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The Phuket Gazette

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IN THIS ISSUE

NEWS: Transportation Office swamped by demand for licenses; Minister buries underground cables proposal.
Pages 2 & 3

INSIDE STORY: How to survive nature's worst.
Pages 4 & 5

AROUND THE ISLAND: A new branch of art.
Page 6

AROUND THE REGION: Eco-tourism in Khao Lak.
Page 8

PHUKET PEOPLE: A blind Japanese fiddler scores a hit on the island; Bruce Stanley: Off The Wall.
Pages 10 & 11

LIFESTYLE: Music: A new Norsk jazz legend; An alternative slant on love; Nikita's knockout cocktail.
Page 12

FIRST PERSON: A tax on life.
Page 21

BUSINESS: Franchises survive; Oil woes rear up again.
Page 23

SPORT: Jolly volleyball in Patong; Soft tennis; Problems with penal holes.
Page 24

GOOD LIVING: No mis-steak at Locanda.
Page 27

PROPERTY: Décor: in praise of ceiling fans; Home of the Week: Nai Harn; Gardening: Bert undoes bachelor's buttons; Construction: Garden Place.
Pages 28-31

PLUS

QUEER NEWS 4; AROUND THE NATION 7; HAPPENINGS 9; ANNELIESE STORM 14; TRAVEL 15; OUTSIDE IN, PHUKET DIARY 16; KIDS 17; MAKING TRACKS, HOROSCOPES, DOVEN, BOOKS 18 & 19; EDITORIAL, LETTERS 20; ISSUES & ANSWERS 21; COMPUTERS, ON THE MOVE 22; WINE, THE TIME MACHINE 26; CLASSIFIEDS 32-39.

MORTGAGES for foreigners

By Alasdair Forbes & Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

PHUKET: Bangkok Bank has broken ranks with the Thai banking establishment to become the first Thai bank to offer mortgages targeted firmly at foreigners wanting to buy property in Thailand.

The mortgages are fairly limited in scope – they can be applied only to condos; the buyer must come up with the first 50% of the purchase price; and the mortgage term is only 10 years – but they are being hailed as a breakthrough by property developers and real estate agents.

The inability of foreigners to get mortgages to cover home purchases in Thailand has put developers and real estate agents at a disadvantage when compared with other tropical destinations where mortgages are available.

The loans, launched quietly over the past couple of months, are available through Bangkok Bank's branches in Singapore and Hong Kong, and will normally be denominated in US, Hong Kong or Singapore dollars. Other currencies may be considered – but not baht.

In Hong Kong, where branch General Manager Phai-thul Tejasakulsin said the bank has made "one or two" loans, the amount that can be borrowed ranges from HK\$1 million to HK\$5 million (approximately 5 million to 25 million baht). Loans are made only to Hong Kong residents.

In Singapore the range is from S\$100,000 to S\$1 million (about 2.5 million to 25 million baht). The loans currently carry



Artist's impression of the proposed world-record Buddha image.

Work starts on 'world's largest' Buddha

PHUKET: Construction of a 1,000-ton concrete Buddha image, touted as the largest of its kind in the world, has started high on the Nakkerd Hills between Karon and Chalong.

Suporn Wanichkul, the head of the project committee, told the *Gazette* on August 19 that the Buddha will be 45

meters high and 25 meters wide. He claims that it will be the biggest meditating, or Pang Manravichai, Buddha image in the world.

"We have budgeted about 10 million baht for construction and the foundations alone will take about 14 months to complete," he said.
Continued on page 2

annual interest of around 7.5%.

In addition there are fees attached. In Hong Kong, for example, a processing fee of around 125,000 baht is payable when the borrower accepts the bank's letter of offer. About 50,000 baht

of this is refunded when the loan is drawn down. In addition, at the start, 1.5% of the loan amount must be handed over to the bank as a "prepayment fee".

The Head of the Thai Desk
Continued on page 2

Rainmakers return to Phuket

By Chris Husted & Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

PHUKET: Despite recent rain showers, the Royal Rainmaking Project has been called in again to help stave off yet another looming water shortage in Phuket.

Isara Anukul, Chief of the Water Allocation Division of the Phuket Irrigation Office (PIO), told the *Gazette* on August 17, "The water level in Bang Wad Reservoir [Phuket's main water source] has dropped to 450,000 cubic meters ... That is enough to last about a month."

K. Isara said, "We have been making plans to cope with a water shortage since February because there has been very little rain since the beginning of the year."

"Officers from the Royal Rainmaking Project will come to help solve this problem. We will start making 'artificial rain' [cloud seeding] this Saturday [August 20]," he said.

Cloud seeding is the process whereby chemical compounds – silver iodide particles, frozen carbon dioxide (dry ice) crystals or even salt – are dispersed into clouds, by either aircraft or large, ground-launched flares.

The theory behind cloud seeding is that it introduces other particles into a cloud to serve as "cloud condensation nuclei" – the tiny particles of dust ever-present in the sky around which rain droplets form – which could induce a greater amount of precipitation.

K. Isara explained that Phuket's water authorities will also seek help from private companies and privately-owned water reserves, namely tin mine lagoons that are already used to supplement the mains supply.

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Work starts on 'world record' Buddha image

From page 1

plete. We plan to present this project to the Father of our Land, HM the King, on his birthday," he said.

The first large Buddha image on the same site, made of brass and reinforced concrete covered with gold leaf, has already been completed, and K. Suporn said that he plans to celebrate the completion of that project on October 13-15 this year.

That Buddha, 12 meters high and weighing 22 tons, was started three years ago in an effort dogged by adversity and controversy.

The new Buddha image will be built on the same site – a plot of 42 rai belonging to the Forestry Department at an elevation of 400 meters above sea level. The project received planning permission in April 2002.

"The Forestry Department has constantly refused permission for [related] commercial ventures but gave us the green light after we asked to construct the Buddha images," K. Suporn said.

"We met with many obstacles but finally, through the donations [we have received], we can see that people want to make merit through it. There is no profit involved and this has nothing to do with politics. Donations of about 60 million baht have been received for the two projects.

"The world's biggest meditating Buddha should be finished in the next three years."

The tallest Buddha image in the world – and the world's largest statue – is the Ushiku Amida Buddha in Ibaraki Prefecture, near Tokyo. The monument is three times taller and 30 times larger in volume than the Statue of Liberty in New York.



LOVIN' PHUKET

Tasha Armatmuangbang collects her prize of a two-night stay at Absolute Sea Pearl Beach Resort from *Gazette* Desk Editor Sam Wilkinson, as part of the ongoing 'We Love Phuket' campaign.

POLITICS in a cuppa

FORMER Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai (center) enjoys a cup of coffee after opening the second Democratic Party coffee house, Kopy Tiam, in Phuket, recently.

"This coffee house has been opened so that Democratic Party members and the general public can gather to discuss politics," K. Chuan told those at the opening.

The coffee house is in the office building of Phuket Provincial Administration Organization President Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr.



Mortgages for foreigners launched

From page 1

at Bangkok Bank in Singapore, Yaovaluk Suksathit, said that the bank there had made more than 20 loans. The Singapore branch has been pushing the service more aggressively than Hong Kong.

For example, in Hong Kong mortgages are available only on freehold condominiums, whereas in Singapore loans will be considered for other types of property, including homes on leased land.

"It all depends on the structure," K. Yaovaluk explained. The average mortgage to foreigners granted so far by Bangkok Bank in Singapore has been about US\$200,000 (8 million baht), she said.

K. Yaovaluk said that she and her team had visited Phuket and Koh Samui over the past couple of months to talk with property developers. This, however, was apparently news to the

Transportation Office swamped with license applications

By Athiga Jundee & Sam Wilkinson

PHUKET CITY: Overworked staff at Phuket Provincial Transportation Office (PPTO) are rushed off their feet by the demand for new licenses and license renewals.

Teerayuth Prasertphol, Chief Technical Officer of the PPTO, told the *Gazette* that the

office is receiving 80 to 150 applications for new licenses and as many as 200 applications for renewals a day.

"There has been a 70% increase in applicants from other provinces because the regulations were changed to allow people registered as resident in other provinces to apply anywhere, rather than having to go back home for a license," he said.

In spite of the surge in applications, the PPTO still has only four members of staff to process licenses. "We don't have enough money to hire more staff, so we have to ask people from other departments to come and help in our section," said K. Teerayuth.

Applicants who pass their test one day should, in theory, be given their licenses the following day, but there are too many to process at the moment, he said.

"In theory, the maximum number of applicants should be 200 a day but we have as many as 350 on some days. We cannot deal with all of them, and as a result we receive a lot of complaints," he said.

"We are issuing 70-80 new driving licenses every day and are obliged to work after office hours in order to keep up with demand, so staff members always get back home late.

"Some staff are starting to lose heart because, in spite of our hard work, there are a lot of complaints directed at us."

"The situation here is much worse [than in other parts of Thailand] because of the high number of people from other provinces who have come to work in Phuket.

"We're trying to improve the online application process which should ease things, but we've run into problems connecting our computer system with offices where residential records are kept."

If these problems can be ironed out, he said, the online system will be a big help in speeding up the issuing of licenses.

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A Mazhofu, or Ruby God.

“Mazhofu” to welcome East Asian tourists to Vegetarian Festival

PHUKET: In an effort to attract more Asian tourists to Phuket's yearly Vegetarian Festival the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Phuket Office, Phuket Provincial Administration Authority (*OrBorJor*), Phuket City Municipality and representatives from Phuket's Chinese temples will bring a specially made “Ruby God” or *Mazhofu* statue from its original home on Meizhou Island in Fujian Province, China.

Phuket TAT Director Suwalai Pinradap explained to the *Gazette* that Asians – particularly those who live along the coasts of Hong Kong, Macau, mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia,

believe that it is unwise to visit places where tragedies have happened, for fear of malicious departed spirits.

The *Mazhofu* is strongly respected by those people who believe that the Ruby God protects people from the sea.

Phuket City will host a welcoming parade September 6.

K. Suwalai said, “Last year, some 200,000 Taiwanese tourists visited Phuket. This year, the number of Taiwanese tourists has dropped by more than 50% in the first half.”

She explained that the *Mazhofu* has about six million followers in the China seaboard area, and that there are more than 1,000

Mazhofu shrines in Taiwan alone.

“We have launched a strong public relations campaign with the cooperation of local Taiwanese authorities and the Taiwan Taoism Association. [The campaign] includes placing Chinese-language posters promoting the Phuket Vegetarian Festival at every *Mazhofu* shrine in Taiwan,” she added.

She explained that the *Mazhofu* is the festival's main attraction this year.

Meanwhile, the Taiwan Taoism Association will also bring 30 *Ma Song*, or mediums who can be possessed by gods, from Taiwan.

Phuket City Municipality

will convert the Navamindra Memorial Square into a temporary *Mazhofu* shrine but every Chinese shrine would also like to host the deity so, during the festival, there will be “prediction ceremonies” as to where the deity will eventually end up.

She revealed that the cost of bringing the image to Phuket will be about 1 million baht, to be paid by the TAT, the *OrBorJor* and the Phuket City Municipality.

She noted, “This [the *Mazhofu*] will bring good luck to Phuket and encourage tourists from East Asia to visit us.”

— *Anongnat Sartpisut & Sam Wilkinson*

Minister buries underground cable pleas

By Anongnat Sartpisut & Stephen Fein

PATONG: It appears unlikely that Patong will get the 350 million baht it wants for burying power cables, after Tourism and Sports Minister Pracha Maleenont shot down a budget proposal for the project at a meeting on post-tsunami redevelopment.

The meeting, at the Grace-land Resort and Spa, was held to discuss progress reports on tourism redevelopment efforts in the six tsunami-affected provinces.

As host, and the only province to be represented by its provincial Governor, Phuket was the

first to report to K. Pracha, who chaired the meeting.

Phuket Tourism Association Chairman Pattanapong Aikwanich mentioned that Patong's last request for 350 million baht in central government funding to lay underground power cables had been rejected by former Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptanlop, who was responsible for Phuket and Phang Nga Provinces after the tsunami.

However, he said, the local business community supported the project, and Patong Municipality had already cleared a two-meter-wide path along the beach road for subterranean cables.

“If we don't go ahead with

this project now, it will be very difficult to get it done in the future. We requested a budget from the government, and the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) has agreed to budget 40 million baht, but we will need more than that,” he said.

Patong Mayor Pian Keesin then made a budget request for the project, estimated at 350 million baht.

“Patong really needs underground cables. So if it's possible, could the Office of Tourism Development provide 100 million baht and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports add another 100 million? If the PEA could [increase its contribution] to 100 million,

then Patong Municipality could pay the remainder.

“Could the Ministry please help us with just 100 million baht for this project?” he asked.

Mayor Pian then began to ask K. Pracha to help lobby the government to designate Patong as a “special tourism zone”, with entertainment venues allowed to remain open until 3 am or 4 am.

K. Pracha cut the mayor off in mid-flow. “Local administrations are always making requests for this and for that,” he said. “Please be aware of what the Ministry of Tourism and Sports is responsible for and what it can accomplish. You continually ask and ask, but the government still

has other parts of the country to take care of.”

K. Pracha told the media after the meeting that most of the requests were more about infrastructure development than sports and tourism and, as such, should be submitted to other ministries.

However, he added, the redevelopment of Patong and Kamala remains a priority objective at his Ministry.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Juthamas Siriwan, also present at the meeting, added that the TAT would finish the first phase of its redevelopment plan for Patong and Kamala by September as a “gift” to high-season tourists.

Phuket Air jet seized

SEOUL: A Phuket Air jumbo jet has been seized in South Korea after the carrier's owner, Phuket Airlines Co. Ltd, allegedly failed to settle debts owed to its local sales agent.

The *Nation* in Bangkok reported that the Boeing 747-300 had been impounded at Incheon International Airport, west of Seoul.

The aircraft had initially been banned from flying back to Bangkok from Incheon August 10 after the firm failed to pay 237.6 million won (9.48 million baht) in maintenance and service fees.

Three days later the debt was settled. But before the aircraft's planned August 19 return to Bangkok, Phuket Airlines was hit by a separate lawsuit, and the 747 was again impounded.

The *Korea Times* said a court had approved the seizure, a move requested by its local sales agent TV Club, when the airline allegedly failed to honor debts owed after it withdrew operations from Korea last month.

The agent is claiming 1.22 billion won (49 million baht) in damages for losses it says were sustained because of the airline's decision to suspend flights between Incheon and Phuket in July.

Repeated attempts by the *Gazette* to contact Phuket Air for comment were unsuccessful.

— *Sangkhae Leelanapaporn*

Wrecked Kamala resort asked to clean up tsunami “eyesore”

KAMALA: Kathu's top official has paid an inspection visit to the tsunami-damaged Kamala Bay Terrace Resort, where he asked the hotel's sole remaining employee to try to organize a clean-up as soon as possible.

Kathu District Chief Khantee Silapa, accompanied Phuket Provincial Security Affairs Chief Nikorn Torhiranyapreuk, said the visit had been prompted by a complaint to the Phuket Damrongtham Center, which serves as the provincial ombudsman's office.

The complaint, received from a Kamala businessman, charged that the resort had failed to conduct any clean-up in the eight months following the tsunami, and that it is now an eyesore threatening the recovery of tourism in the area.

Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura, originally scheduled to attend, canceled at the last moment because he was busy with visiting Tourism and

Sports Minister Pracha Maleenont.

There to meet the officials was the resort's accountant, Arom Nanna, who told the *Gazette* that she was under orders from the resort's Indonesian owner not to take any action at the site until claims with the insurance company had been cleared up.

She said that the owner had been facing financial difficulties after suffering tsunami losses not only in Phuket, but also in his native country.

K. Arom added that she had worked for the hotel for 10 years and was serving as its representative because she was the only employee who is still on the payroll.

K. Khantee, who said he sympathized with the owner's plight, told the *Gazette* that he had already ordered the Kamala Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) to clean up

public areas surrounding the property.

He did not, however, order a fence to be put up around the property as that would be expensive and possibly illegal.

He said that in his view a fence was not really justified by the current condition of the re-

sort. K. Khantee asked K. Arom to ask the owner to do his best to clean up the site as soon as possible.

K. Nikorn said he would report the results of the visit to Gov Udomsak.

— *Sangkhae Leelanapaporn & Stephen Fein*

Queer News

Swine dining

RAYONG: Pigs lead a rather miserable existence in Thailand. They are generally confined for the length of their short lives in hot, excrement-filled enclosures, where they are fattened up on swill until the day they are wrestled onto a pig transporter – often a motorcycle with an illegal sidecar – and sent, squealing, to the slaughterhouse.

In contrast, two “temple pigs” in Rayong’s Klaeng District are living the life that other pigs can only dream of.

Every day without fail, Boonrawd, a pink three-year-old domestic swine weighing 200-kilograms, and his dining companion, Boonlerd, a 100-kg two-year-old boar, do what fellow residents at the temple do: they go off on their begging rounds.

Along with their ringleader, a Thai dog named Abac, they cross the road from Wat Nern Khao Din and visit all the mom-and-pop stores on the other side. Upon arrival, the owners open up bottles of soft drinks and hold them out to the pigs, who happily gulp them down. The pigs then move on to the next shop, and the next, where their drinks include iced coffee and even beer.

