven as can be, played out in 45 swift-moving pages. A young couple run a failing horse stable and riding school. Clark has a temper, Carla is prone to crying jags.

Down the road is the home of a famous poet and his wife. Carla does occasional housework for them, joking that the invalid poet is an inveterate lecher. Clark takes her seriously when the poet wins a huge cash prize just before his death. Now he wants to blackmail the widow, Sylvia.

Forced into an intolerable situation, Carla breaks down and

confesses to Sylvia that she wants to run away from her husband. Sylvia lends her the money for the bus fare to Toronto, but midway there, Carla loses heart and returns to Clark, who has an angry confrontation with Sylvia for aiding and abetting.

But the nasty atmosphere dissipates with an epiphany: the arrival of Flora, Carla's long-lost pet goat. Carla only learns of this when Sylvia writes her a farewell letter.

Carla and her husband have reconciled and the horse business is doing better but Clark pretends the goat is still missing. What happened to Flora?

"It was as if she had a murderous needle somewhere in her lungs, and by breathing carefully, she could avoid feeling it," Munro writes of Clara. "But every once in a while she had to take a deep breath, and it was still there."

In terms of spookiness, this is right up there with Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily*.

The next three stories illustrate Munro's penchant for play-

ing with time. We first meet Juliet, a newly-graduated classics major, on a train from Ontario to Vancouver to take her first teaching job.

In the second story, she's the mother of a 13-month-old daughter, on a visit to her parents in Ontario. In the third, the daughter has grown up and is staying with a shady religious cult in the deep backwoods of British Columbia.

For reasons Juliet cannot fathom, she has no news from her daughter for the next decade until a quick chance meeting with a former schoolmate whose rushed words are all the more heart-breaking for being so few.

A cruel case of mistaken identity involving twins forms the plot of *Tricks*, one of Shake-

spearean incongruity if it were not so firmly grounded in the harsh details of reality.

The last story, *Powers*, displays all of Munro's virtuoso talents of narration.

The story opens with the 1927 diary entries of teenager Nancy, ending with a marriage proposal by Wilf, the town doctor; then switches perspective to Wilf's cousin Ollie, and his first meeting and later marriage with Nancy's psychic friend Tessa.

Forty years later, Nancy visits Tessa in an insane asylum in Michigan. A few years later, she runs into Ollie on a Vancouver street. The stories they tell of their marriage are completely different.

The mark of a great writer is that she makes it look easy. There is no straining for effect, just a simple wonder at the complexities of life.

Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt



Wordly wise

"In general, the art of government consists of taking as much money as possible from one class of citizens to give to the other."

– Voltaire [1694-1778]. French writer and satirist, Voltaire is best remembered as a crusader against tyranny and bigotry.

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On the menu

with
Andy Johnstone

Casablanca

Mention Casablanca, and most people tend to think, not of Morocco's largest city, but of the 1942 movie of the same name, which was, of course, set in that city.

Inevitably, classic lines from the film spring to mind. It is, after all, a well-known fact that after Connery's Bond and Schwarzenegger's Terminator, most Western men feel that they can pull off a decent impersonation of Bogey's Rick saying "Here's looking at you, kid."

Setting off for Phuket's Casablanca, housed a mite incongruously on the ground floor of the Royal Paradise Hotel in Patong, I wondered whether I should wear a white dinner jacket, a trench coat, or even a fez.

I was dreaming of *tagine*, *babakanoosh*, *tabuleh*, *couscous* and *harissa*, which was, perhaps, the inspiration for Thai *nam phrik*.

As for that Tunisian Farka, I'll tell him when I see him.

North African and Arabian cuisines are – if one can get away with lumping them together – often overlooked by foodies, when, by rights, they should be somewhere near the top of the culinary list.

The traditions of the food itself, with its rich panoply of ingredients, are legendary.

Anyone who has ever stepped off the tourist trail in those parts of the world will know that food and hospitality are cornerstones of Arabian culture, whether the hosts have everything or nothing.

Perhaps knowing how good Arabian food can be is why I am so disappointed with Casablanca.

Some thought has gone into making the interior area look vaguely Arabian, at least in terms of the attractively-tiled walls, fitted out in an approximation of the abstract mosaics found in the region.

I am a rather less impressed with the choice of music. While there is a time and a place for the likes of Ronan Keating and Norah Jones, it does perhaps behoove an Arab restaurant to have something at least vaguely Arabic played to the diners.