After aperitifs, they cross back over the road for the main course – a porcine smorgasbord provided courtesy of an animal feed supply store conveniently located right next to the temple.

Temple Abbot Phrakru Somchainarong said the two pigs, which were donated to the temple, had become the darlings of the community and, as such, stood little chance of ending up as meals themselves.

Source: Thai Rath

The secrets to improving your chances of survival in a disaster lie in being well informed and well prepared.

A recent seminar on disaster mitigation and management brought together 29 experts from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Japan at the Pearl Village Hotel near Nai Yang Beach on Phuket.

The Japanese have long experience of dealing with earthquakes and tsunamis, so the *Gazette* spoke with Prof Tatsuo Ohmachi, Director of the Tokyo Institute of Technology’s Center for Urban Earthquake Engineering, and also with Dr Adichat Surinkum, Geology Director of the Geotechnics Division of Thailand’s Department of Mineral Resources.

Both made the point that natural disasters – whether floods, blizzards, fire, landslides, typhoons, earthquakes or tsunamis – are never easy to predict, but they laid out five basic steps to help the individual get ready, just in case.

BE INFORMED.

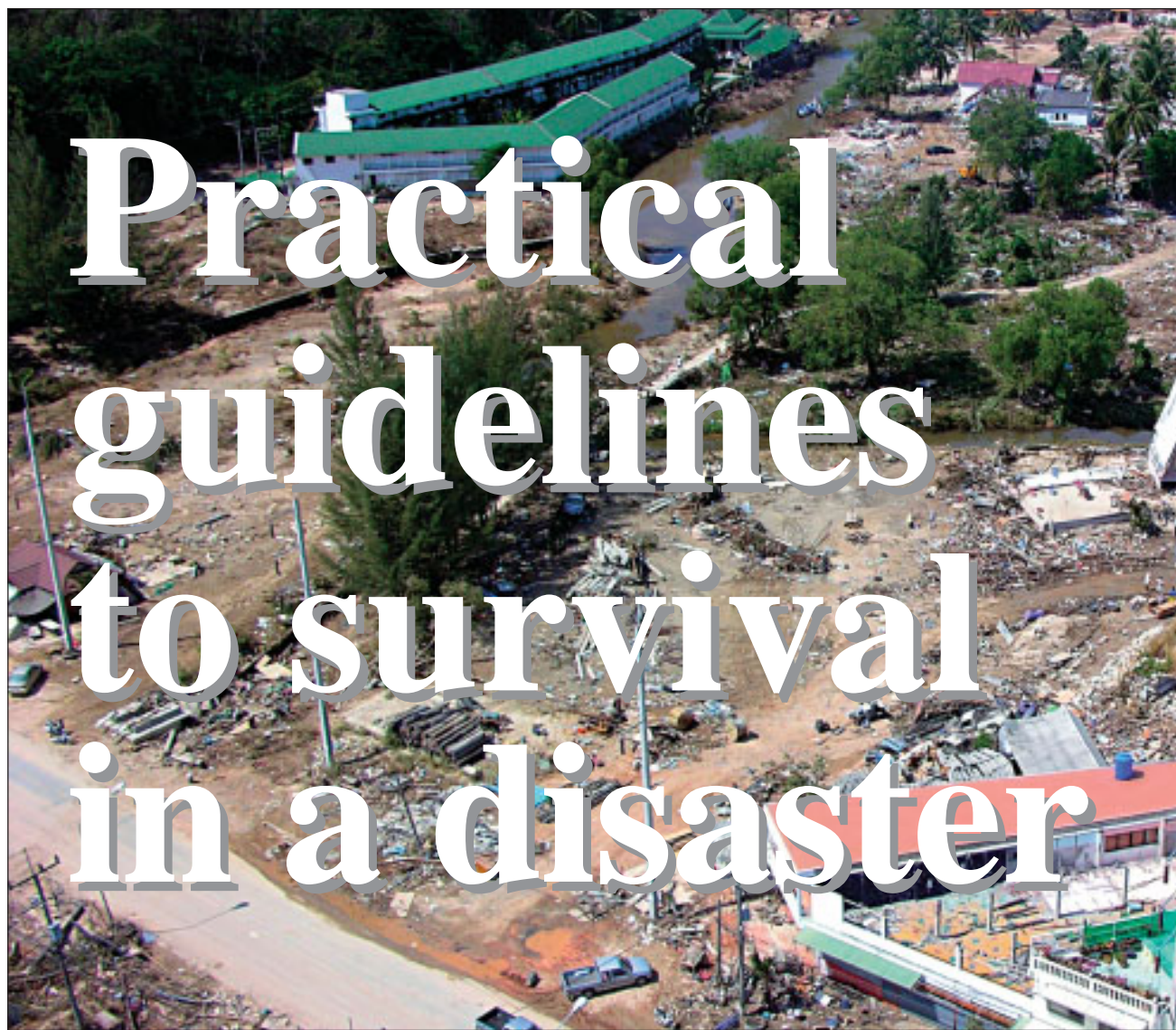
Find out what natural disasters are likely in your area, and learn to recognize the signals that one is on its way. Determine beforehand what warning systems are in place and ensure that you will be warned. Find out, too, where designated evacuation routes and public shelters are.

DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN.

Know what to do – whether to duck under solid furniture in case of an earthquake or to run for higher ground in case of a tsunami.

Map escape routes and safe zones inside the house and make sure that everyone, including children, is aware of them.

Figure out the fastest ways to shut off utilities (assuming there is time to do so) and work out what to do with family pets,



Imagine that it’s 2 am. The TV is turned off. You are asleep. You wake up to the sound of an incoming SMS on your phone. It warns of a tsunami on the way. What do you do? Do you know where to go? What to take with you? Should you take the car, or should you get out of harm’s way on foot?

The Thai government has taken great strides to set up warning systems, not only for tsunamis but also for other possible disasters, and more steps will be taken. But no government in the world can take every person by the hand and lead each to safety.

In the end, it’s your life and you must look after it. The *Gazette’s* Athiga Jundee and Shiona Mackenzie attended a recent international seminar in Phuket on disaster management and asked two experts for practical advice for individuals.

LEARN EMERGENCY SKILLS AND PRACTICE THEM.

Such skills include not only evacuation drills, but also first-aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and how to use a fire extinguisher.

Being prepared can at the very least help you feel less anxious; you will be better equipped to protect yourself and others. It may even enable you to avoid danger altogether.

Good preparation can lessen the impact of a disaster, not only on people, but also on property.

As in any emergency situation, save yourself first. Do not try to rescue your possessions.

While warning systems may be in place, it is better not to rely solely upon public announcements and support systems – natural disasters often destroy public infrastructure, too.

Basic facilities, transport and communication systems and public institutions may break down. Hospitals may be damaged, inundated with patients and short of necessary supplies that may be hard to bring in from beyond the disaster-affected area.

You should aim to be as self-sufficient as possible until help arrives.

Prof Ohmachi and Dr Adichat also offered advice on specific disasters.

BEFORE AND DURING A TSUNAMI.

If you see signs of an approaching tsunami, do not wait for a tsunami warning to be issued. Get away from the sea immediately.

If you see water receding rapidly from the shoreline or feel tremors in the ground at the beach or at the pier, immediately move inland and towards high ground

which are usually not allowed in emergency shelters.

Designate a safe meeting place for the family in case you get separated and establish your own communication method – public telecommunications may be knocked out.

PREPARE A DISASTER SURVIVAL KIT.

This kit should be placed close to an exit where you can grab it as you flee your home. See box story, top right, for suggestions as to what it should contain.

SECURE YOUR HOME.

Make sure the electrical wiring is in order. Make sure that overhead items such as light fixtures and ceiling fans are firmly attached. Install smoke alarms and buy a fire extinguisher for your kitchen.

Fasten pictures and mirrors securely to the walls. Bolt down items that are likely to come loose or fall over.

Store breakables on lower shelves of cabinets that lock shut. Place large, heavy items on lower shelves.

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Kamala after the tsunami. Photo courtesy of Helicam

as fast as you can. Once you can see a tsunami, it will be too late – you cannot outrun it.

If a large tsunami occurs at night and you cannot see it, you may be able to hear the roaring sound of the water approaching. Immediately run for higher ground or, if in a hotel, to an upper floor in a quick, but orderly fashion.

Remember, it is better to move on foot to avoid getting stuck in a traffic panic.

Do not climb up a tree or onto a rooftop as these are not safe. You can be swept away, crushed by the force of the water or injured or killed by debris in the water.

If you are on a boat in open water, be aware that tsunamis are usually imperceptible, but there will be changes in water level and currents that can be very dangerous. Should you receive a tsunami warning, do not return to the harbor. Remain in, or move to deep water. Return only when you hear officially that it is safe.

AFTER A TSUNAMI.

Take shelter and remain on

high ground until you hear from appropriate channels or authorities that it is safe.

Stay away from the water and from debris in the water.

Try to find out what's happening from others and, if possible, tune in to the radio for news.

BEFORE AND DURING AN EARTHQUAKE.

Go to a safe place and stay there until you hear it is safe to move from there.

If you are indoors, take cover under a sturdy object, such as a desk, or by a strong interior wall

Stay away from loose or fragile items such as windows or light fixtures.

Stay indoors. Many injuries and deaths during an earthquake are caused by falling debris around buildings.

In larger buildings, be aware that the electricity may be knocked out and sprinkler systems may be triggered.

Do not use elevators.

If you are trapped under debris, try to cover your nose and

mouth with a piece of clothing and avoid stirring up dust.

Do not light a match or use a lighter, in case household chemicals have spilled or flammable vapors have been released in the vicinity.

Tap on a pipe or nearby debris or blow a whistle to get rescuers' attention. Try not to shout, except as a last resort, because you may inhale fumes or particles.

If you are outdoors, do not go indoors. Stay away from power lines, street lights and buildings.

If you are in a car, stop as soon as you are in a safe spot, away from buildings, overhead cables, overpasses, bridges and trees. Stay in your car until you are sure it is safe to proceed, and be alert for damaged roads and bridges.

AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE.

Be aware that aftershocks and tsunamis may follow an earthquake; fires may break out and landslides may occur. Stay in a safe area until authorities advise that it is safe to return home.

Use your disaster survival kit supplies to help family and friends who are only slightly injured. It is risky to move people who are unconscious or severely injured.

Stay away from damaged areas unless officials ask for your help. Beware of broken glass, damaged wiring, chemical spills, dead animals and contaminated water. Stay away from shorelines.

Upon returning home, do not enter if the building seems unstable – look for cracks in walls, ceilings, and floors, loose floorboards or wet floors.

Enter cautiously, looking for signs of damage or sparks. If you smell gas, leave immediately. Try to leave a door or window open.

Do not smoke, light a candle or turn on a flashlight indoors until the premises have been inspected by an expert.

If the electricity is off, do not turn it on until it can be inspected by an electrician. Try to ensure that the power is off.

The water supply should be turned off until pipes are inspected.

Do not flush the toilet in case sewage pipes are broken. Dispose of any wet, opened or suspected contaminated food.

Be careful when opening cabinets as items may tumble out.

Ready for anything



Typical disaster survival kit. There should be one for each member of the family.

Your disaster survival kit should contain supplies of the following items to last a minimum of three days:

- Drinking water and food you can eat without cooking;
- First-aid supplies such as band-aids, bandages and anti-septic ointment; medications, such as aspirin and prescription medicines; and hygienic supplies, such as sanitary pads. Don't forget any essential medication for conditions family members may already suffer from, such as asthma inhalers or heart pills.
- Useful equipment, such as a battery-powered flashlight, battery-powered radio (shortwave, if possible), spare batteries, a pocketknife, and a whistle;
- Documents or copies of documents, such as ID cards, passports, insurance papers, a valuables inventory and contact information of friends and family members;
- Emergency cash or travelers' checks;
- Spare keys for the house, safe, car and so on;
- Extra clothing (especially in colder weather) or rain gear and bedding, such as a mat and/or blanket or towel.

Clean and disinfect any salvageable items.

Take photos of any damage and keep records of repair costs, for insurance purposes.

Throughout the recovery

period, keep yourself informed, via the media or contact with volunteer groups, about shelter, food and water supplies, first aid, financial assistance, clothing, search and clean-up operations.

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By Athiga Jundee

Southern Thailand's rubber tree plantations often appear to passing motorists as optical illusions, much of the time a blur but appearing to "freeze" as the trees line up momentarily.

On long journeys, however, the charm of this visual "cheap trick" wears off quickly and gives way to the monotony produced by an otherwise drab landscape, one in which virgin forest has long since been sacrificed to the demands of capitalism.

Those passing by one rubber tree plantation in Rawai, however, are in for a different kind of visual treat – art.

Hanging among the trees at Art In Garden on Wiset Rd is a collection of interesting works by artist-in-residence Nirun Chanhom, 36. The Chiang Mai native, a graduate of Chiang Mai Teacher's College, describes his works in oils and acrylics as "semi-abstract" because they combine contemporary styles with highly symbolic themes.

There are about 50 pieces on display at Art in Garden, and K. Nirun feels the peace and relative coolness of the rubber plantation provides not only the tranquility he needs to focus on his paintings, but also the perfect atmosphere for art lovers to ponder them.

Art In Garden has two rustic shacks, one of which K. Nirun calls home. Both house his collection overnight to protect them

Artistree



Niran Chanhom draws most of his inspiration from the natural world: "It's kind of like cooking – some people may like what one cooks while others may not."

from the elements. Each day, he gets up early to hang paintings from the rubber trees, where they can capture the attention of motorists

passing by.

The human form, represented in a highly abstract and seminal way, figures predominantly in many of Nirun's paintings.

In *Warmness*, for example, two rounded and faceless human

forms, one clearly male and the other female, stand shin-deep in placid water, cradling a baby that more closely resembles a fish than a human. K. Nirun says the image is a statement on the loving kindness of the family.

Such a representation may also encourage the viewer to reflect on humanity's evolutionary origins in the sea and how, as humans, we should better protect the environment from which we were spawned.

K. Nirun admits that many of his works draw on environmental themes that become apparent to those who think about the images for long enough.

He added that all of his painting are based on his own insights, which are mostly inspired by nature. For this reason he doesn't accept orders from customers – as many artists on the island do.

"What I do is based on my own imagination. It's kind of like cooking – some people may like what one cooks while others may not. It's really a question of individual taste," he explained.

Although K. Nirun chose to make Phuket his home because he draws so much inspiration from the sea, he feels that, as a native of the North, he has a slightly different slant on things,

which makes his work quite unique on an island that has no shortage of artists.

Those interested in acquiring one of Nirun's work are best recommended to do so at Art in Garden, as he seldom accepts invitations to exhibit them elsewhere. Starting at around 3,000 baht each, prices are reasonable given that they typically take about two weeks to complete.

K. Nirun told the *Gazette* that he wants his works to end up on the walls of homes of people who really appreciate them, which is why he sometimes gives discounts to people who really seem to understand the work but can't afford to pay the full price.

Most buyers are foreigners who stop by Art in Garden out of curiosity when touring the southern end of the island, and many paintings are taken abroad when the visitors return home, he said.

With the sea being so central among the themes K. Nirun likes to explore, it should come as little surprise that he is working on something special to commemorate the first anniversary of the tsunami – an 11-meter-long conceptual treatment of the tsunami disaster that will remain on exhibit for one month after it is unveiled at Art in Garden on December 26.

Art In Garden, open 8 am to 5 pm daily, is located at 88/5 Moo 1, Wiset Rd, Tambon Rawai, on the left as one travels toward the viewpoint along the coast road in Kata. For more information contact K. Nirun at Tel: 076-288418 or 01-2896415, or by email to artingarden@hotmail.com, or visit the website at: www.phuketindex.com/artingarden

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



PM defends B780m splurge on offices

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra shrugged off criticism that his plan to build new offices for the government was luxury spending during difficult economic times, saying the existing premises were too crowded.

PM Thaksin hit back at the opposition for criticizing the plan to spend 780 million baht on expanding Government House, saying it was a three-year project and not a mega-project because it would cost less than one billion baht.

"That is why they are the called the opposition, because they can only oppose," he said when asked about comments that cost overruns could take the project's bill past one billion baht.

Accusations of unnecessary luxury spending were also leveled against the government last year over the purchase of an Airbus jet costing more than one billion of taxpayers' money and dubbed "Air Force One" by the media. The plane arrived in Thailand without any official statement from the government, but sparked heated debate among critics who questioned Thaksin's need to join the small, elite group of world leaders who use personal planes.

PM Thaksin also denied he was imitating the US White House by having the new building built partly underground.

Pests aside: Agriculture Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan announced a large-scale pilot scheme to promote organic farming, in which crops would be grown using bio-fertilizers.

The scheme sprang from concerns about the country's dependence on imported chemical fertilizers and the government's plan to boost Thailand's ability to compete on the world market by



Two boy scouts ride happily along a makeshift embankment wall on the western bank of the Yom River in Phitsanuloke, one of the many provinces in the North affected by flooding in recent weeks.

becoming a center for organically grown produce.

K. Sudarat said chemical overuse had led not only to money pouring out to chemical suppliers overseas, but also to higher farm production costs and soil contamination. The pilot scheme aimed to attract 4.25 million farmers in 23 provinces, occupying about 136,000 square kilometers of land.

Canon fodder: The Culture Ministry's Religious Affairs Department is planning to publish and distribute 500,000 volumes of the Tipitaka Buddhist canon to government agencies, private organizations, hotels and hospitals as part of an 80 million baht effort to revive religious faith.

Preecha Kanthiya, Director-General of the Department, said publishing should start next month and that the work would have to be in an abridged form because the entire work covers more than three dozen volumes.

The Religious Affairs Department also plans to publish the Lord Buddha's teachings and the different incarnations of the Lord Buddha in cartoon or animated versions to educate Thai youngsters.

Taking a stand: Thepchai Yong, group editor of the Nation Multimedia Group, told the Criminal Court that he believed media-reform campaigner Supinya Klangnarong had a right to express her opinion about Shin Corp's business in an article published in the *Thai Post* newspaper in July last year.

K. Thepchai testified as the second defence witness in the much-publicized 400 million baht libel suit against K. Supinya and *Thai Post* newspaper.

He added that K. Supinya's opinion was in line with others who had followed the issue, and that he felt she harbored no anger or personal resentment towards Shin Corp, which is con-

trolled by the family of PM Thaksin Shinawatra.

Snip, tuck and stamp: The Immigration Bureau opened a visa-extension unit on the third floor of Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok, which treats as many as 360,000 international patients annually.

Immigration officers will be stationed there every Wednesday to receive visa-extension applications from patients and any other foreigners wanting to extend their visas, said Dr Sinn Anuras, Medical Director for the Bumrungrad Group.

The new unit, the first at a hospital, will facilitate the visa-extension process for patients, especially in-patients who need more time for treatment and recovery.

Special needs: The number of special needs children in Thailand – including those with learning disabilities, Down's syndrome and

autism – recently surpassed the one million mark.

About 10% of the student population belongs to this group, said Dr Padoong Arrayavinyoo, head of the Special Education Department at Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok.

Dr Padoong asked authorities to pay more attention to the need for special education, urging them to put regulations in place that would require teaching assistants at schools where normal and special pupils attend the same classes.

Children with learning disabilities who have difficulty with reading and writing form about 5% of students in the special needs category. The number of autistic children is also increasing at an alarming yearly rate, he said.

Big member of parliament: In a desperate gambit, a woman being sued by a cosmetic surgery clinic called on a government minister who reportedly had his penis enlarged by the same surgeon to come forward and testify.

Raweewan Satakrak said she was being sued for defamation by a Bangkok surgeon after accusing him of malpractice that caused her face to puff up.

Saying that the surgeon had often boasted about having performed penis enlargements on a current Cabinet minister, she called on the unnamed minister to step forward and testify whether his operation had produced a desirable outcome.

K. Raweewan said he believed the minister's credibility would help support her case.

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

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Eco-tourism boost for Khao Lak



**ANDAMAN
COASTING**
By Franky Gun

With the start of the coming high season just a mere 10 weeks away, Khao Lak has been blessed with a new sponsored institution that aims to give "eco-tourism" in the area a serious boost.

Before the tsunami, the concept of eco-tourism was bandied about in countless glossy brochures all over Khao Lak, but only a few travel agents and tour operators truly understood the responsibilities towards tourists and nature alike that come with using such a powerful sales pitch.

The Ecotourism Training Center (ETC) at Bang Niang beach opened with a small celebration on August 20. The event included a variety of Thai traditional rituals to bless the center's first two longtail boats for their maiden voyage.

The small celebration was a nice change in Khao Lak, for the area has seen more than enough of post-tsunami suffering. A dinner plus music and casual mingling rounded out the successful event, bolstering Khao Lak's "We can do it!" attitude, bringing the community closer together and raising spirits and expectations that the region will have a better future.

In his opening speech, Reid Ridgway, ETC's co-founder and managing director, explained the ETC's scholarship program, which aims to give local Thai people good English-language skills and a developed understanding of how to conduct an eco-friendly tour program.

In addition to learning English and about preserving nature, ETC's 12 students will learn marketing and computer skills, how to stage fund-raising events, basic movie making and editing, and scuba diving to the level of a cer-



Celebrating a launch with a launch: the new Ecotourism Training Center, students, and one of the longtail boats before her maiden voyage

tified Divemaster – an achievement that is financially out of reach of most Thais.

The ultimate goal of the nine-month course is to produce professionally trained and educated eco-tour guides. The ETC will also help graduates to find jobs in Khao Lak's eco-tourism industry.

Students aged from 16 to 30 are accepted into the program, which requires each student to be sponsored to the tune of US \$2,500.

The fee is to pay each student 6,000 baht a month to ensure he or she does not have the burden of financially providing for family needs while the student is enrolled in the program, and to cover educational material costs.

Students are required to work hard, have a professional attitude and comply with the ETC's code of conduct.

For further information about the ETC call 076-376001-

2, email: reidridgway@yahoo.com or visit www.etcth.org. To download PDF and text files with comprehensive information about the ETC, its sponsors and program, visit: www.khaolakserver.com/etc/etcdata.zip

Down that road: While the rebuilding of resorts and businesses all over Khao Lak continues, perhaps the one project that will annoy what few tourists we have coming in search of peace and tranquility is the widening of Highway 4, also known as Petchkasem Rd, to four lanes.

Looking at the distance between power posts on both sides of the highway, one can imagine the dimensions we are talking about.

The widening of the highway has been praised as an impressive achievement by Phang Nga officials. However, many Khao Lak residents and businesspeople fear the worst. On the

existing two-lane highway, most cars, trucks and buses already manage speeds of up to 120kmh while zipping through Khao Lak center.

The big question is what speeds they might achieve on the "new, improved" highway.

If there are no traffic lights installed to slow down drivers and keep them alert, and to provide safe crossings for pedestrians, Khao Lak will most likely face the season with the highest number of fatal road accidents ever reported in its history.

The positive side of this project is that the highway will be equipped with better – which hopefully means functional – drains. Such a system could prevent sections of the highway from flooding, as is often witnessed during the rainy season.

Benefit bonanza: A group of private donors from Sweden has announced that its members are

willing to donate up to 600 million baht to support long-term tsunami relief in Khao Lak.

Khao Lak residents, businessmen and government officials are encouraged to email suggestions on what Khao Lak really needs – in terms of water treatment, schools, orphanages, memorials, and so on – to avalon@loxinfo.co.th, so they can be forwarded to the Swedish group.

But the big news is that there is a good chance that Khao Lak will get its first private hospital, something it needs as badly as a fish needs water.

A professionally managed private hospital would be a milestone in Khao Lak's development as people in need of medical treatment between 10 pm and 5 pm, when local clinics are closed, have to drive more than 35 kilometers to Takuapa Hospital, a distance that could certainly be a killer in a life-or-death situation.

Many of Khao Lak's tourists are well above the age of 50, and are thus more concerned about safety and health issues than younger visitors.

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WELCOME BACK: Philippe Seigle (white shirt), Regional General Manager of Le Meridien Thailand Resorts, and staff welcome regular guest Jean Paul Fallegger (yellow shirt), the first person to check in to Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort after the hotel's extensive post-tsunami refurbishment.



SAYING IT WITH FLOWERS: (Front, from left) the Permanent Secretary of Culture, Khunying Dhipavadee Meksawan; Phuket Red Cross Chairwoman Maneephun Usvarangkura, Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura, and Phuket Provincial Administration Organization President Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr (middle row, 2nd from left), together open the "Flowers of the Andaman" show at the Thai Hua Museum in Phuket City.



OTOP TOPS THE BILL: Singburi Governor Juthamas Pratheepawanich (right) and Piaporn Charoensinrongruang (center), Directing Manager of Tesco-Lotus, Phuket, tour the stalls at the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) Road Show at Tesco-Lotus. More than 100 booths offered products from Singburi, Phuket and Central Thailand at the show from August 15-21.



IT'S GOOD TO GIVE: Royal Palm Resortel General Manager Krisada Tansakul (on gurney) and staff members donate blood to the Thai Red Cross to mark the resort's 10th anniversary.



AQUAMEN: Pierre Dernier (front, left), General Secretary of the World Underwater Federation CMAS, is welcomed to a dinner party at the Royal Phuket City Hotel August 16. Greeting him are Royal Thai Navy Deputy Commander Capt Apakorn Yookongkaew (2nd from left); and Thai Diving Association (Thailand) President Ronnachai Jindaphol (green top), Vice-President and Secretary Pragon Geatgun (2nd from right), and CEO Rainer Gottawald (back, right).



ARTISTS ALL: Nattiya Nuirod, mime artist Suriyan "Romdon" Kosanae, liberal artist Kitipong Ngowsiri and graphic designer Thanicha Dummak all took part in a recent semi-abstract art exhibition at Phuket Art Gallery.

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"I hope to bring happiness through my music" – Narimichi Kawabata

Blind from age 8, music makes him

By Athiga Jundee

Renowned Japanese violinist Narimichi Kawabata, 33, whose eyesight was irreparably damaged by an allergic reaction to medicine for a cold when he was eight years old, has a simple philosophy: "The past is gone; let a new day begin."

Mr Kawabata's concerts are always sell-out shows, and fans line up for hours to buy his CDs and books – a phenomenon more common with pop stars than classical musicians.

His smash debut came in March, 1998, after he graduated with top honors in his year from London's Royal Academy of Music. Now he performs around the world and also devotes much of his time to charitable work.

Mr Kawabata recently visited the Patong Childcare project, run by the Asia Center Foundation, a local NGO, where he gave a short concert for underprivileged and tsunami-affected children.

"I want to give the children

a chance to listen to live classical music so they can reconnect with their fighting spirit," he said. "I know the tsunami caused many people to lose heart, and I would like to try to inspire them to regain their confidence and will-power."

"I hope to bring them some happiness through my music," he said.

This was his first time performing exclusively for children. During his one-week sojourn in Phuket, he wanted to show children who are suffering from misfortune that they can overcome their problems.

Mr Kawabata himself has struggled since his early years to triumph over adversity. On his first trip abroad to the US with his grandparents, he said, he was given medication for a cold.

A reaction to the medicine caused him to break out in lesions all over his body. Even his corneas were affected, and this left him with just 5% of his vision.

After three months of treatment in a California hospital, where he was diagnosed with

Stevens-Johnson Syndrome, he returned to Japan where treatment continued for a year. But his eyesight could not be restored.

"My family was sad and worried about me. My father was in despair, but he never gave up trying to find a way to help me."


"But every time we visited my grandfather, he told me that we should forget the past and start each day anew – that is the way to live," Mr Kawabata said.

Some two decades on, and in testimony to his sense of determination, he gave a recital at Carnegie Hall in September, 2002.

He released his fourth CD – which sold 400,000 copies – the following year, and has put out two more critically acclaimed CDs since then.


His road to success was paved in large part by his family's fighting spirit. His parents sought out things he could do that did not require perfect vision.

When he was 10, he was introduced to the violin, even though his father said it was too late to start learning the violin if


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but see

he wanted to be really good at it. "My father was a violinist and knew very well that the life of a musician is extremely demanding," Mr Kawabata said. "That's why he was not 100% for it at first, and the decision to allow me to take it up wasn't an easy one."

"In fact he wanted me to have as normal a childhood as possible, but when he thought about my future, he knew I'd have to work extremely hard regardless, and he ended up encouraging me to give it my all."

Mr Kawabata had to learn music entirely by ear. "But this was not an [insurmountable] problem for me because of my firm belief that with hard work people can overcome almost any difficulty."

However, despite the hours of practice, he would feel drained – physically and emotionally – when his progress slowed. Yet he never gave up.

Eventually, he graduated from the Toho School of Music in Tokyo before continuing to study at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

In 1999, just a year after the launch of his career, Mr Kawabata's first album, *On Wings of Song*, was released in Japan, and immediately hit Number 1 in the classical music charts there.

He has been performing around 100 concerts annually ever since, attracting audiences of more than 100,000 people. He also appears on popular television and radio shows in Japan.

Despite the loss of his sight, he said that he has never felt "disabled". He admits that no one can be happy all of the time, but is convinced that listening to music can raise one's spirits.

"Playing the violin is now my full-time job and sometimes I do feel down," he said. "But every time I perform I try to demonstrate what happiness is all about."

"My goal is to be a good role model for children who have any kind of personal problem."



Off the WALL

With Bruce Stanley

Problems at the Phuket International Airport are like a dull headache that just won't go away. The first problem is the location. Although it is beside one of Phuket's finest beaches, there is virtually no place for arriving or departing passengers to enjoy the enchanting views of the Andaman Sea.

The government could have built the airport in a central location with room for expansion. Instead, they built it crammed between the road and the sea, with none of the charm of the private airport at Koh Samui – which takes advantage of its soothing tropical breezes and lush vegetation.

I had to run for it after being captured at the airport

In the 15 years I've had to use our local airport, I've lost count of the number of times my car or truck has been vandalized there. Just a few months ago, the vinyl cover on my truck was stolen from the parking lot.

Don't even try to inquire at Lost & Found for items taken from the glove box or trunk.

And what's with the cleaning ladies in the men's bathrooms?

The latest frustration comes in the shape of the new anti-terrorist cameras installed at the immigration stalls in the departure area. Last month, when I flew out to San Francisco, I had to stand in front of one of these new surveillance cameras while the

smiling immigration officer tried to figure out how to use it.

"Don't move! Don't move!" he insisted.

Apparently, the cameras only work when the departing visitor stands perfectly still for a very long time. It was enough to make me quite angry (which we all know is a no-no in the Land of Smiles).

Thank goodness I had lots of time before my flight while the smiling Immigration officer fiddled with his new surveillance equipment.

Finally helped out by fellow officers, he accomplished what was necessary and I was allowed to run to catch my flight.

I remember plans some years ago for the airport to be leased to a professional corporation, which apparently would also get to handle the rabble of touts and taxis that visitors have to wade through at this ugly airport before they can enjoy some time in paradise.

Russia gave an Irish company the rights to run their Moscow airport. Can't Airports of Thailand invite some Singaporeans to operate ours? Please?

Charming balladeer: The General Manager at the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa, **Peter Hourigan**, has a lively collection of fun concerts and fundraising events lined up.

It all begins with a **Nantida** concert, September 3. Nantida gave a sold-out performance a couple of years ago in the Grand Ballroom at the Royal Phuket City Hotel. She's a charming professional international singer popular with those who prefer melodic ballads.

She's the Thai equivalent of Olivia Newton-John or Céline Dion and creates a romantic feel in an evening of warm sentimentality. A great occasion to take a date or even a spouse for a memorable evening.

Then on October 1, Life Home Project will have their annual Ball at the hotel. This worthwhile charity helps locals with HIV and AIDS.

According to **Hélène Fallon Wood**, the Life Home Project will begin construction of its new facilities on Koh Sireh and will need continued community support.

Finally, the Phuket International Women's Club have confirmed their return to the Hilton Phuket Arcadia for their annual extravaganza on November 25.

Artful Kathy: So after my airport adventure I finally made it out of Phuket paradise and over to San Francisco where **Kathy Manthei**, who directs the art training program at Phuket's Life Home Project, has brought her show, *illuminESSENCE*.

The show features her Asia-inspired constructions based on Indian and Chinese symbols and mythological animals.

Kathy graduated from the University of California Davis with a degree in Community Development, with an emphasis on art therapy. She has since worked with homeless women and troubled youth, helping them to express their emotions through art.

She has been living and painting in Phuket since 1999, collecting rare and exotic papers on which she layers gold leaf, copper, acrylic paint and patina aging solutions to place



Kathy Manthei with children at the Life Home Project: she is currently exhibiting in the United States to raise funds for her work.

them onto canvas and wood.

She volunteered to train local women with HIV and Aids at the Life Home Project to use art materials to create flags, greeting cards, and banners that can be sold to help them make a living.

Most recently, she founded Project Neptune with which she travels to tsunami-affected villages to do art therapy with children

whose lives were changed by that tragedy.

Kathy spends so much time helping others that she has a struggle to find the means to support her good deeds. She will spend a few months in North America with gallery shows of her personal art so she can afford to continue her important work on Phuket.

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Nicky with Nikita Knockout (right) and Whisky Sour.

Warm-weather whisky at Nikita's

Sipping a chilled cocktail on the Rawai beachfront while gazing out at the islands in the distance is even better when enjoyed in pleasant company. For nearly 12 years, Nikita's has been the place to find all that and more. Its casual atmosphere and friendly service make the bar's customers feel right at home.

The bartender fixes me two drinks this fine evening – a Nikita Knockout and a Whisky Sour. Although people may associate smooth, belly-warming whisky with colder climes, these cocktails prove that the “water of life” can go down refreshingly in the tropics.

The aquamarine blue Nikita Knockout is served in a tall tumbler shaped like a female torso, decorated with an orchid and part of the top of a pineapple. It packs the

COCKTAIL HOUR

with Athiga Jundee

powerful punch of two shots of Thai whisky.