It would, perhaps, be too much to expect *maqam al-iraqi* or *sawt* – one of Arabia's most celebrated musical genres – to be played. However, I feel sure that when diners from that region do venture to this restaurant, they may appreciate music that better suits the surroundings and ambience.

Sadly, we are even less impressed with the selection of dishes we are given, ostensibly to demonstrate the range and flair of the chef who learned the art of Arab cuisine from a book.

First, we are brought two



Main picture: The *sayyadiya* was delicious but the lamb (inset) was one of several disappointments.

Casablanner

starters. One is a kidney bean *shourba* (soup) and the other a *ful madammas* (a salad of taxonomically-indeterminate white beans). I do not mind a little "bite" left in beans, but in both of these dishes the beans are just too crunchy for us to enjoy.

The soup has a vaguely Mediterranean taste to it while the salad, which should be infused with the tastes of olive oil, lemon juice, onion and parsley, appears to be devoid of all four. And it comes with just three bland prawns.

Next comes baked lamb fillet (so far, so good) on a bed of ... pizza sauce, topped with plasticky cheese. This item is from the "East meets West" section of the menu.

The lamb lacks flavor, a shame when one considers the wealth of spices – cinnamon, cloves and cardamom, to name a few – used in Arabian cuisine. The meat is also a little tough and dry, suggesting that it had been kept waiting for some time. There is little to say about the pizza sauce.

We are a little happier with a fish dish based on *samak bil*

tahini. This dish, traditionally, is made from fillets of, say, red snapper baked with *tahini* (sesame seed paste). The *tahini* is quite palatable but the fish lacks flavor, although it looks and is fresh.

Some 20 minutes after asking for them, our *gahwa* and *shai* (coffee and tea infused with cinnamon) arrive and are enjoyed, as is the final savory dish,

sayyadiya – three very small pieces of delicately-spiced fish on a bed of golden, fried rice. Between three hungry people, it is soon eaten.

Awaiting our dessert with trepidation, we are eventually presented with – well, what else? – chocolate-covered sponge pyramids. We again clear our plates.

At the top of the review, I

lauded – and rightly – Arabian hospitality. Casablanca, however, has blurred the borders of Arabian and North African culture and cuisine too much, and has a long way to go before it lives up to its namesake.

Casablanca is at the Royal Paradise Hotel, 135/23 Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd., Patong. Tel: 076-340666.

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Construction Update

by Anongnat Sartpisut

Two months to go for Samkong-Kathu Rd

KATHU: Those who commute between Tesco-Lotus and Patong will be glad to know that work on the 75.3 million-baht widening project for Samkong-Kathu Rd, which began in May last year, will finally be completed by the end of September.

Kathu Municipality Engineer Joroonlert Logootara told the *Gazette* that the work, funded by the Municipality and contracted to Thanasin Pattana 1999 Co, is now about 70% complete and should be completely finished in about two months' time.

Under the contract, Thanasin Pattana has until November 26 to complete the work, he added.

Thanasin Pattana is the sole contractor for the project and is responsible for all work, including landscaping, installation of traffic lights, drainage and road painting.

When completed, the 4.3-kilometer road will be 16 meters wide and will have two lanes in each direction, he said.

In the works: At the weekly CEO Governor's meeting on June 8, the local head of the Department of Rural Roads proposed seeking a 371-million baht budget for three road projects in the province – as soon as the Phuket Public Works and Town and Country Planning Office (PWTCP) acquires all the necessary land from the private sector.

Reporting to Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura about Phuket's worsening road congestion, Wichai Phuskunkajorn, head of the Phuket office of the Department of Rural Roads, said he could seek funding for the projects only when all the land had been acquired. If it could, he said his department stood ready to



THE END IS NIGH: The improvements to the Samkong-Kathu Rd, which began May last year, should be complete by September.

begin work in 2007 on the following projects:

- A new six-lane road, 900 meters long, connecting Chao Fa East Rd (route 4021) near Baan Muang Thong to Sakdidet Rd (route 4023), at a proposed cost of 90 million baht.

- A new road to bypass Cherg Talay, starting near the Cherg Talay Water Supply Office on Sri Soonthorn Rd (route 4025) and running 2.6 kilometers to near Cherg Talay Police Station on route 4030.

The estimated budget for the project, which is intended to relieve traffic congestion in the center of Cherg Talay, is 110 million baht.

- Construction of the long-delayed Patong-Karon Rd extension in Patong. The 2.9-km road, the southern part of which starts at the Prachanukhro Rd-Nanai Rd intersection and is already complete, would be extended to serve as a third north-south artery for Patong, starting near the new Jungceylon project in the

north and running parallel to Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd.

The proposed budget to complete the thoroughfare, once the necessary land is acquired, would be 171 million baht.

Gov Udomsak said Patong had the most pressing traffic problem. He asked the PWTCP representative to approach Patong Municipality about the possibility of funding the purchase of some of the land required in order to restart the stalled project.

"If we wait another year for budget approval or to acquire 100% of the land needed from the private sector, we will miss the chance to solve Patong's traffic problems," he said.

The Governor added that construction should begin as soon as possible – skirting the land of hold-out landowners if necessary – in order to show the central government that Patong and the Phuket authorities are serious about completing the road.

– **Additional reporting**
by Mayo Kishimoto

Wrong way

The traffic lights change to red and two big tour buses, a large truck, a fuel tanker and several cars come to a stop. The lights from the left change to green and two pickup trucks emerge. After a couple of minutes, the lights change to green on the right side of the highway and a little old man on an old Honda motorcycle puts his way gently across the six lanes of traffic.

Is this in the middle of a city? No, it's in the middle of nowhere, on the main highway near Chumphon, about 400 kilometers south of Bangkok. There are many of these big intersections on this highway; in fact there are excellent roads all over Thailand.

Everywhere that is, except in Phuket. Even compared with the flyovers, underpasses, bridges and motorways in some of the remotest parts of the country, Phuket's infrastructure is pitiful.

The section of the road between the Heroines' Monument and the bypass road is nothing short of dangerous. There are four, soon to be five, major traffic danger areas between the Chuan Chuen Lagoon housing estate and the bypass road intersection.

All traffic heading south from Dulwich College or Chuan Chuen Lagoon, plus all traffic from the south going to the marinas, must converge on the same u-turn, into three lanes of almost non-stop traffic hurrying down from the north.

Whenever I have to make this turn, I try to keep on the inside of a bus, so that the oncoming motorcycles can run into that instead of me. If you think this is a sick joke, well I've seen it happen three times. Actually, I didn't see it, I heard it – the motorcycle running into the far side of the bus.

Being on the inside of the bus also means that you get to keep going; everyone behind is stuck there while the upholders of the law and the representatives of the insurance company descend upon the scene to preside



over the case in the middle of the road.

The local authorities tried once to alleviate some of the danger by putting orange cones around the u-turn, but this only created traffic jams in both the northbound and southbound lanes. I understand that a big part of the problem is caused by local politics; somebody thinks that somebody else should either pay for or at least contribute to the solution.

As a result – as is the case with so many other aspects of Phuket life – vested interests stop progress, and the island suffers.

The best solution would be to install sets of synchronized traffic lights, just like those found on many parts of the highway to Bangkok. At the very least a policeman should be there to direct traffic during peak periods.

He could have a partner, and they could take turns directing traffic and stopping motorcycles from hitting the sides on buses. They have police on traffic duty at the Heroines' monument now during peak periods, and while it's a disaster most of the day, it works fine then.

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Graham Doven

The balance of life...amidst the nature

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to better roads



DASH OR SMASH: Drivers using the busy U-turn on the main road through Koh Kaew need nerves of steel and perfect timing to get safely into three lanes of almost non-stop traffic in both directions.

Another trouble spot, the Samkong Junction at Tesco-Lotus, inspired the powers that be to propose an underpass costing 400 million baht. They also proposed another underpass further along the bypass road, doubling the money required.

The Prime Minister told them it was out of the question, and rightly so. The reason behind not proposing an overpass was that it would spoil the scenery. Scenery? Along that section of road?

Why is Phuket so far be-

hind the rest of the country? Is it the vested interests, or that Phuket is not a favorite of the current national government? I doubt that; the government would gain nothing by singling out one part of the country for special deprivation.

I reckon the problem comes down to a combination of poor planning by local authorities and vested interests. Phuket needs to get its act together in more ways than one, or its going to be a long struggle back to normality.

Speaking of struggles, last week the subject of tourism and the tsunami and how Phuket has been affected by bad publicity from the international TV media resurfaced.

An bizarre example of this came from the Managing Director of Sunsail Thailand, Kevin Quilty.

"The perceived bad image of Phuket created by the media has resulted in clients canceling their bookings here and switching to Langkawi," he said.

Surely people know that Langkawi also borders the Andaman Sea and was also hit by the tsunami? People who charter yachts tend to know these things. But the fact remains, Langkawi didn't feature in the all-smashed-up news – Phuket did.