Nikita Knockout

Ingredients:

1 oz Master Blend whisky
1 oz Mae Kong whisky
½ oz Blue Curaçao
½ oz lemon juice
½ oz syrup sugar
A splash of soda water

Method:

Place ingredients (but not the soda) in a cocktail shaker with a little crushed ice. Shake well, pour into a tumbler with a piece of pineapple leaf and a blossom on the rim, and add a squirt of soda.

Next, the easy-to-make Whisky Sour, combining whisky with syrup sugar and lemon juice ... truly unforgettable.

Whisky Sour

Ingredients:

1½ oz Master Blend whisky
½ oz syrup sugar
½ oz lemon juice

Method:

Put ingredients in a cocktail shaker with a little crushed ice; shake thoroughly and serve in a stemmed glass. Garnish with a slice of lime and an exotic blossom.

Nikita's is open daily from 10 am to late, and in addition to serving 150-baht cocktails, also has beer, wine and soft drinks.

Norway's Young soars in new album

Evening Falls is Norwegian guitarist Jacob Young's debut release on a major label. Auspiciously, this release is on the acclaimed ECM label, a fact that proves, if necessary, the 35-year-old Young's position in the contemporary jazz scene.

With a background in New York's radiant contemporary jazz milieu, he studied at the New School of Jazz and Contemporary Music in the Big Apple, and having taken part in many projects and collaborations in Europe, Young has become a force to be reckoned with.

This album does not disappoint.

Of the music on *Evening Falls*, Young says, “These are

EAR CANDY

with Andy Johnstone

lyrical compositions but at the same time it's jazz music, with a lot of room for melodic interplay and improvisation.”

All but one of the compositions on *Evening Falls* were written by Young. The exception is

Presence of Descant, co-written with the legendary Jon Christensen. This famed drummer is the cornerstone of the elite ensemble on this album.

Two other brilliant young

Norwegian musicians make their debuts. Trumpeter Mathias Eick is just 24, but he plays precise lines of heartbreaking melancholy, while Mats Eilertsen might just be

the next big thing in Nordic bass playing.

Together, Eilertsen and the godfather of this band, Jon Christensen, generate a restless energy that blesses this music with quiet fire.

Young's nine originals on *Evening Falls* are remarkable for their freshness and lyrical purity. Pieces such as *Blue* and *The Promise* deserve to become jazz standards. They have the requisite quintessence, and sound as if they have always been here.

On *Sky*, Young creates a spacious frame that engages and centers around his own atmospheric playing.

It underscores and accents Eick's trumpet and the elegant, restrained use of bass clarinet and tenor – provided by Vidar Johansen – as a backing voice, offering shadowy, restrained counterpoint and harmonic extension.

Not one second is wasted on *Evening Falls*; it is a beautifully-balanced and superbly-played album and a memorable listening experience.

Evening Falls ECM 1876. Running time: 50 minutes 21 seconds.

EMI tackles – and fairly well – the broad church of alternative music with the new double CD *Alternative Love Songs*, even if just three of the 28 tracks are not 21st-century releases. Most of the songs are from 2002-2005, which means that much of the splendid back catalog of EMI, and Virgin Music, which it acquired in 1992, is ignored.

Yet the compilation is rich with great music, although the “alternative” label is vaguely misleading or perhaps a sign of the times; alternative or Indie music has seen a marked crossover into other genres in the past 10 years or so, and the more liberal music fans include jazz, hip-hop, techno and folk in the category that was once the preserve of wan and effete boys and girls wearing heavy mascara and black.

French band Air contributes *Cherry Blossom Girl* – as delightful a piece of fluffy chill-out music as one could find, with its mildly psychedelic, spacey electro-acoustic pop and sweet breathy harmonies provided by the beautiful Hope Sandoval.

Bristol trio-hoppers Massive Attack contribute one of the older tracks, *Teardrop*, to the album with trademark ethereal (unintelligible) lyrics sung by Cocteau Twins/This Mortal Coil's vocalist Elizabeth Fraser.

God alone knows what she's singing about – it could be love or it could be ceiling fans.

Yet the bass lines – played slow, almost like a heartbeat (think of Robbie Robertson's *Fallen Angel* or the end of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*) but penetrating enough to have the neighbors organize a petition

against you – mesmerize the listener.

Approaching more the traditional alternative music is *Twenty Years* by Placebo with opening guitar chords comfortably reminiscent of well, almost every song by The Cult. Goth sounds from a Swedish/British/American band comprising one gay, one straight and one bisexual guy.

“There are 20 years to go, And many friends I hope. Though some may hold the rose, Some hold the rope,” they sing.

Radiohead, whose archetypal-shoegazing *Fake Plastic Trees* features on this album, seem to be in a state of high dudgeon at their inspirational status.

When, in 2001, vocalist and main lyricist Thom Yorke was asked by *The New Yorker* how he felt that bands such as Travis and Coldplay sound just as Radiohead did in 1997, Yorke

responded with a wry allusion to the band's superlative 2000 release *Good luck with Kid A*.

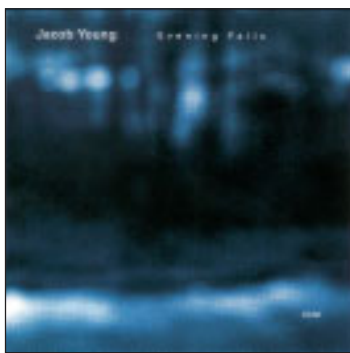
Coldplay, too, feature on *Alternative Love Songs*, as do Norwegian duo Kings of Convenience. Their

chirpy, jazzy *Misread* boasts crisp production and first-rate musicianship, and it is a standout track on an album of intelligent and cohesive choices.

The album is a rather mixed bag and perhaps the loose definition of alternative, but there isn't a bad track on it. Something for everyone.

Alternative Love Songs Various Artists, EMI 0946 311263 21. Running time: 126 minutes 45 seconds.

For more information on these and other recordings, contact Siriporn Nurrukkhe at Email: mm@cdwarehouse-asia.com



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In search of lost femininity

By Anneliese Storm

Right from the start I knew it didn't matter which diet I followed; the no-carb, no-fat, no-food whatsoever; I would never be as petite or as gracious as Thai women, or indeed as obsessive.

They seem to be forever titivating, looking in mirrors, powdering their faces, outlining their lips, adding color to their eyelids. They never sit idle but rather do their hair, or someone else's. They wear frilly, feminine clothing, teeter on high heels and wear short skirts, showing perfectly proportioned legs and shapely bottoms.

After a while this constant, subtle bombardment of femininity began to niggle. Everywhere I went I was confronted with it in one form or another.

I even walked into the Ladies one day and found three young women, hands high in the air, comparing armpits. I guess trying to see who had the smoothest underarm.

The breaking point came when I was walking home from the neighborhood Internet café one evening. I was on my own, peacefully enjoying the balmy night air and thinking to myself how safe I felt. And then I asked myself, "Why?"

Because no man would consider jumping a frumpy 40-year-old unless he was really desperate or totally out of his mind. There are so many beautiful women on this island, what would a man want from me?

It was a depressing thought. It's bad enough to realize that you're "maturing", but worse still to think you're not worth a second glance any more. It was time to throw off my apathy and do



something about it, beginning with the basics.

For years I've highlighted what I thought to be my best feature – my eyes. For me, leaving the house without eyeliner was next to going out naked. Unfortunately in this weather black kohl

melts within 20 minutes, leaving me looking like a sunken-cheeked panda, so I'd not been using it at all.

I was considering cosmetic tattooing as an option when I discovered waterproof eyeliner at Watson's for 399 baht which does the job just fine, and having put the tattooing on hold, I was also able to afford new lipstick.

I've never seen so many rows of feminine hygiene products in the supermarkets as I have here. They put Europe and New Zealand to shame, although I have to admit it's never so hot there.

In Thailand I don't know if the same rule applies to ladies perspiring and not sweating, but I'm not taking any chances and have opted for my husband's Axe deodorant to give me that extra confidence. Can't forget the talcum powder, body lotion and of course the final touch, a light mist of perfume. I had just finished all my ablutions this morning when my son walked past. "Aw Mum, why do you always stink?" Coming from him, I'll take that as a compliment.

My wardrobe, while not needing a total overhaul, definitely needed supplementing. I spent days walking in and out of department stores, cruising stalls and scouring markets in search of a style that was "ME".

"ME" comes in a large size – not the Asian large which is really depressing for any Western woman, but the European large, which in Asian terms is an XXL. This is even more discouraging, and would leave any well-adjusted teenager verging on the brink of an eating disorder. So here's one piece of advice for farang women; if you find something that fits, buy it. You may not get another chance.

Times have changed; gone are the T-shirts, jeans and sandals. I have no trouble finding shoes for my four-year-old daughter. It seems little girls are encouraged to be very feminine and demure from an early age. A sturdy, practical pair of sandals is hard to find for a girl over three, but she has a wide range of pink and purple ones to choose from with dainty straps and sequins and flower buds. Thank goodness I managed to find a couple of pairs of dressy high heels for myself without too much ado, but not before I felt like one of the ugly sisters trying on a glass slipper.

A few weeks ago while lazing on the beach I had a wonderful pedicure. For an hour I relaxed and allowed my feet the pampering they deserved.

This week they needed pampering again, and I strolled

into a salon advertising a range of services, including pedicures.

As per usual in places of business I was greeted with a wonderfully big smile while I explained why I was there. "And a manicure?" suggested the assistant invitingly in her soft, sing-song voice.

"Come into my parlor," said the spider to the fly.

Thai selling techniques can be strangely seductive. You say "no" so often you don't remember when it turned into a "yes". At the beach I could make a run for open spaces if need be. Here I was pinned in by four walls and there was only one way out – through the cash register.

"Just a pedicure," I replied with a big smile of my own, trying to be strong but feeling myself wavering. She'd just mentioned the benefits of matching nail polish on hands and feet.

While one foot is soaking in tepid water and the toenails on my other foot are being preened prior to a paint job, the salon owner/manager makes a dramatic entrance.

P pausing on the threshold, one glance tells him I'm his sole customer. So he introduces himself, giving me a quick once-over as we shake hands, then leans casually against the wall, hand on hip, legs crossed at the ankles, and begins gathering info. Where I'm from, how long I'm staying, where I'm staying... and all the while I notice him glancing down at the top of my head, eyebrow slightly raised.

I realize my parting is a little gray. I've been tardy. Finally he suggests a color, or maybe highlights?

His eyes squint as he looks straight at me, and I know for a fact he's lining me up for a facial. It's hard not to be overwhelmed by feelings of inferiority, and K. Owner/Manager obviously thinks I have nothing else to do but spend the whole day in a beauty salon.

God loves a trier and this approach may have worked a few months ago, but I've learned to say "No, thank you" with assertiveness, and "Maybe another time" so I don't hurt any feelings.

As a result of my mini-makeover, although I don't turn heads, I do catch a glimmer of interest every so often. The easy, baggy tourist attire has disappeared, replaced by a softer, more feminine wardrobe and a positive attitude. I walk taller – and that's not just because of my high heels.




Everyone appreciates a pretty package, no matter what the size. It's not an obsession to want to look nice, it's a way of life. I've an appointment for a color next week, by the way. That gray has got to go.


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Shodo Shima has peacocks, granite, and even its own Parthenon

Depending on who's counting, how you define an island, and which map you're using, there are something like 3,000 islands in the Inland Sea, also known as Seto Nagai or "The Japanese Aegean".

Set between western Honshu and Shikoku in the southeast of the country, the Inland Sea covers some 10,000 square kilometers.

Despite being Japan's first national park, parts of it have been criminally swallowed up by industrialization. However most of the islands are still highly picturesque and portray a side of Japan that contrasts happily with the built-up areas in the rest of the country.

Ferries putter between the likes of Omi Shima, once a pirates' lair, Awaji Shima, which is renowned for its beaches, and Ikuchi Jima, where steel magnate Kanemoto Kozo poured a substantial amount of his fortune into building a host of temples in homage to his mother.

But possibly the most interesting island is Shodo

Shima, which, although almost the largest island of the Inland Sea's archipelago, is still small enough to explore in the space of a few days. Local tour operators sell Shodo Shima as a

Japanese Greece, and you can take this at face value and bask in trips round the balmy olive groves on the south coast or place it one step away from the out-and-out ludicrous – witness the miniature Parthenon erected on Mount Hoshigajo.

Indeed, it's the central mountains that provide Shodo Shima's most spectacular vistas. A cable car clanks up through Kanka-gei Gorge to Hoshigajo's 816-meter

summit, or there is a walking track if you want to take things more slowly and sweatily.

The best way back down to the coast is via Choshi-kei Gorge, where a resident troop of monkeys subsists on a diet of handouts from coach parties. Supposedly feral, they demonstrate a surprising familiarity around humans, and seem to have a particular affinity for the latest marque of camcorder.

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters



Local guides are recruited for their amenability



The Inland Sea ferry operators have never been ones to shy away from over-the-top kitsch



Erosion by the wind and the waves has created many spectacular rock formations

The gorge's other specialty is the restaurants selling *somen nagashi*, noodles cooked in something akin to a table-mounted Jacuzzi which swirls them around a water chute – not exactly recommended for the ravenous or anyone who has yet to master chopsticks.

Shodo Shima's 15 minutes of fame came with the 1954 movie *Nijushi no hitomi* (*Twenty-four Eyes*), an uplifting three-hour black-and-white biopic by Keisuke Kinoshita following the fortunes of a

teacher posted to a country school with 12 pupils, whose 24 eyes provide the title.

Shot on location in the village of Tanoura on one of the island's southernmost peninsulas, the movie's original school and the set are open to visitors. There's even a statue of the teacher and her class.

Even farther in the past, Shodo Shima was at one stage used as a quarry for the stone required to build the main castle in Osaka, which was completed in 1583, but destroyed and rebuilt twice thereafter.

Huge leftover slabs of granite still litter the east coast of Shodo Shima near the port of Fukuda, each bearing the seal of the general responsible for their quarrying and shipment, and destined to stay there as the castle was rebuilt in concrete in the 1930s.

Finally, at Peacock Garden, just to the west of Ikedako Harbour, some 3,000 birds strut in a continual parade of color and elegance that provides the best memory of the whole island.

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Bleep! It's time to turn turtle again

There's life out there, but not necessarily as we know it, Jim. Take, for example, this site: <http://cooltech.iafrica.com/science/402707.htm>, a source of revelatory and not entirely unrelated facts.

"The tsunami that ripped away at Thailand's southwestern coast apparently brought unexpected visitors back to the tourist island of Phuket — endangered leatherback sea turtles, a report said on Sunday.

"Leatherback sea turtles, one of the world's most ancient species, had been crowded off Phuket's beaches by the growing tourism trade and had not been seen for three years. But environmentalists told *The Nation* newspaper that a boy on Mai Khao beach had discovered a leatherback nest with about 80 eggs."

They may be rare up in Mai Khao, but the sight of leatherback and lobster-red British tourists is a common one in Patong and not necessarily one we'll see in the future, according to the same site.

"A new bikini which bleeps every 15 minutes to prevent holidaymakers from sleeping in the sun was to be shown off in Britain on Thursday. The inven-

Quirky, wonderful and weird: comments, stories and opinions about Phuket gambol and frolic like well-fed and frisky dolphins out there on the Internet.

Lis Kinswoman throws her net out weekly and drags in a few choice catches for you to inspect before throwing them back in. Grab 'em here while they're still fresh.

tion could stop the traditional ghastly seaside sight of bright-red Britons on beaches across the world."

That's all very well, but Patong just wouldn't be the same without peeling noses, irregular tan lines and our someone's-got-to-love-'em well-baked medallion men.

Back to reality: The debate still rages between those who love this island and those who are repulsed by it.

"Welcome to beautiful Phuket, or so the sign says. Maybe, if trash dumps and strip malls are your idea of beauty. A little Bangkok surrounded by a thin strip of nature and an ocean. I dare go so far as to say it is the least beautiful place in all Thailand." groovydomain.com/travels/t3a8_story. Bitch.

Telling it like it is: "Patong

Beach is one of the biggest s***holes I've ever stayed at. It's full of gaudy neon and T-shirt shops and everything touristy and disgusting.

"It also seems to be a major center for sex tourism. There are plenty of farangs with lanky Thai girls in tow, and this being the low season, every bar you pass is full of Thai girls trying very persistently to grab your attention and then god knows what else.

"I never took it that far... Anyway, Phuket Town was a much more authentic Thai city that has not been overrun by farangs and the Thais that are attracted to them and their disposable income.

"I had some great meals there and while it's not on the beach and doesn't really have much notable in the way of attractions, I enjoyed wandering around for a while."

Personally, I know very few

tall Thai females. Maybe this cheerful chappie should have had a closer look at those "lanky Thai girls". He might have had a shock. — wherespedro.com/blog/archives/2004_09

Spies like us: Then there are those who will put up with anything in the name of a good, cost-free holiday.

"I holed up in a cheap, pretty clean room at Julie Guesthouse. Much like James Bond would, I immediately checked the room for bugs.

Ants were breaking in by the door, but I soon put my foot down on their invasion attempt. There were also some evil spider webs in the shower, but I didn't examine them too closely. I convinced myself they were there for ambience." — travelpod.com/cgi-bin/view

Over the top tip: And of course, in sharp contrast there are those who throw their money around as if it's not real, then suffer the consequences.