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A Natural Paradise in Phuket Town

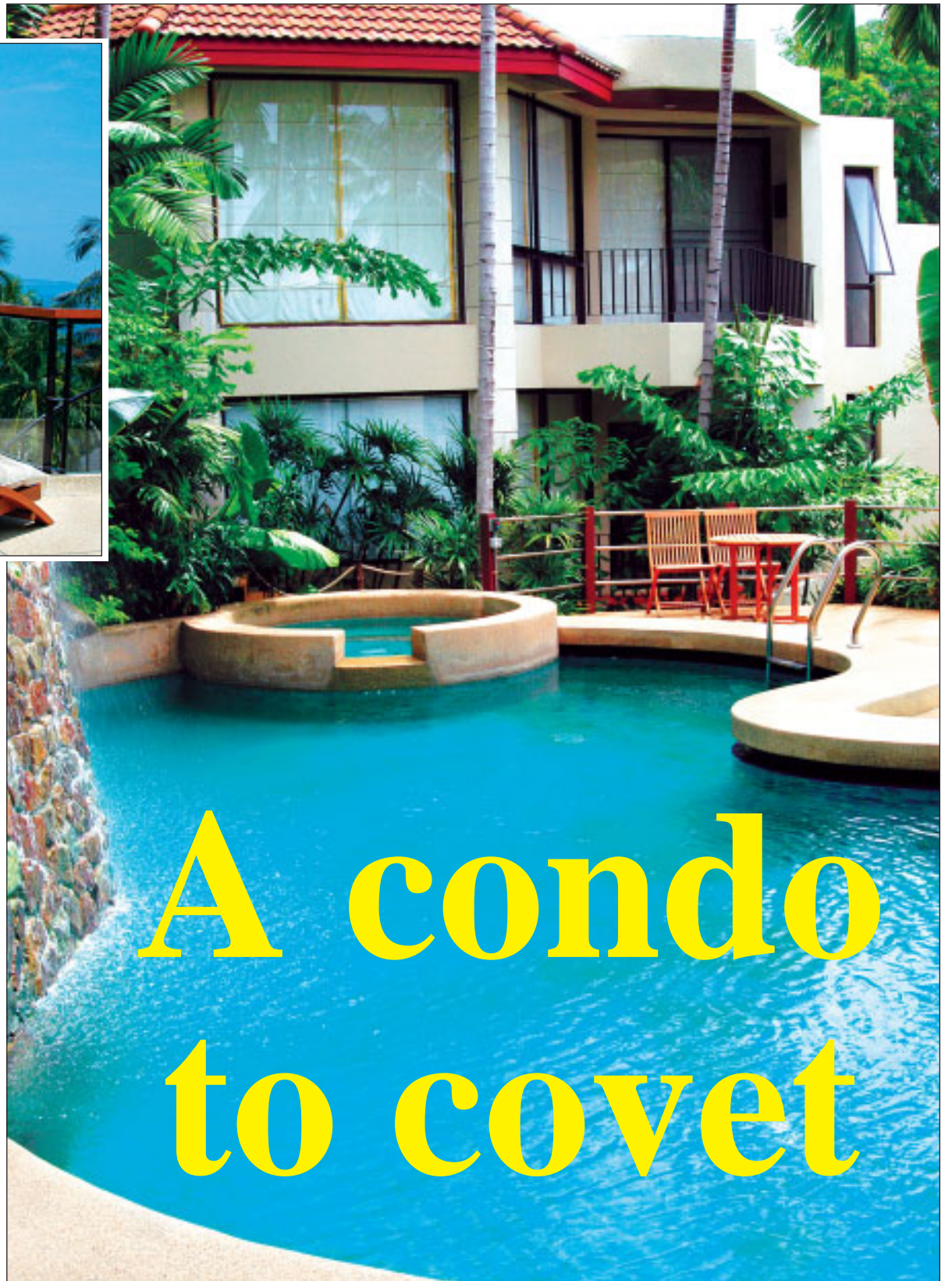
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Home of the Week

Rawai



A condo to covet

This 230-square-meter property, within the Andaman Cove residential development at Evason Phuket Resort & Spa in Rawai, boasts many amenities, not least of which is access to the hotel's gymnasium and tennis courts, access to transport to Koh Bon and use of the resort's 44-foot yacht.

Designed to blend in with the surrounding tropical gardens, this condominium features dark woods and a touch of Mediterranean style as well as soft lighting and a natural ambience.