"We checked in and went to our air-conditioned rooms. The man brought our cases up and this time we tipped him 20 baht in-

stead of 500 like the last bloke. He still smiled, still bowed and said thank you, but he only bowed once instead of the 30 or so times the guy in Bangkok did." — stickmanbangkok.com/reader/reader155.html

The Thai smile: Some sites are amazing one-offs that no one could possibly emulate successfully.

One such site is adieu.nu/2002_12_01backblog where writers indulge in streams of consciousness that encompass thoughts, memories and stark comparisons between life in Thailand and the West. Here is a contributor in deepest winter in downtown Vancouver.

"I sat outside a Starbucks on Robson, another Starbucks across the street, sitting and shivering, drinking decaf to warm me.

"I'm in a foreign place, so dark, a post-apocalyptic place, another planet, the survivors holding cups of coffee as they walk along, and home in Thailand you meet the eyes of a woman and she smiles a real smile, and here if you smile you are a lunatic or a rapist, now a stranger in a strange land."

OUTSIDE IN By Lis Kinswoman

PHUKET DIARY

August 21: Blackrose MC 2nd Birthday Party, Day 2. There will be parking on Soi Bangla for big bikes from 7 pm onward. BBQ at the Kangaroo Bar and lots of entertainment at the Blue Note Bar and Dragon Club. Open from 7 pm till late. All are welcome. For information Tel: 01-0873048 or Email: maria@blackrosemc.com

August 21: Mangosteen Family Barbecue Sunday Brunch. The Mangosteen Restaurant and Chef "Khun Gerd" are offering a very special Sunday Brunch from 11 am to 3 pm. Enjoy a great barbecue with your family.

Just a few examples from our extensive choice: Mixed seafood skewer on lemongrass salmon fillet; pork chop with onion-sage stuffing; pork fillet marinated in ginger, garlic and coriander; beef striploin; lasagna; sausages; grilled corn; beefburgers, beef tenderloin; and baby back ribs.

The brunch costs 950 baht per person, including wine. Children 350 baht only. Please reserve your favorite table well in advance.

August 31: Deadline for applications for International Big Wall Mountain Photo Contest 2005. The magnificent landscapes and panoramic Big Wall Mountains are waiting for keen photographers who are inspired by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to apply for this contest, with winners traveling to Nepal.

Send inquiries and applications to: Dive & Travel Magazine, 8 Soi Pattanawet, Sukumvit 71 Rd, Prakanong-Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Tel: 02-23901012, 02-7153663; Fax: 02-392 1210; or Email: info@diventravel.net. Detailed updates are available online through the magazine's website at: www.diventravel.net

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Black+White Honda Dream

The first three of these vehicles' owners to contact us can choose from the following three prizes: one Samsonite suitcase from Central Festival Phuket; or a two-hour spa treatment at The Mangosteen Resort & Spa; or a two-night stay for two in a deluxe double room (accommodation only) at the Absolute Sea Pearl Beach Resort in Patong.



Please contact the Gazette quickly to ensure you get the prize you want.

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Email: LovePhuket@PhuketGazette.Net, or call K. Nok at Tel: 076-236555.

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Hidden in the grid below are the names of at least 25 motor racing teams, past and present. The words may read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They may also read right-to-left or down-to-up. See if you can find more than your family or friends. Score: 15 or more, good; 20 or more, very good; 25 or more, excellent.

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

Brain Buster!!

Daeng the dog cannot recall where he hid his bone – under the rock, in his master’s bed, in the kitchen closet, or under the tree. If only *one* of the following sentences is true, where is his bone?

1. The bone is under the rock.

2. The bone is in the bed or under the tree.

3. The bone is under the rock or in the kitchen closet.

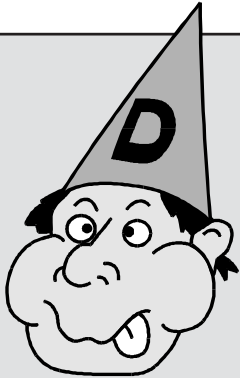
4. The bone is not in the bed.

A: In the bed

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK’S MONSTER QUIZ

1. A tower; 2. A submarine; it was rescued off the coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula; 3. Benjamin Harrison; 4. Viking 1 and Voyager 2 respectively; 5. September 4, 1870 to July 10, 1940; 6. 1935; 7. Old Kent Road; 8. £160; 9. The Press; 10. Sao Paulo, Brazil; 11. Luc Besson; 12. Nunavut, Canada; 13. From the New World; 14. 104; 15. Avian 'flu or bird 'flu; 16. The Crystal Method; 17. Tom Clancy's *Splinter Cell*; 18. Geoff Ryman; 19. Emotionally-driven hardcore punk; 20. A haircut favored by emo-music fans.

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



Kids! Ask Mum and Dad to help you find the answers to these questions. They’re not easy but, if you do some research, you should be able to find the answers to all of them.

1. Both born on July 30th, but 140 years apart, which two people gained fame for writing pieces that had the same title?

2. Which actor, born in Chicago in January, 1949, made his movie debut in *Lemmings*?

3. Who wrote *The Invisible Man*?

4. What is the chemical symbol for ice?

5. What is the highest mountain in the Alps?

6. Which came first, movies in color, or movies with sound?

7. How many faces does a dodecahedron have?
8. Name both songs that reached No 1 in the UK charts and contained the word “Fandango” in the lyrics?

9. What was the Greek god of sleep called?

10. Which Shakespeare play features two sets of twins?

11. In which sport can one find a yorker, a Chinaman and chin music?

12. Which, on August 27, 1939, was the first turbojet aircraft to fly?

13. What, speaking colloquially, is Montezuma’s Revenge?
14. What does the acronym JPEG stand for?

15. Which is the 13th month of the Coptic calendar?

16. Which Pokémon is No 25 in the National Pokédex?

17. What is the provincial tree of Phuket?

18. Who is the bassist for death-metal band Shadows Fall?

19. The song *Who Shot The Go Go Dancer?* is from which Moloko album?

20. Who was the father of Kim Jong Il?
- Answers next week

Never a Cross Word!

ACROSS

1. Shake from cold or fright.

5. Air pollution from Sumatra.

7. King of the beasts, supposedly.

8. Budapest’s river.

9. A little bit drunk.

12. King with a golden touch.

15. Time aircraft is supposed to land.

16. Shrimp’s big cousin.

19. Domesticated.

23. Tell tales.

24. Green part of plant, usually.

25. Hello, sailor.

26. Gas essential to life.

DOWN

2. Western half of Hispaniola.

3. Grapes grow on them.

4. Impolite.

5. Language of India.

6. Stripey animal.

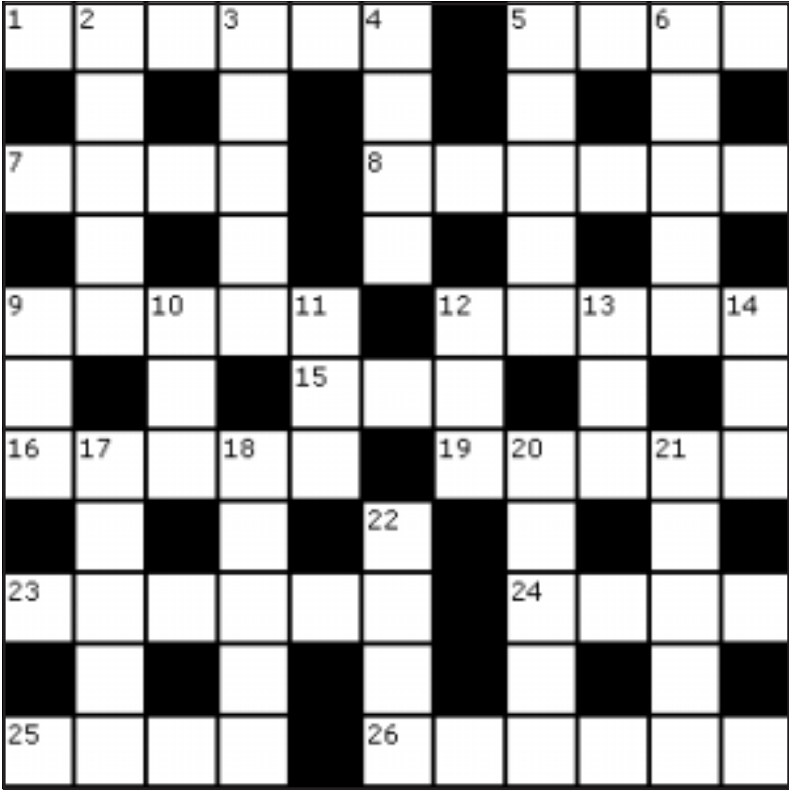
9. Hint.

10. Little green legume.

11. Japanese currency.

12. Where the cat sat?

13. Reservoir wall.



Solution to last week’s crossword



In The Stars

by Isla Star

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): You appear to be preoccupied with looking after other people. As the month of August draws to a close, you should take time out to pamper yourself. You are not as indispensable as you like to think. If it is your birthday this week, then drop clear hints regarding presents to avoid receiving something unwelcome. The number 8 may bring good fortune on Thursday.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): You may soon regret having allowed your heart to rule your head. A well-meaning friend's prediction is about to come true, but it is not too late to leave the sinking ship. Flagging energy can easily be revived by examining your lifestyle and making healthier changes. Wednesday brings important mail from overseas. The color mango orange will brighten your aura.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): A more upbeat mood may descend on you this week. After being down in the dumps lately, you realize that there is light at the end of the tunnel. On Monday, when someone is reluctant to agree to your terms, do not give in easily as there may be a more lucrative deal just around the corner. A trip down soi memory takes you unawares on Thursday.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Make your needs clear this weekend if you crave solitude. People closest to you have other plans that will be difficult to back out of if you delay. Showing others your true colors will set the pace for the remainder of this year. If you do not take steps now, expect to miss out on business opportunities. Wear the color sky blue to attract the right kind of attention.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Follow your heart if you do not like the view from where you are standing. Your rightful destination is about to be revealed, and this could easily involve a work opportunity elsewhere. Immediate family members may be unsupportive at first, but will come round eventually. If you are single, surprises are in store this weekend when a previously platonic relationship sparkles. Number 2 is lucky next Wednesday.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Recharge your batteries with a little solar power this weekend, especially if you have been putting in overtime at the office.

SEE WHAT THE WEEK HAS IN STORE FOR YOU

Try a quiet stroll on the beach. Finances are about to receive a boost from an unlikely source, so put something aside for a vacation later in the year. On the romantic front, Leo is getting ready to pounce when you're not expecting it.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Fishing for elusive answers will bring enlightenment far quicker than staring into space; start searching now for clarification or you may not rest. Taurus has some good tips, but do not believe Aries without receiving proof of their claims. Midweek, there is a breakthrough at work when your needs are finally recognized. Do not take any more money out than you can afford to spend this weekend, as friends could try to lead you astray.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): A close companion is up to no good. Unless you are prepared to face up to this situation, events could take a sharp downward direction. The astrological atmosphere around you this week may be quite tense, but should ease as September begins. Luckily, energy levels should be high enough to deal with everything. A friend who disappeared into the blue some time ago turns up suddenly.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): You should be feeling on top of the world this week. As August draws to a close, long-term goals appear to be nearing realization. While you are so focused on your personal direction, do not forget that others close to you need attention, too. A money-making scheme previously considered impractical starts to look feasible. Virgo wants to get to know you better; a hot date is forecast for this Saturday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): You should be as sharp as a razor this week, and should have the edge on slower competitors when it comes to business. Wednesday is the most auspicious day for sign-

ing agreements; Tuesday is *not* recommended. Where romance is concerned, crossed wires this weekend can lead to distance between you and your partner. Matters cool down early next week, but you need to show more patience. Wear the color aubergine to remain calm.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): You will be asked to listen to a sob story this week. Showing some sensitivity is advisable, particularly if the person in question lent a willing shoulder for you to cry on recently. Romance can be rekindled if that is what your heart desires; think things through carefully before making this decision. You are advised to double-check financial transactions midweek. Number 4 is lucky on Tuesday.

LEO (July 24-August 22): If you do not feel like you are lying on the proverbial bed of roses at present, there are ways to enhance the quality of your life. Lazy Leos have no one but themselves to blame if boredom is a problem. Try doing something innovative this weekend; Sunday is the best day for adventure. Tying up loose ends at work could turn up a forgotten debt, which may be in your favor.

Insurance a against land

Land title problems in Thailand? Heaven forbid. There *aren't* any land title problems, in the same way as there are no brothels, as a police chief once said.

Both of these "facts" are, as anybody who works or lives in Phuket knows, a load of old cobbles, as the Poms say.

Land titles all over the world suffer from a variety of problems – including property developments that encroach on forestry or national park land – and Phuket has had more than its fair share of these.

One particular development has endured no end of problems and has made many appearances in the media.

It was discovered during a land scandal investigation that this piece of property previously held an agricultural title, and that the former owner might have slipped a little something to certain government officials to get the title upgraded to full Chanote before selling it on to the developer.

Things got really messy when somebody decided to kill the Land Office deputy chief who was investigating this and other cases. As a consequence, the powers that be decided, it seems, to make an example of Phuket.

First, they revoked the development's title. Then the head of the Crime Suppression Division (CSD) in Bangkok in-

spected the allegedly false titles and said that the owners of the properties erected on the site would have to vacate. He added that they could sue the developer.

Of course, the lawyers for the developer pointed out that the developer had bought the land with a legitimate title issued by a legitimate government department, so if the owners were going to sue anybody, it would be the government.

Situations like this continue to undermine the confidence of investors in the Thai property market.

Now, however, something different has come along to help both the unwary and wary investor. A major international insurance group will now insure buyers of land in Phuket against any problems arising from a land title of suspect authenticity.

Stewart Title Guaranty Co, which was established in 1893, insures the owners of property and the holders of land titles – including developers, giant banking corporations, governments and private companies – against risk arising from their holdings.

Paul Boldy, former CEO of Linklaters law firm in Hong Kong, is in Phuket to introduce the firm's services.

"This type of problem is not limited to private individuals," he says. "It goes to the top of big business."

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Graham Doven

Wildlife abounds in

Just beyond the edge of our patio is a tiny *klong*. It is usually a meter across at this time of year. This morning, catfish – *pla dook* – frisked along it looking for minnows and other small prey. Siamese Fighting Fish also live in the *klong*. They avoid the catfish and bigger male fighters.

The *klong* is separated from a big, overgrown pond by a dirt berm. Occasionally, the *klong* gets high enough to spill water and some resident animals into the weedy pond. This usually happens in September.

The weediest part of the pond is home to several varieties of toad. Frogs prefer the watery areas. My favorite is the species I have nicknamed the racing frogs because their calls sound like race cars winding up through the gears.

The frogs and toads eat mosquitoes, flies and many other insects. I once watched a toad



EARTH WATCH

By Robert Cogen

swallow a firefly, which continued to light up until it entered the toad's stomach.

Dragonflies and Praying Mantises eat a lot of insects as

well. But spiders eat the most.

I have seen tiny orb weavers, a millimeter across, and giant black and yellow ones with 10-centimeter bodies and 25-cm legs. They capture big flying insects including moths and dragonflies.

My favorite spider is a green Crab Spider. It eats cockroaches, which it captures without a web. A crab spider will perch on a wall a meter or more above the floor. When a roach emerges from a hole or under a mat, the spider runs down the wall and chases down the roach. It grabs the roach and carries it off.

The pond and *klong* are also host to several snakes including Golden Tree Snakes and a few Monocled Cobras. The cobras eat frogs, toads and mice; the tree snakes eat small birds' eggs, fledglings and small geckos.

Once in a while I see a beautiful Reticulated Python wending its way through the

Riding a motorcycle? Please . . .



Thai law requires that motorcycle drivers and passengers wear a safety helmet with the chin strap fastened at all times – 24 hours a day.



PHUKET PROVINCIAL
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

new defense title trouble



The last thing anyone wants is to see his dream home ripped down, but at least now one can be insured.

"A huge international bank was taking over the land, buildings and operations of another major bank in [South] Korea, when they found out that part of the site was encroaching on public land – and they never knew."

Mr Boldy, a lawyer, points out, "The lawyer can go on the documentation provided alone, but there can still be hidden pitfalls. There are developers in Phuket who have bought land in good faith, not knowing that the titles were acquired in a dubious manner."

Here are some of the risks covered by the company:

- Lack of right of access to and from the land;

- Any invalid document upon which the title is based because of forgery or impersonation;

- Any invalid document upon which the title is based because of lack of capacity, fraud, duress, incompetency or other disability;

- Any other encumbrance upon the title;

- Any outstanding marginal annotation, preventative notice, caution or privilege upon the title.

This insurance is something that every developer or land buyer should look into.

It could save a lot of heartache and financial loss, and help fish some of the rotten apples out of the property barrel.

Bumbling across Burma

Bertil Linter casts a long shadow over Shelby Tucker's book *Among Insurgents: Walking Through Burma* (Flamingo, London, 2001, 386pp).

For a year and a half, between 1985 and 1987, Swedish journalist Linter and his Shan wife Hseng Nong, with their infant daughter in tow, marched across Burma from India to China, through guerrilla territory held by the Nagas, Chins, Kachins, Shans and Karens.

The first Westerner to penetrate these lands in a quarter-century, Linter emerged with one of the great scoops of the 20th century and a book called *Land of Jade*, not only a classic of political reporting but also one of the best travel books ever written.

In 1989, Shelby Tucker marched across Burma on a lark.

He was 53 years old, a veteran of stunts like crossing the Panama isthmus on foot, hitchhiking across Australia's Nullabor Desert, and slipping through the closed border between Ethiopia and Sudan.

On a train trip through China, he picked up a 23-year-old Swede named Mats Larsson to be his traveling companion on a trek from China to India, through the homeland of Kachin guerrillas.

"If Bertil Linter could cross Burma, so could we," Tucker writes, despite the fact that he knew virtually nothing about Burma.

This is typical of a type of

travel writer I love dearly: the Bumbling Brit. Peter Fleming, Robert Byron, Redmon O'Hanlon – they all set out on impossibly perilous journeys with a blithe and humorous confidence in their ability to Muddle Through.

Tucker is actually an American, which proves you don't have to be a Brit to bumble. He is, however, an Oxford-trained lawyer and his prose is riddled with Britishisms like "taking the mickey", while he constantly refers to his Kachin guerrilla escorts as "the lads".

He can also be very funny. To cross the Chinese border into Burma, he and Mats dress up like Dai peasants, their Western features concealed with medical masks, a dubious disguise – Mats is 195 centimeters tall. Tucker's reaction when he is confronted by an angry Chinese border guard is: "I felt a rush of blood to the brain. Denial,

it isn't happening, it can't happen – not to me, not to cocky, impetuous, invincible me; it isn't in my stars; it isn't as I planned it."

He brazen his way through and is soon in a jungle camp run by the Communist Party of Burma. Here he has the great good fortune to meet Seng Hpung, a member of the ruling council of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). The same age as Tucker, Seng Hpung was educated by American Baptist Missionaries.

"Tell me frankly, Mr Tucker," he said, "what is your purpose?"

"Adventure," I replied. "For the next three months,

Seng Hpung will be Tucker's Virgil, leading him deeper and deeper into the Dantesque Hell that is modern Burma.

Tucker quickly becomes serious about the atrocities inflicted by the Burmese army upon the Kachin: the mass murders, the rapes, the villages razed, livestock slaughtered, families scattered to the winds. He sees many an abandoned village during his three-month trek across

northern Burma.

What is missing in his book is an element that makes the work of such writers as Fleming, Byron and O'Hanlon so charming: the easy repartee between travel companions.

Mats Larsson really doesn't have much to say and, in fact, the author admits that they often quarrel during their journey. There is a generation gap, too, Larsson preferring to sneak off and get drunk with their young student/soldier escorts, while Tucker stays with the senior officers.

But as a work of serious reportage, *Among Insurgents* is rock solid. There is a section of acronyms and abbreviations, a glossary, a daily itinerary, an alphabetical list of characters appearing in the book, a chronological guide of the Burmese civil war and copious maps. The reader will need all of them to keep track of the story.

Nevertheless, this is a lively, fast-moving read, and you rush to the end just as Tucker does, whether on day-long marches or on elephant back.

In India, he and Larsson are promptly clapped under house arrest, and the surreal working of the Indian bureaucracy over the next three months makes for a thoroughly satisfying, comical conclusion.



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

Phuket's wet season

grass looking for mice or squirrels.

Tokays, which are the largest geckos in our area, eat butterflies, moths, cockroaches, baby mice and eggs. Their call of tokay is among my favorite evening forest sounds.

Once in a while I see one- to two-meter-long monitor lizards. Sometimes they wade in the klong or step slowly through the grassy pond.

They will eat almost anything, including mice, squirrels, lizards, birds, eggs and carrion; they are not at all picky.

Two or three species of red squirrels, one gray squirrel and

one flying squirrel live in the large trees across the pond. They make nests in holes or between

the larger branches, particularly in the durian trees.

The red squirrels frequently climb from branch to branch trying to get to our side of the pond. Inevitably they must descend to the ground for part of the journey. They love scampering through our banana trees, feasting on both blossoms and fruit.

A pair of Palm Civits also live across the pond in the tallest trees. Their eyes shine in the moonlight or when I point a flashlight at them.

There are several species

of birds that do not migrate; they live in the forest and low brush around the pond.

A beautiful blue-and-brown kingfisher with a white collar sits on a low bare branch and dives for small fish in the pond.

Cattle egrets pick parasites from the Brahman cattle grazing nearby and Greater Egrets stalk frogs and fish by wading quietly through the shallows.

A family of White-breasted Waterhens strolls through the grasses in and around the pond at dawn and dusk, eating grasshoppers and other large insects.

The parents guide their chicks, distinguished from the adults by their smaller size and by gray bellies that have yet to turn white.

There is an amazing amount of interesting wildlife crawling, running swimming and flying in our backyard in the middle of the rainy season.

My favorite spider is a green Crab Spider. It eats cockroaches. When a roach emerges from a hole or under a mat the spider runs down the wall and chases down the roach. It grabs the roach and carries it off.

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An ICE idea

The *Gazette* received a number of huffy emails from readers after the most recent tsunami alert on July 24, which followed an earthquake of 7.3 magnitude centered on the Nicobar Islands.

Fortunately there was no tsunami, but the government was pleased with the warning and the way it was heeded, declaring the exercise a "90% success".

This was not good enough for some who learned about the alert only the following day. "What about the other 10% (including myself)?" asked one reader. "Collateral damage?"

Yes, actually. Governments can go only so far in helping populations in the event of a major disaster. As this week's Inside Story (pages 4 and 5) points out, no government can take every person by the hand and lead him or her to safety.

The responsibility for preserving life lies, eventually, with each individual, which is why we published this week's "Practical guidelines to survival in a disaster".

There is one other thing that you can do to help the authorities help you in case of injury or death, and we thank the reader who brought this to our attention.

It's known as the ICE scheme – for "In Case of Emergency" – and was devised by police in Britain following the recent spate of terrorist bombings in London.

It is a very simple idea. In the phonebook in your mobile phone, store the number of the person who should be called in case of emergency, and save it, not with that person's name, but with the name "ICE".

The emergency services, called to assist someone so badly injured that he or she is unable to communicate, can simply check in the mobile phone for the ICE entry and call that person to help with identification, along with any other form of help that is needed.

The idea already has the enthusiastic backing of Pol Col Apirak Hongtong, Deputy Commander of Administration of Police Region 8, who was until recently involved with tsunami victim identification.

He told the *Gazette*, "Sometimes it takes more than a month to find a victim's next of kin. If there were an ICE number on every phone, it would be much easier."

The idea is simple, and it costs nothing. All it takes is awareness on the part of the public and the emergency services. In the coming weeks, the *Gazette* will be working with police, hospitals and other emergency services to make them aware.

Readers, meanwhile, can help by putting an ICE number on their own mobile phones, and by telling all their friends.

– The Editor

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Letters

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

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

Treating touts fairly

I would like to point out that the touts that you refer to in your August 20 editorial are no more annoying than almost every sales person in the large shopping centers. From the moment that you enter a store you are followed around and harassed, making shopping unbearable.

Time-share sales reps, most of whom are European, are also a pain. To single out Indian and Nepalese citizens I think is very unfair, and the reason that they are not seen on visa runs along with the rest of us is that they require visas to enter Myanmar and Singapore. Unlike Europeans, they are not as free to travel as we are.

Many of these people, therefore, are on one-year visas and, believe me, they are checked thoroughly before they are given them. These people have mouths to feed and should be educated in better sales tactics rather than being attacked from all angles.

If every single alien were investigated thoroughly, irrespective of nationality, I think the authorities would find that everyone is on the make somewhere or other, and not a single thing is done without a commission involved. Let's be thankful that "there but for the grace of God go I".

G Horne
By email

Living in an animal dream world

To Margaret Simmons and S Heaney [*Gazette* letters of August 20]: please forgive me for failing to state the obvious: that habitat destruction is the main

cause of wildlife loss. Ms Simmons accuses me of knowing "nothing about animals" because I fail to accept her view that dogs pose no threat to wildlife.

I wish I could somehow explain that to the otter I saw ripped to shreds by a pack of dogs in Songkhla a few years ago, or the fox being chased across the English countryside by hounds.

I have seen dogs kill, chase, paw or otherwise terrorize birds, reptiles, and amphibians and other animals on numerous occasions – they even bark at buffaloes. The only difference is that they are too stupid to eat what they kill, preferring to obtain food by knocking over garbage cans and rummaging through the spoils.

Frogs, turtles and snakes may not amount to much in Ms Simmons' view of nature, but their presence plays a vital role in sustaining the wildlife we have left on the island. Just ask a sea turtle conservationist about the effect of having 20,000 dogs or more roaming the island.

Although well-intentioned, people like Ms Simmons are living in a dream world.

Charles McBride
Phuket

Onus on Olaf, not us

I get very annoyed when I read letters such as the one from Olaf published in the *Gazette* of August 20.

Why do people come to a foreign land and then think that their host country should change to what they believe are "better" standards?

Olaf goes to great lengths to criticize just about every aspect of the way drivers behave here and asks why the police do not take action. He is making the

assumptions that: 1. what he describes is illegal; 2. it is unacceptable to the drivers here; and 3. the people of Thailand want it changed.

When people visit another's country, the onus is on the visitor to accept and adapt to local customs and practices, not to criticize and expect the hosts to change.

In my home country, driving is no longer a relaxed pleasure. Traffic police, in both marked and unmarked cars, wait to pounce. Hidden cameras are there to catch out the motorist who dares to go 6.5kmh over the speed limit.

There is "road rage" from other drivers, which has, on occasion, spilled over to fights and even murders at the roadside.

Huge fines and disqualification [because of breaking traffic laws] are commonplace, and yet, there is still the same number of accidents and deaths there as here.

The final straw in Olaf's letter is his criticism of children being taken to school by car. Has he not seen how packed the buses are, overflowing to almost a dangerous limit?

Anyway, the majority of pupils who are taken to school by their parents arrive by motorcycle. It is a very small percentage who arrive by car.

This is in contrast to the majority of Europe, where nearly every child is chauffeured to school.

Next time Olaf visits Thailand, he should try adapting to our relaxed ways and enjoy his motoring with a laid-back attitude, accepting what is happening around him.

John Lunn
Phuket

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

Rocking the boat on maritime safety

FIRST PERSON

There is no room for maneuvering to avoid the import duty on [maritime] safety equipment; you can legally change the description of an item to circumvent rules on imports, but not on this.

To me, the most blatant example of the ludicrousness of the tariff system is lifejackets.

Lifejackets or personal flotation devices (PFD), even to a non-sailor, are the single piece of safety equipment one associates most with boats, but the tax is punitive. Many people come in to the store, look at the price of PFDs, and ask, "Why are they so expensive?"

First of all, you must first ship them here.

A company rep from the only manufacturer of – well, you can't call them lifejackets – came into the shop the other day.

The company in question produces the buoyancy aids similar to the ones you can buy from Big C and Tesco-Lotus; you also find these aids on some of the pleasure boats taking day-trippers out on – for example – snorkeling jaunts.

They are actually totally unsafe because all of the buoyancy is on the back, which means that the wearer will float, but face down. If you're conscious then it's okay, but if you're not then you will probably drown.

Inspect many of the commercial – and some private – vessels in the waters around Phuket and the dearth or poor quality of safety equipment on board might make one see that the three sinkings resulting in 17 drownings here this year is a surprisingly light toll compared to what might have been.

Some boat operators claim that the cost of imported international-standard safety equipment – which attracts import duty of 30% under Tariff Code 6307.20 – is prohibitively high. Such operators sometimes equip their vessels with little more than the buoyancy aids available at supermarkets for a few hundred baht each. Other operators rely on nothing more than good luck; a dubious entity that tends to run out. Yet some operators do equip their vessels satisfactorily, whatever the cost.

Julian Hill, Director of Phuketsail Group, gives an insight into Thailand's absurdly Kafkaesque regulations on maritime safety equipment.



A proper PFD has flotation on the front, and a buoyant collar which keeps your head out of the water.

I asked the firm if it could produce – in Thailand – PFDs that would meet SOLAS (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea) or USCG (United States Coast Guard) regulations, or the CE mark (European Community approval), all of which are pretty similar standards.

Obviously enough, if quality PFDs can be produced in Thailand, then there is no import tariff to pay, and their production will be a boost to the Thai manufacturing industry.

That was a major problem to the company. The rep seemed incredulous when I asked if this could be done. He said that the device they produce is their standard design, and they are quite happy with it.

But the company rep said – and this wasn't just a case of the message being lost in translation – "Why should we? They are OTOP (One Tambon, One Product) approved."

Although my company stocks and sells a number of makes [of PFD], I believed it necessary to be able to offer an affordable PFD that met recognized safety standards.

I used to buy them from a company in Europe, but when I realized that they were made in China, I decided to have them made myself, cutting out the middleman. They are tested by and meet SOLAS or USCG standards.

This doesn't just save the broker's cut, however. Import duty and VAT is payable not only on the product, but also on the shipping costs of said item, a painful double-whammy. It's cheaper to ship from China, and therefore these PFDs are even more affordable.

I haven't been able to get a really clear answer on why there is such a punitively high duty on safety equipment, PFDs in particular, but there is the theory that the tariff is slapped on because PFDs are made from textiles and that Thailand is trying to protect its indigenous textile industry.

The 30% duty also applies to horseshoe buoys and, most absurd of all, safety line.

Safety line is no more than rope that floats, and [imported] rope attracts duty of 10%. However, because it is shipped in a bag that says "rescue line" on it, it attracts duty of 30%. You are, effectively, being penalized because you are using that item as a device to save a life.

That, to me, is the worst example of this punitive tax on safety and safety equipment.

My guess is that this [30% duty] is one of those things from 30-odd years ago that no one [in the Customs and Excise Department] has really thought about for a while.

I've talked to guys from Customs in Bangkok about this, and although they sympathize, smile and shrug their shoulders, there's nothing they can do about it, because it's in the book and they have to follow the book.

Customers come in here, up from Langkawi for example where there is no import duty and no VAT, and ask me why they [PFDs] are about 37% more expensive here than in Langkawi. They can't believe it when I explain the situation to them.

I read about the sinkings and fatalities here this year and know that those deaths were

avoidable. But I understand the operators – especially those of the Thai-registered boats – when they say that PFDs are too expensive for them, even the ones I have made, which are probably the cheapest in Thailand [that meet international regulations].

If the PFDs are – because of the import duty – too expensive, then the fishing boat and ferry operators will take the chance and hope that their boats don't go down. The Marine Department should crack down on these operations more than it does.

I might be a businessman, but I am also a yachtsman, therefore safety at sea is very close to my heart. I'll do what I can to get the duty down a little bit more.

But I seem to be doing it alone, and I wish there was more support from elsewhere within the marine industry for this, but there is absolutely none. I've raised the issue with other people, but they don't appear to give a damn. I just seem to be rocking the boat.

They seem to concentrate on promoting business, but I'd like to see them attempting to get the duty on safety equipment down.

A lot of boats are imported into Thailand with a full raft of safety equipment as an integral part of the boat, and, because the vessels are imported at 0% import duty, the PFDs, safety lines et cetera also attract 0% duty. So the owners don't give a sh*t about the 30% import duty on safety equipment; they already have a craft with full safety equipment.

The people who are really being screwed are Thai people, the average fishing boat crewman, ferry passenger(s) or speedboat passenger(s) because the boats they are on were not imported into Thailand and consequently do not have all of the safety equipment.

There have been massive strides made in relaxing and modernizing import duty regulations as applied to the maritime industry in Thailand. It's high time that the same was done for maritime safety equipment.

When is the next auction of boats seized by Customs?

Please tell me when and where there are government boat auctions in Phuket.

Alan Garfield
Koh Samui

Khaisang Boonsin, an officer in the Phuket Provincial Customs Office replies:

Sorry, but we have had no boats to auction since Thailand dropped import taxes on speedboats, sailboats and inflatables in February last year.

Before that, such boats that were seized for non-payment of import taxes were auctioned off but, due to the change in the law, we no longer have to impound boats on which taxes are unpaid.

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

Can I open a barber shop?

I have been a qualified barber in Britain for 39 years, and I would like to open a barber shop in Phuket. Is this possible? I would only employ Thai people in this venture, and hope to do some work myself.

Doug Silvester
United Kingdom

Penchan Boonhok, of the Phuket Provincial Employment Services Office, replies:

Hairdressing and design are one of the 40 occupations reserved for Thais, so although you can establish a company to run a barber shop, you may not do the work yourself.

Are there any limits on medicine prices?

Are hospitals allowed to charge whatever they want for medicines? Prices in Phuket's "major" hospitals can be double the price one pays for exactly the same medicines in clinics.

Sam
Phuket

Eam-Orn Kittitornkul, Public Health Officer (Grade 8) of

the Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO), replies:

We set standard prices for medicines sold at public health-care facilities. These prices are listed in the dispensaries for public reference.

As for private clinics and hospitals, we don't control the prices of their medicines, though we do ask for their cooperation

in informing their patients of the prices for medicines and explaining their bills.