The property has two bedrooms, both of which have king-size beds, open views to the gardens and sea, air conditioning, a 20" flat-screen TV and cable television.

Both the third-floor master bedroom and the other bedroom

have en-suite bathrooms with both a shower and a bathtub.

A well-equipped kitchen – it includes crockery, cutlery and kitchen utensils – is equipped with a range of white goods from Germany, and has plenty of space should one tire of dining at the hotel's four restaurants. The house also has a washer/dryer.

The dining room has a six-seat table and views to the sea.

The living room, which is – naturally – open plan has an entertainment center, a 43" TV and a range of DVDs, books and games for rainy monsoon days. Cool floors, an L-shaped sofa and a day bed add to the comfort factor.

Also, should the buyer tire of the nightlife in the Nai Harn-Rawai area, the house has a its own bar – with supplies provided on request by the hotel.

Two roof decks, both of which have telephone and Internet access, provide ideal platforms to entertain, sunbathe or simply chill out with stunning views.

The prop-

erty is offered freehold for just over 20 million baht.

For further information contact Richard Lusted, Siam Real Estate, at Tel: 076-288908. Email: info@siamrealestate.com or see www.siamrealestate.com



The condo offers seclusion (right), views of Chalong Bay (top left), a private pool (above) and access to the resort's pools (left).





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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

The lily that isn't a lily

There are many imposters in the world. Not just connemen who sell get-rich-quick schemes to impressionable pensioners, or politicians who are prepared to buy their way to positions of power; more material things can be imposters too.

There are few computer owners in this corner of the globe who can honestly put their hands on their hearts and say they are certain that every piece of software on their machine has been bought and paid for, with the cash ending up in the pockets of the software manufacturers. The cheaper imitations are just too tempting, and the real thing often way too expensive.

Surely there can be few people gullible enough to believe that the Nike T-shirts or the Chanel handbags in the shops of Patong are genuine, despite the protestations of the vendors.

The Thais have a great term for the real thing – *jing jing*. It can sometimes be difficult here to distinguish the copies you see in the shops from the *jing jing*, but in the plant world, the picture is a little clearer. Well, in theory anyway.

How *jing jing* is the traveler's "palm"? This is the magnificent fan-shaped tree you see in the grounds of the finer establishments in Phuket. It's not actually a palm at all, but a member of the banana family. And there's another one – the innocent banana "tree" isn't a tree at all, but a herb. Imposters both.

We all think we know what a waterlily is. It's obvious isn't it? It's one of those plants with round leaves that floats on the surface of ponds, – the kind that frogs sit on while waiting to be turned into princes.

It's certainly true that the lilies we consider *jing jing* do exist here in abundance, but one



With its unusual, white flowers perched atop slender stalks, the spider lily does not look like a lily at all.

of the most common "lilies" we see on a regular basis in this part of the world isn't really a lily as we know it at all.

The spider lily, or *hymenocallis littoralis* (I wonder how that translates?) is one of the more bizarre plants around, perhaps even more odd than the "zig zag plant", the heliconia. The spider lily often features in ornamental gardens, as it looks impressive in quantity.

Thais know the spider lily as the *phlap-plueng-tiin-pet*. It doesn't conform to any of the more usual rules that the bloke who invented the first flower

came up with, as it doesn't have the obvious usual cluster of nice, neat, orderly petals that most of its counterparts do.

It didn't get the name "spider" by accident – that's pretty much what it looks like. The flowers, usually pure white, appear at the end of solid stalks that rise above long, slender leaves, which are usually dark green.

In large groups, these flowers really do look like rather bored giant white spiders, perched in mid-air, waiting for something to happen. In common with a surprisingly large number of plants in this region, it too is poisonous

– perhaps this may also have contributed to the name.

These flowers are often seen at the side of the road and at the entrance to public buildings and banks. Like so many of the plants I rant on about, they are quite content to be neglected. This is one of those plants that's perfectly suited to gardeners who prefer to go about the job by sitting in the garden holding a bottle of Heineken rather than doing any physical work there.

Regular watering will encourage the lilies to flower, as will plenty of sun. That's what the books say, anyway; I have one

at the side of my house, in a rather dingy area, and it seems happy enough. I've just never been able to summon up the energy to move it.

Spider lilies are equally at home in pots and in the ground, and multiply enthusiastically.

Thinking back to my arrival in Thailand, I remember going to the local tax office and stopping outside to admire the distinctive foliage planted just outside the entrance.