Patients who believe that the prices they have been charged for medicines in a private health care facility are unreasonably high compared with prices in public hospitals may complain to the PPHO at Tel: 076-211330, ext. 303-304.

ON THE MOVE



Australian **John Howard** has been appointed Managing Director Phuket of Tilleke & Gibbins International. He has multi-jurisdictional experience from more than 24 years as a commercial and property lawyer in the Asia-Pacific region, and is also a qualified legal and real estate trainer. He was previously in charge of special projects at Tilleke & Gibbins' Bangkok headquarters.



Khata Sinhaseni, from Bangkok, has been appointed Director of Sales of Crowne Plaza Karon Beach, Phuket. Khata has headed various sales teams in the hospitality world over the past decade. As Director of Sales at the Crowne Plaza Karon Beach Phuket, he will direct all sales activities of the Phuket and Bangkok sales team for the local and overseas markets.



Holger Jakobs, appointed Director of Sales & Marketing, Thailand, joins Six Senses after similar posts at the Sheraton Laguna Phuket, Le Meridien Khao Lak Beach & Spa Resort, and Dusit Laguna Resort Hotel in Phuket, to where he relocated from his native Germany in 2001. Holger will be responsible for the sales and marketing for four Six Senses properties in Thailand from the Bangkok hub.

Sharing between computers

This week I want to take a look at small office and home computer LANs (local area networks). Simply put, these are tools that enable you to connect multiple computers to each other and share printers, files and Internet connection.

Setting these systems up can be very simple or very complex, depending on requirements and how you go about it. There are many components that need to work together: in addition, storing files in a manner that enables you to find them and keep track of the latest updates of a file can be confusing, to say the least.

There are a few tricks you can apply in both the design and application stages of your LAN that will make simple work of what would otherwise be a difficult project.

I will cover the basics, but keep in mind that you should be working with a systems integrator, or at least a pretty savvy computer person who has enough experience to work out the bugs.

File sharing: One of the most useful applications of the computer LAN is the centralization and open accessibility of your files.

Any software program allows you to choose where you

IT ISSUES

By John Seebach

want to store your files, and for the most part Windows, as a default, stores files in "My Documents". A pretty obvious feature you might say ... but not any more. Windows XP has become so smart that it now knows who is logged into the computer, and it creates a whole separate set of storage folders for each user.

This is why sometimes you save a file in "My Documents" only to find it missing the next day.

There are many reasons for this, but the simple explanation is that "My Documents" has become a relative term that depends on who is logged into the computer. The bottom line is this: you may be looking at someone else's "My Documents".

Anyway, this can all be solved by ignoring (or changing) the Windows default settings and deciding for yourself where to store your files. I shall cover file sharing in greater depth in a future article.

LAN card: Most PCs and laptops these days come equipped with a LAN card. This is where you plug in a CAT5 cable that con-

nects you to your LAN. This is not used if you are setting up a WiFi wireless LAN, as these use a different device that plugs into your USB port (more on that later).

A LAN card may be part of the main board in the computer or it may be a separate card that slides into the computer like a video card (for PC) or a PCMCIA modem card (for laptops).

Either way, LAN cards have a jack that connects to your CAT5 cable via an RJ45 plug that looks like a large telephone plug. Once installed, LAN cards need to be configured to work with the network system.

Wi-Fi adapter: This is the wireless version of a LAN card, and it usually connects to the USB port (for PC) and the PCMCIA slot (for laptops), although many laptops now come with WiFi as standard.

Instead of using a CAT5 cable to connect to the central Hub, Wi-Fi adapters use radio frequency to connect to a central Wi-Fi Access Point. Depending on the size and area of your LAN, you may need more than one access point to cover the entire area.

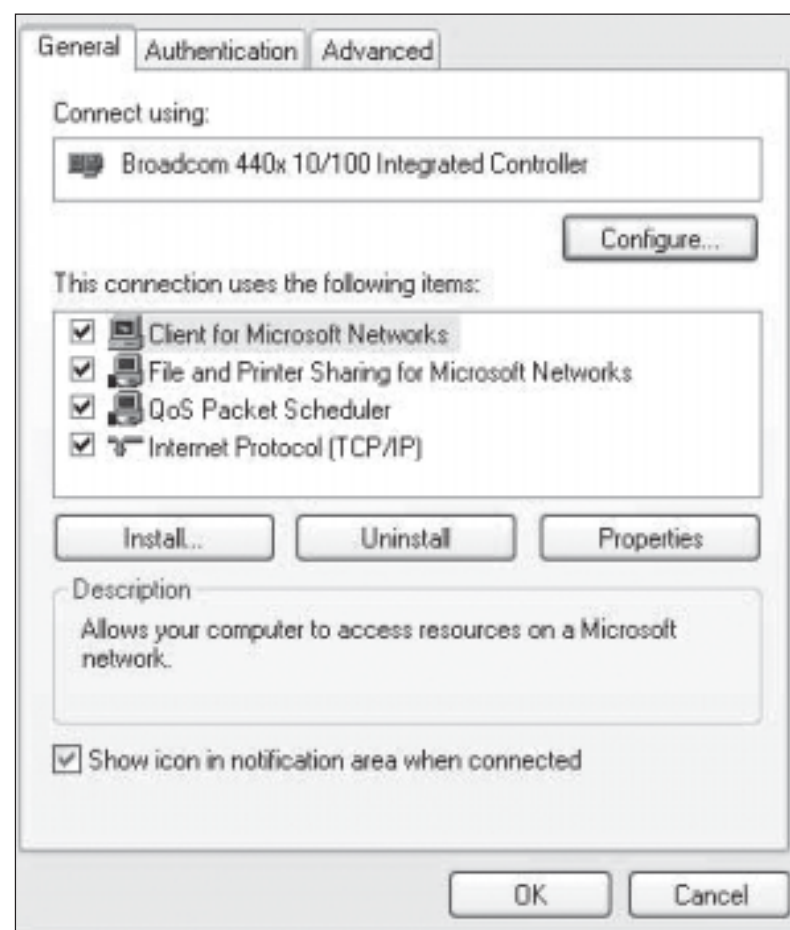
As with LAN cards, Wi-Fi adapters must be configured to connect with your network.

Hubs & access points: Both of these items act as the central connection point(s) for your network. The hub has many RJ45 ports where you connect the other end of the CAT5 cable going to your LAN card. The access point has an antenna that broadcasts the wireless signal to each of your WiFi adapters.

In many instances, both are used in the same network, thus enabling users to connect via cable or wireless.

Keep in mind that the average wireless system connects at half the speed of a cabled system. If you are working with large graphics or CAD drawings, this can make a big difference.

Printer sharing: One of the most useful aspects of a LAN is the ability to share printers. Once set up and configured, any com-



puter can connect to any printer on the LAN.

Remember, though, that if the printer is connected to a computer, you can only access it if that computer is turned on.

An alternative is a print server, which allows you to connect a printer directly to the LAN without the need of a computer. Print servers work well in both cabled and wireless environments, and are great when you have an office full of laptops.

Internet sharing: A very useful – but sometimes frowned upon – feature of LANs is that they enable you to share your Internet service with any computer on the network.

Some ISPs state that this is not allowed when using their package (especially ADSL packages), but there is no law governing this, it is easy to set up, and no one will be the wiser.

It works pretty much like printer sharing, where you connect one computer to your dial-up, ADSL or leased line broadband connection.

From there, it's just a matter of turning on Windows Inter-

net Connection Sharing – and *voilà!* Everyone connected to the LAN is sharing the single connection to the Internet.

There are also ways in which you can connect your Internet directly to the LAN in a similar way to print servers, but remember that all of this is a bit technical, so you'll really want an expert on hand.

Since I am out of space here, I shall dedicate a future column to the topic of file sharing. Things to look out for include security, limiting access to certain users, servers versus peer-to-peer file sharing, folder management and controlling file updates. All pretty basic stuff that can make a major difference to your everyday computing.

John Seebach has 25 years' consulting experience in Information Systems and Business Process Re-engineering. His company, Island Technology, offers IT solutions and broadband services throughout South-east Asia. Contact john@islandtechnology.com for more information.

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Franchises hold up well in downturn

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn
& Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: Many of Phuket's businesses called a halt to their plans or shut their doors following the tsunami last year, but some food and beverage franchises simply revised their goals and pushed on.

Kongsak Chunharatchapan, General Manager of the Marketing Division of the Andaman Group told the *Gazette* that the group launched Oishi Ramen, In & Out – the Bakery Café, and the Pizza Co in Central Festival in September 2004, and Oishi Buffet (Express) is scheduled to open on November 29.

"At the time we launched, we ex-

pected about 80 million baht in revenue [by the end of year]. However, income has dropped about 50% since the tsunami and group revenue has not even reached 40 million baht."

The original target customers were to be 70% tourists and 30% locals but the tsunami forced the company to revise that ratio to 50:50.

"We tried to achieve a balance because we saw that if we relied on tourists too much, as happened with Oishi Buffet then, when the number of tourists fell, our revenue also dropped.

"We normally look for Return on Investment (ROI) within five years; now, it might take longer than that. But investing

in a franchise is worthwhile," he added. "At least it guarantees us a strong brand."

In & Out – the Bakery Café requires one million baht to open a single outlet, K. Kongsak said.

"To build our own factory, we invested nearly 20 million baht. Therefore, the more outlets, the greater the distribution of our product, and so we are able to get faster return on investment.

"After the rebranding of Oishi Buffet as Oishi Express, the feedback was good – an average of about 8,000-9,000 people a month were using our service at all outlets. Since the group revised its budget as a consequence of the tsunami, this year, we expect a 70% revenue increase."

The Andaman Group plans to open two more branches of In & Out before the end of the year, although the exact locations have not yet been finalized.

"With regard to our other lines, such as Oishi, we are looking to expand within Southeast Asia," K. Kongsak said.

Another successful franchise owner, Natthanit Nithiwirun, Managing Director of Black Canyon Phuket, opened her first outlet three years ago, at the Ocean Shopping Mall, followed by Tesco-Lotus and Central Festival Phuket.

The shops were not directly affected by the December tsunami, she said; income from her shops initially stayed the same as usual.

"But after March, my business was hit by the news of violence in three southern border provinces and worries about bombs at department stores."

The tsunami also took its toll eventually. "Our target market is people who work in Phuket, most of them connected in some way with tourism, so if there are no tourists [my customers'] business is not good and that, in turn, takes its toll on mine."

"Our business fell by about 30% three months after the tsunami ... so we try to do promotions in conjunction with other businesses. For example, if you spend more than 400 baht [with us], you get a coupon worth 200 baht to have your picture taken in a studio.

"We invested in an open-air branch of Black Canyon in Khao Lak last year and planned to open that branch in January. Luckily we had spent less than 100,000 baht.

"We plan to invest there again but have to wait first, to see whether tourism picks up – it may take more than four years. However, I plan to invest in a new branch in Patong next year and three more in Krabi after that," she added.

More oil price rises on the way?

Where is the oil money going? Oil prices are still a matter of concern. One reader emailed me to ask where all this money goes. The main beneficiaries are the oil-producing countries but, obviously, the oil companies are sharing in this bonanza.

Some analysts and economists are even going as far as to state that oil companies are hiding the extent of their real profit increases.

The reason given for this behaviour is that the oil companies are wary about governments levying higher taxes. However, oil companies face one expensive reality: oil reserves in politically stable areas, such as the North Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, are declining.

New oil fields will have to be developed in less politically stable areas or more geographically hostile and expensive areas, such as the Russian Arctic.

A significant portion of what appears to be huge profits for oil companies will have to be used for future exploration and development of new oil fields. This is an extremely capital-intensive business.

Another beneficiary of the recent higher oil prices has been the oil refinery sector. Ten years ago the average US refinery was operating at 75% of capacity; that has increased to more than 95% today.

The problem with this sector is a lack of investment over the past 25 years – many are old and dated plants. The increase in

demand is putting pressure on the refineries where ageing technology is often inadequate to deal with the new situation.

The refineries have traditionally been forced to operate with paltry profit margins, and the sudden increase in demand has led to accidents, breakdowns and explosions. The most recent refinery to be built in the US was in 1976, and it is impossible simply to add more capacity without a delay of several years.

A similar situation exists in many parts of the world.

The effects of a tight supply/demand situation have meant that each refinery breakdown has led to increased nervousness in the oil markets. Recently, this has been aggravated by further concerns over tensions caused by the new Iranian political administration's decision to continue with its nuclear program.

Iran is the second largest oil producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the continuation of Iran's nuclear ambitions has drawn the ire of the US and the EU. There has also been much talk about referring the Iranian situation to the United Nations and speculation about possible sanctions being imposed on Tehran for its intransigence.

The new Iranian administration is composed entirely of anti-western politicians who are contemptuous of outside political pressure. They are in a strong bargaining position and placing sanctions on oil would be self-



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

defeating as prices would immediately reach new record highs, likely to be above US\$100 (more than 4,000 baht) a barrel.

The effect on the global economy would be severe to say the least.

Another "wild card" among oil-producing countries is Venezuela. Its President, Hugo Chavez, recently closed the offices of Shell in the country for two days and has taken legal action to attach some of Shell's assets to pay tax bills.

Venezuela is the world's fifth largest oil producer, and its president is strongly anti-west. His closest ally is Cuba's Fidel Castro.

One piece of good news has come from Russia. Its government recently tried to levy a tax bill for "historical arrears" on a joint venture between Russia's Tyumen Oil Company (TNK) and its British partner, BP, for the sum of US\$1 billion (more than 40 billion baht).

This sudden and unwarranted demand gave even greater cause for concern in the international oil community, especially after the Yukos affair. Moscow agreed to reduce the tax demand by 75% to US\$250 million (10 billion baht). The Russian partner, TNK, was keen to negotiate fur-

ther, but BP voted to pay up to prevent further acrimony.

Financial analysts are seldom in unanimous agreement about any subject, but oil prices have been an exception. Every analyst I have heard replying to the question "If you had known that oil prices would rise 40% in 2005, what would you have thought would have been the effect on financial markets?" has answered that the result to date has been far more positive than anticipated.

However, the longer-term impact of high oil prices has yet to be fully appreciated.

Oil prices may temporarily subside in the next month or two as demand falls after the summer vacation. This will be quickly followed by a rise in demand for heating oil as the Northern Hemisphere's larger economies enter late autumn and winter.

The prediction made by US investment bank Goldman Sachs, that oil could reach US\$105 (4,300 baht) a barrel by the end of 2005, seemed to many observers to be unrealistic when it was made at the beginning of the year.

Increasingly, however, it is becoming a possibility.

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



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VITAL STATISTICS: Occupancy rates continue to climb

Average figures per night, 10 five-star hotels, July 16-August 18, 2005

Total number of rooms in hotels:	2,893
Number of rooms occupied:	1,452
Percentage of rooms occupied:	49.80%
Lowest average occupancy rate of any one hotel:	35.63%
Highest average occupancy of any one hotel:	67.95%
Average price per room:	2,652.40 baht
Lowest average price of any one hotel:	2,136.76 baht
Highest average price of any one hotel:	4,502.81 baht

Source: Gazette Research

Patong to host top volleyball tourney

By Anongnat Sartpisut
& Stephen Fein

PATONG: Phuket will host the "Phuket Thailand Open 2005" women's professional beach volleyball tournament November 10 to 13, organizers Pentangle Promotions have told the *Gazette*.

Ratchadaporn Sawangsri, Pentangle's Business Development Manager, said it was "100%" certain Phuket would take place after a successful inspection tour of the proposed site in Patong last week.

Sanctioning body the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) has already approved US\$90,000 (3.6 million baht) in prize money for the event, which will feature up to 40 top women's beach volleyball teams from more than 20 different countries.

Pentangle's Managing Di-

rector Geoffrey Rowe told the *Gazette* the tournament would be a world-class competition, featuring some of the finest women's beach volleyball sides from Brazil, the US, Germany, Italy, Japan, and China. He added that the Tourism of Authority of Thailand (TAT) is firmly behind the competition because it will help Phuket continue to recover from the post-tsunami tourism slump.

Pentangle, the TAT and corporate sponsors will pay 13 million baht for the right to host the competition, which would be televised not only in Thailand but also around the world on the ESPN-Star and Eurosport networks.

"We will try to bring the current world champions from Brazil as well as the reigning Olympic Champions from China," he said.

The matches will be played on four FIVB standard courts 16 meters long and 8 meters wide, surrounded by a free zone of at least five meters from the end and side lines. Three of these will be on the beach, and the fourth on the football field on the beach

road that will serve as a temporary center court stadium, with seating for up to 5,000 spectators.

A WBO world title fight and FedCup tennis tournament have already been held at the site this year.

If the event is successful, Phuket will be in a good position to host the event on an annual basis as part of the FIVB Women's World Tour circuit, Mr Rowe added.

The organizers would also arrange special training sessions for children affected by the tsunami, he said.

Thailand Volleyball Association Vice-President Prommin Twatchainunt told the *Gazette* that the tournament should be a great warm-up event for Thai beach volleyball team in their preparations for the 23rd SEA Games, to be held in the Philippines November 27 to December 5.

"I am confident Phuket will be able to host this tournament successfully," said K. Prommin, who is helping to organize the event.