At the time I wondered what this spectacular plant might be, with its brilliant white dangling flowers with dangling petals, and decided to have a look for one the next time I went plant shopping.

I soon discovered a very good reason why the spider lily is so prevalent. They almost give these things away at the garden centers, which might explain why so many spider lilies are planted in public places. A 25-cm-high plant will cost you only 30 or 40 baht, and that single plant, if looked after, will turn into five or six within a few months. Then you can either scream at it to stop or put it in the shade, which should curb its enthusiasm a little.

Is the spider lily a *jing jing* lily then? Maybe not, but it's probably more *jing jing* than a politician or a music CD bought from a Patong sidewalk. A lot cheaper, too.

Want to know more
about a plant
in your garden?

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Property Gazette

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Deadline for Property Mart page: Friday 3 pm.
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Property Gazette

Accommodation Available

ROOMS TO LET

Lake-view apartments in Kathu. Fully furnished, with aircon, fridge, cable TV, hot water, car park. 183 baht a day. Contact for details. Tel: 076-202585, 09-1968449. Email: ketmaneeclayton61@hotmail.com

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access. Surf the Net in your room, with the works (aircon, cable TV, heater, fridge) for 5,000 baht. Please contact K. Passakorn at Tel: 09-188-5300. Email: passakorn@taitancourt.com or for further details, please see our website at: www.taitancourt.com

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Accommodation Wanted

APARTMENT

I am looking to rent a villa or apartment suitable for 3 people for Christmas - December 22 to January 5 - on Phuket. All 1- to 3-bedroom accommodation will be considered. If you have anything which you think might be of interest, please email me. Thanks. Email: bo.matsson@brostaden.se

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I am looking for a house to rent in the Rawai/Chalong/Nai Harn areas for at least one year. Ideally it will have two bedrooms, at least one aircon, and be furnished (although unfurnished is also an option). As I have a pet dog, the house should have an enclosed garden. Tel: 01-926-2334. Email: laureninthailand@hotmail.com

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We are looking for an apartment or a villa near Surin Beach to rent for August. Email: sukandac@hotmail.com

APARTMENT

at Kata beach. I'm looking for a nice, clean apartment on Karon or Kata Beaches. I will stay for a long time. Not more than 5,500 baht per month. Must have aircon, cable TV, and small kitchen. Tel: 04-6304243. Email: jurgen.hugli@gmail.com

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- ▶ Good command of English and translation skills.
- ▶ Basic computer skills and an additional language would be an advantage.
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HOUSEKEEPING/

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to Manager. Must be good at English and have a good, happy personality. Experience preferred. Knowledge of accounting and office computers. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-344350. Fax: 076-344350. Email: manager@kalimresidence.com

PIMALAI RESORT

& Spa, a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, is currently looking for guest service officers. English required, computer literate. Fidelio front office a plus. Other positions available: Graphic Designer, Bell Boy, Admin Secretary. Tel: 075-607999. Fax: 075-607987. Email: rdm@pimalai.com For further details, please see our website at: www.pimalai.com

IT SUPPORT OFFICER

IT Support Officer wanted with at least 2 years' experience in networking and hardware maintenance. Good command of spoken English would be an advantage. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-272572 or 01-5358041; or Fax: 076-273447 or Email: wilawan@greatglove.com

TEACHERS WANTED

Phuket Wittayalai School requires native English-speaking teachers with TOEFL certificates and a degree. Please contact Khun Boonthong at Fax: 076-213922 or send Email to: boonthong_a@pkw.ac.th for more information.

NATIVE ENGLISH

teachers. Many excellent jobs available; must be TEFL-trained. Apply now. For more information or to apply, please call Tel: 06-9520088 or email: paul@langserv.com

ACCOUNTANT

wanted. Fluent English, 5 years' experience in AR/AP/VAT, filing social security. Please call Tim for more information. Tel: 01-9279328.

Employment Wanted

THAI WOMAN,

39, returning to Phuket. Thai woman, 39 years old, is returning to Phuket after more than 12 years in Europe and is looking for employment. Experienced in tourism-related jobs (receptionist and head-cashier in hotels, lounge hostess at Vienna International Airport, employee in a tour agency), computer literate, native Thai speaker, good command of English, excellent command of German language, good personality, friendly, polite, concerned about customer care and service-oriented. CV available on request. Please contact Mrs Metta Krenn for more information. Email: gueni.k@gmx.net

CERTIFIED TEACHER

(from the USA) available for English tutoring; Mathematics (Grade 6 through 12); and/or Science. Available for group lessons or private lessons. For more information or to reply, please Email: xinloi@excite.com

MY NAME IS DON

My name is Don Copley. I am a West Australian who has been visiting Phuket for nearly 20 years. I have a Thai partner and intend to take up permanent residence in Phuket. I have spent 40 years consulting in real estate and related fields. I hold licences for real estate, valuation, land conveyancing and auctioneering, and have vast experience in subdivision and project management. I am looking for full- or part-time consultancy or related work. Excellent references can be provided. Please contact me for more information at Email: ccopleya@bigpond.net.au

HOUSE MAID/NURSE

Care-giver/maid available for Chalong, Rawai, Cape Panwa. References available. Tel: 01-6935015.

CHEF/MANAGER

I am a 32-year-old chef with lots of international experience in New Zealand, Thailand, Switzerland, etc. Staff training, cost control, pre-opening, menu design, cost calculations, etc. I am a fun loving and easy going self-starter. CV available upon request. Email: chef73@dbzmail.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

I'm a talented, young, creative designer with experience. I'm currently working on Koh Samui and am looking for work elsewhere in Thailand. Please contact me ASAP. Hope to hear from you soon! Tel: 66-72760882. Email: hilbily@webmail.co.za

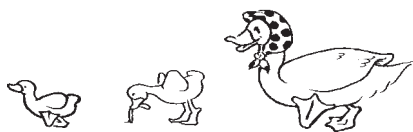
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Articles for Sale

FOR QUICK SALE

Kitchen equipment: 2 computer-controlled coolers, 2 door; 1 chest freezer, 160L; 1 industrial kitchen fan; 2 elec burger grills; 1 gas burger grill; 1 elec cashier unit; other grill/shop accessories. Used only 10 months. Contact Khun Kim. Tel: 06-2989500. Email: la@grillhousedk.com

UNDERWATER PHOTO

Gear: Ikelight substrobo 300. Powerful wide-beam strobe, like new: 7,500 baht. Pelican case #1650: 5,000 baht. Email: info@oceanic-impressions.com

SECONDHAND ITEMS

Teak king-size bed, desks, dining room set, beds, Karcher rug cleaner, safe, pictures, books. All available at Phuket Secondhand store at 64/30 Chao Fa East Rd.

MOUNTAIN BIKE

American brand Gary Fisher mountain bike selling at half-price, negotiable. Bought 3 months ago. American owner leaving Phuket for new project in US. Must sell; best offer secures. Contact & Viewing: Rockin' Angels Jammin' Cafe 54 Yaowarat Rd (Phuket City). Tel: 66-76210828, 66-9654-9654. Email: jammincafe@rockinangels.com

BABY STUFF!

Expat soon to be leaving Thailand has a lot of baby equipment for sale: - Brown Farm designer wooden cot, with matching duvet and linen, very good condition: 10,000 baht for it all. - Car seat for newborn baby, good quality, bought in Europe: 1,000 baht. - Carrying pouches, one 'local' for newborns, one European standard for the bigger baby: 750 baht. - Moses Basket with bamboo rocker/stand, very nice design: 1,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 09-8730034. Email: pfriender@dulwich.ac.th

CD PLAYER

& recorder. Pioneer PDR 609, record CD to CD, or LP to CD, or just play. 7,000 baht. Mint condition. Please contact for more info. Tel: 07-9223242. Email: patongman123@hotmail.com

TEAK BED

Queen-size teak bed, elephant-style legs, 6 months old, only 10,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 09-5943209. Email: olebay_th@yahoo.co.uk

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
012732053 (Scandinavian),
018954763 (English) or
018912895 (Frank)

Business Opportunities

RESTAURANT/BAR



in Phuket City for sale . 2 units, 4 stories, seats 100-plus. 1.5 million baht, 30,000 baht per month. For more info contact Ploenta at 07-9795048.

CAFE EUROPA KRABI

Scandinavian restaurant with 40 seats + guesthouse with 6 rooms. Sale includes building and company with 2 work permits. Well-established business, 15 years with the same owner. Price: 7 million baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 09-5910584. Email: henrik_krabi@hotmail.com

WANIDA MASSAGE

2 massage shops for sale in one deal: 8 million baht. Please call. Tel: 01-9782209.

GUESTHOUSE

for lease. Last opportunity to open your own Guesthouse in the heart of Patong with no key money. 26 rooms, Jungceylon area. 9-year lease. Monthly rent: 150,000 baht. Tel: 076-381772, 06-0043008. Fax: 076-383756. Email: info@ayudhya.net For further details, please see our website at: www.ayudhya.net/english/show.php?property_ID=297

INVESTORS/

partners. We are seeking investors for a share or as partnership. Danish grillhouse chain based in Patong. For more details, please contact Kim. Tel: 06-2989500. Email: la@grillhousedk.com Please see our website at: www.grillhousedk.com

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RESTAURANT

for lease. Nai Harn Beach main road, 60-seat night restaurant. Tel: 06-2722410.

BUSINESS FOR SALE

Resort with over 20 rooms, for immediate takeover. Please call Khun Na. Tel: 01-8918082. Email: dianagohlf@yahoo.com

PROFITABLE BIZ

One of a kind; monthly net profit 120,00 baht. Price: 2.5 million baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 01-0808557.

RESORT FOR LEASE

Min 10 years, on about 2,500sqm. 15 bungalow units with swimming pool, surrounded by a tropical garden. Key money: 5 million baht, then 80,000 baht a month. Please contact for more info. Tel: 076-330980, 07-2849690. Fax: 076-330-284. Email to: fullmoonbeach@hotmail.com For more information, please see our website at: www.fullmoon-bungalows-phuket.com

ICE-CREAM

business. for sale in Soi Bangla, Patong. New company with 2 work permits, new equipment Carpigiani technology. 2.1 million baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 06-9928026.

OFFICE, INTERNET

shop for sale. Office in Sajuan (near Chalong) with ADSL (256/512) flatrate, including 5 PCs (networked), fax, printer, modem, fridge, etc. Or start with the existing Internet cafe (expandable to a game shop). Rent: 5,000 baht. Business takeover: 200,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-8924282. Email: taxiregio@freenet.de

HOTEL FOR LEASE

Small easily-run hotel for lease. Please see website for all info. For more information, see our website at: www.kohjoy.com/building or call Tel: 01-8922824 or Email: junaworn@hotmail.com

KATA BAR FOR SALE

Good location. 500,000 baht. Please call Tel: 07-8814415 for more information.

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Cars, boats, lockers. Please call for more information. Tel: 09-9088675.

Computers

NOTEBOOK

computer. IBM Thinkpad 600E, 128MB. 6GB FDD, CD, 13.3", Win 98, loaded with software. Please contact for more information. Tel: 04-0603787. Email: phuketwave@hotmail.com

LAPTOP FOR SALE

Compaq Presario 2500. 9 months old, hardly used. Still two years and three months on (extended) warranty. 2.6 GHz, 30 GB, 512 MB. Fully installed with all the latest software. 25,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-323513, 01-8933462. Email: allard@loxinfo.co.th

Miscellaneous for Sale

INT'L DRIVERS LICENSE

5,000 baht, valid up to 10 years, 6,000 baht valid up to 20 years. Sole agent in Thailand. Free pick up & delivery, open 365 days a year. Please contact Khun Christine for more information. Tel: 04-006-8736.

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Personals

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I am a European man who wants to get in touch with a Thai woman. I am moving to Thailand, to live in Phuket. I'm kind, honest, humorous and have a pleasant appearance. The woman I am looking for should be around 45, nice looking, kind, respectable and pleasant. If you are interested, please send a photo to Jan Torell, Mailbox 10086, 72119 Vasteras, Sweden.

BACKGAMMON

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

ROMANTIC LADY

Single UK businessman, 48 years old, tall, fit, in Phuket, seeks soulmate - slim, attractive, possibly a college teacher, doctor, nurse or similar. Should have good English and be under 30 years old. Tel: 01-086-1598. Email: bgfrustr@excite.com

LOOKING FOR THAI

lady. I am a guy from Holland, 29 years old, and I am going to Bangkok October/November this year. I am looking for a nice Thai lady to travel with and have some fun, showing me around Thailand and stuff. Please send photo to my email, address above, and I will reply back. Email: vdb417@hotmail.com

Pets

BABY COCKATOOS

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

NEED DOGSITTER

Reliable, trustworthy, honest dog-lover needed to baby-sit my two dogs from time to time, at my home or possibly yours, either long days or overnight or holidays. Must have excellent references and they will be checked. Please Email: chantanaj@yahoo.com

KITTENS FOR FREE

2 female kittens need new home, both 2 months old, one black and one gray. Don't want to put them in a temple, so please help adopt them. Please email at: phuketinasia@yahoo.com for more information.

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