Beach volleyball has a huge following around the world, even in landlocked Austria, where Kerri Walsh and Misty May-Treanor of the US are pictured celebrating their victory in the Klagenfurt Grand Slam competition on August 6. - Photo: EPA/Gert Eggenberger

FantaSea fun run gets go-ahead

PHUKET: Kamala Tambon Administration Organization (*Or-BorTor*), along with Sports Authority of Thailand Phuket Office and Phuket FantaSea, are to hold a Kamala Mini Marathon to welcome tourists and to encourage people to maintain their optimal fitness in the wake of the tsunami. It will be held at Phuket FantaSea September 4.

All participants in the 10-kilometer run will receive a free T-shirt, and the first 300 people to cross the finishing line will get medals.

For more information contact Kamala *OrBorTor* at Tel: 076-385640-4, *OrBorTor* President Charan Sararak at Tel: 07-0300633, or Charan Sararak of the Sports Authority of Thailand at Tel: 01-5367712.



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Fairway to Heaven, or Hell?

Jon Morrow's article on penal golf holes [*Gazette*, August 6] was not up to his usual standard. He was very inconsistent in his comments.

For example, the 16th at Sawgrass is one of the best penal holes, but there is no secondary way to play it. Either hit the green or miss.

The ninth at Phuket Country Club's (PCC) Phase 2 third shot is hit the green or miss it, and the distance is the same as Sawgrass at around 130 [yards] or less.

Yet one is great and the other is not. Explain as to why someone would walk to one hole and play the other.

Par threes in general require a shot to land on the green. You get to tee the ball up and have a flat lie. Why would a par three be the most penal hole on the island?

In addition, the one that he picked as the best – the 14th hole at the Blue Canyon Golf Course – could be the worst for the following reasons:

1. You can be on the green and not have a putt to the hole (the pin is not reachable with a putter because of the terrain in the way). Check the new local rule at Blue Canyon;

2. The European Tour moves the tee up to the blues or whites because you cannot see the green from the championship tee;

3. There is no way to safely

Over the past few weeks, *Gazette* golf columnist Jon Morrow has critiqued types of golf course designs, using some of the courses on Phuket as examples. His most recent review was on the use of 'penal' holes.

Here Michael Glass, the Director of Golf at Phuket Country Club, explains his different perspective on why certain holes on Phuket do not match up to Jon Morrow's review.

play the hole, which is a fault he found on Hole 9;

4. I can hit the ball in the water and be near the pin, but must go to the drop area which may be miles from the pin. The water which is behind and to the sides of the green should be a lateral water hazard but it is not (The same problem exists at Sawgrass, but TV does not care);

5. This hole is strictly course knowledge. Because of the elevation the distance is not something you would know, and only playing the hole on numerous occasions will tell you the correct club to choose.

A tourist, as he points out in his column, could only guess as to the correct club, not logically pick one.

With these things going against it, I find it hard to believe he picked Blue Canyon's 14th as the best.

If you stick with par threes (which I think is incorrect) the 16th at Thai Muang is better. If

you cannot reach the green, there is a collection area in front of the green where you can play too and try to chip for your par.

I believe a good penal hole is one where you have two or three chances to make a mistake: a good tee shot to a protected landing area, then a difficult second shot to a well-guarded green. The penalty for the tee shot would be a bad lie, while the penalty for the second shot could be a hazard.

I would think the 12th at Blue Canyon would be better [choice of penal hole] since the tee shot would have to be straight to get a flat lie followed by a long second shot over water.

The green is quite large and difficult to putt. Second choice would be the fifth at Phase 2 at PCC, which requires a good tee shot over bunkers and water, followed by a long second shot over more bunkers and water guarding the left side all the way down the fairway.

Double gold for Phuket's Pakorn

PHUKET: Players from the Phuket Soft Tennis Association won two gold medals and two bronze in the third event of the Soft Tennis Thailand Championship 2005 series played recently in Surin Province.

Phuket native Pakorn Niyomadul, ranked second in the country and a member of the Thai National Youth team, won gold in both the under-21 and open category, when he overcame rival Tapanan Boontao, who was playing in his home province.


K. Pakorn also picked up a bronze in the under-21 men's doubles when he paired up with Permyot Tansakul, of Phuket.

Phuket Soft Tennis coach Nipon Jiang-iam told the *Gazette*, "The tournament was a success. We sent only two athletes and both won medals. However, we didn't send top-ranked Thai player Sakan Tansiroj, who had to attend a relative's funeral."

"We will prepare our athletes to be ready for the next event in Bangkok, where we hope to pick up a lot of points," he added.

The next event in the 2005 series will be at Burapha University in Bangkok September 24 and 25.

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**The
Gazette Guide**

Barrels: will stainless steal the show?

In ancient times wine was stored in clay jars. Eventually, someone discovered how to make wooden barrels and that wine tasted better for having been in contact with wood. Today, barrel aging is standard practice, and the romantic image of a cellar filled with barrels is how most of us think of a winery.

In fact, most of the world's wines never contact wood. There is even a trend to popularize wines made without oak barrels, by calling them "unwooded" wines.

Stainless-steel tanks for wine-making were developed at the University of California in the 1950s. Cement or wooden tanks were common then but, unlike stainless steel, were difficult to sanitize and tended to react with the wine.

Stainless steel can be made into any shape or size, can be cooled or heated, is easy to keep clean, and does not change a wine's character.

Because stainless steel is chemically neutral, wines are less likely to be suffer microbial spoilage and maintain their fruity varietal character. Many wines, such as Riesling, do not benefit from oak.

Wood does offer two advantages, however. First, because constituents in wood react with surplus wine proteins and polysaccharides, barrel-fermented wines are easier to clarify and less likely to throw a haze when exposed to warm temperature.

Second, wood requires a lower capital investment than expensive stainless steel. Nonetheless, many wineries soon discover that using barrels is more costly due to their higher labor costs and because barrels last only three or four years.

WINE



By Steven
Roberto

The real reason barrels are preferred is they impart added concentration and complexity to wine. Wood imparts flavors such as vanilla, smokiness, or toastiness to wine. It can also create new flavors and a synergy that amplifies the wine's already present flavors.

Wines grow more powerful during barrel aging due to evaporation. This is an expensive tradeoff, though, as more than 10% of the wine can be "lost to the angels" in as little as six

months.

Those who prefer barrel-aged wines point to their added power, age worthiness and fine distinction. Those who prefer unwooded wines counter that the latter are more true to their varietal character and

easier to enjoy. They also point out that they are usually much less expensive than barrel-aged wines.

Both approaches have merit and can give wines of great distinction. Oak influence to the winemaker is like seasoning to the chef: a little can go a long way, but too much can ruin everything.

Consumers are always better served by considering the style and quality reputation of winery than they are by fretting over the production method used to make the wine.

After all, it's the quality of what is in the bottle that matters, not the choice of tank or barrel.

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

Bar Robbed By Ex-Convict

Phuket Gazette, August 1995

Harry's Bar, a popular meeting place on Talingchan Road near the traffic circle at the Metropole Hotel in Phuket Town, was burglarized last month.

On the evening of July 25, the owner, Khun Maow, and her boyfriend, Michael Miles, were relaxing upstairs.

After hearing some noise from an adjoining room, Khun Maow went to investigate. Thinking it was a mouse, Mr Miles stayed behind. When he heard screams from Khun Maow, he ran out into the hall to see an intruder flee down the stairs with Khun Maow in pursuit.

As the thief dashed down the sidewalk, Khun Maow gave up the chase, but not Mr Miles. He chased the man through the grounds of Phuket Mansion, the

nearby mosque, and then a maze of alleyways.

It was dark and Mr Miles lost sight of the thief. "But then he made a noise," said Mr Miles, "and I saw him climbing over a wall. The wall was topped with broken glass, making his escape difficult, so I dragged him down."

The police then arrived to find the pair, with Maow, wrestling on the ground. In the fracas, the burglar bit both.

The police handcuffed the man who was found to be in possession of approximately 20,000 baht worth of jewelry belonging to the couple.

Police reported that the burglar, whose name was withheld, was recently released from prison and "wanted to buy a motorcycle."

Beach tar 'not a hazard'

Phuket Gazette, August 15-31, 2000

NAI YANG: In response to complaints from both tourists and Thais about tar washing up on Phuket's beaches, a team of local government officials and environmental experts investigated the problem at Nai Yang Beach this month.

The investigation was led by the Phuket Public Health Office and the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) at the request of Phuket Governor Charnchai Soontharamut.

Vice Governor Vongsak Sawadipaniach accompanied the team to Nai Yang and told the

Gazette that there are two factors causing the tar to wash up on the beaches.

The first is bunker oil discarded by large ships when they clean their tanks. The second is accidents at sea, such as collisions.

However, officials present at the investigation downplayed the dangers posed by the tar.

"I don't think tourists need to worry about this, because there are no leaking oil sources around Phuket," said Vice Governor Vongsak.

"We are going to send our

report to the Foreign Ministry, as this problem concerns international shipping and the World Trade Organization (WTO)," he added.

Somkiat Kohkiatiwong, a marine biologist at PMBC, said, "This problem is really nothing new. In fact, it has existed for over 20 years – and not only in Phuket."

"It is quite common to see tar on beaches during the low season, as storms often carry it to our shores."

"This problem was studied a long time ago, and it was determined then that it didn't pose any danger to either people or marine life, as the amount of tar is not great," he added.

Vice Governor Vongsak said he would recommend to Governor Charnchai that groups be set up by local tambon administration organizations to keep beaches in their areas clean during the low season.

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On the menu

with
Andy Johnstone

Locanda

A cousin of mine (he usually has “doctor” entered on his charge sheet) advises me to avoid “Surf ‘n Turf” meals. I concur with the medico’s opinion; I, too, see little nutritional worth in consuming a dish comprising a brand-name washing powder and a sod of earth.

What interests me more is to eat the occasional large piece of beef, which, as my soon-to-be-struck-off kinsman says, is extremely good for one. Well, actually for me in particular, and for others in the same blood group with which I am blessed.

Not that he is aligning himself completely with loony groups that advocate eating strictly according to one’s blood group, you understand. Being a National Health Service doctor for 12 years, especially in the Mornington Crescent area of London, is enough to make anyone vaguely skeptical.

“A little of what you fancy” is his counsel, and although Dr Rourke is not really referring to a novel by H.E. Bates, I catch his drift.

But I decide to have a lot of what I fancy at Locanda, an Argentine-style steakhouse or *churrascaria* at the Bougainvillea Terrace Resort in Kata.

There are no steers’ heads or laminated prints of *gauchos* on the walls. Nor are there pics of Diego Maradona or references to 1982’s “Little Local Difficulty”. Well, just one, although unintentional...

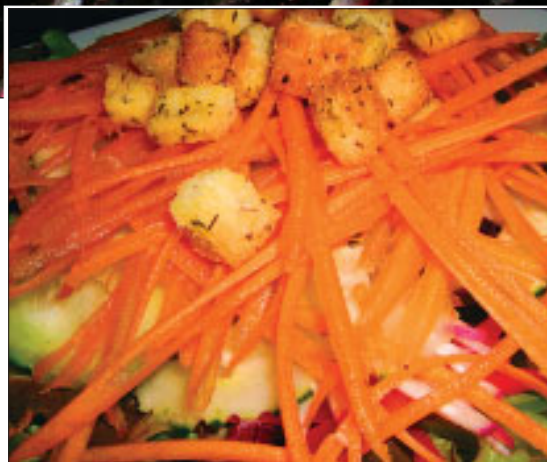
But enter the restaurant and what one does find is an area at once cozy – with the occasional snug corner dotted around the place – and open. For a newish *churrascaria* it possesses a strange historic charm, aided by the use of bare brick in its decor.

I am told, by Roger Schmid of the resort, that the bricks are from old charcoal kilns he found

Steaking a claim



Above, steaks on the parilla.
Right, Locanda salad.



in and around Ranong. “But there is very little wood coming in from Myanmar these days,” he quips.

All in all just bricks in a wall perhaps, but stop me if they don’t imbue Locanda with even more atmosphere, in much the same way that wine seems so much better when it has been aged in wood barrels and not in ghastly metal.

We hear music. I suggest a Tango. I am given a vodka martini instead.

It’s impossible not to notice the vast grill or *parilla*, which pushes out a good few thousand BTUs while grilling lumps of prime, aged (“Six to eight weeks is just about right,” says Roger) steaks from New Zealand and Australia. An ingenious air-cooling system, which sprays atomized water, keeps the temperature well below what one would expect.

Our waitress, Thipawan, is both attentive and patient as we um and er about what to eat. We choose *gai hor bai toei* (chicken fillets roasted in pandanus leaves)

and *laab moo* from Locanda’s Thai kitchen, a salad, as well as Angus tenderloin and a T-bone steak.

We can’t fault the two Thai dishes but, to put it bluntly, our minds are firmly on matters of the flesh. We even creep round to inspect our steaks as they are cooked rare on the *parilla*. My camera nearly melts in the process.

The steaks arrive, and with them, tasters of Café de Paris butter, black peppercorn and Bearnaise sauces, as well as Chimichurri sauce, the sauce for Argentine-style steak. And here is the apocryphal link between

the chopped parsley, oregano, garlic, vinegar, chili and oil sauce, and the late unpleasantness in the South Atlantic.

It is said that the word chimichurri is a corruption of “Jimmy McCurry”, an Irishman who, legend has it, created the sauce while fighting alongside Argentinian General Belgrano’s troops in the 19th Century; Belgrano, of course, was also the name of an warship lost in the Falklands unpleasantness.

The sauce was popular and the recipe passed on, but Jimmy McCurry was difficult for the Argentinians to pronounce, and his name – and the sauce – be-

came “chimichurri”. Go on, prove me wrong.

Our steaks are fragrant and Heaven-sent. We both swap half a steak for the full taste experience, and although my companion suggests that the T-bone is slightly salty, for me it’s just right – even with Jimmy McCurry’s sauce all over it. Perhaps different cuts of meat have different flavors.

The T-bone, a decent size at 400 grams plus, yields to the knife like a fool to my sharp tongue and is graced with a scandalously good taste.

Damned good with the hearty Chilean Quinta Las Cabras Cab Sauv.

However, superb as the T-bone is, the Angus tenderloin trumps it. There is a suggestion of a similarity to Kobe beef, but I feel that the similarity is with Buccleuch beef – from the estate of a Scottish duke of the same name – which is arguably the best in the world. Anyway, I haven’t tried Kobe beef.

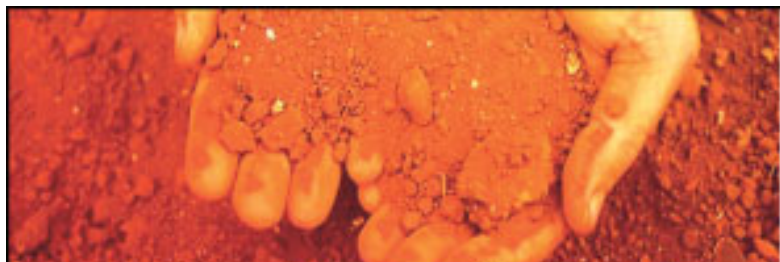
There is no possible criticism of the steak; either of them actually. Chef has cooked them perfectly rare, then left them for a minute or two, to allow the meat to relax before serving. The *jus* is divine and the variety of sauces like icing on a beefcake.

The salad, which under other circumstances would have us salivating, is finding it difficult to compete with such cuts of meat, and we barely pick at it.

Despite eating slowly to get the maximum sensual pleasure out of the steaks, it is over too soon. Of course, we are not indulging in the true Argentine way of one cut of meat followed by another and another. We’ll save that for another day.

Prices? Excluding wine, expect change from 1,500 baht for a splendid dinner for two.

Locanda, Bougainvillea Terrace Resort, 86 Patak Rd, Kata, Phuket. Tel: 076-330139.

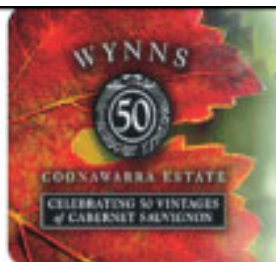


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Decor

by Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

Don't want the unnatural chill of an air conditioner, but still want to stay cool? The ceiling fan is a sensible solution that comes in all sorts of styles designed to temper sultry tropical nights – or days – indoors.

For between 1,200 and 1,500 baht, there's a wide selection available at Ong-Arg Engineering. You might opt for the minimalist twin-blade "Boomerang" in white, or, inspired by nature, a fan with palm-leaf-shaped paddles.

Also worth a visit is Light Style, where prices range from around 1,300 baht to 2,500 baht for a vast array of ceiling fans, including one with paddles of woven bamboo and wood, or, if you prefer, a fun fan with five paddles in bright primary colors.

For a modern ceiling fan that resembles a starfish or a windmill, or one with gleaming silver-color paddles and fancy lights, look no further than Index Living Mall.

Most models there cost between 1,700 baht and 7,000 baht, although you could find yourself tempted to splurge on the fancy fan with clear paddles that fold down around a light in the center for 13,715 baht.

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If you are a fan of ceiling-mounted air conditioning, there is a wide range available locally to choose from, ranging in price from around 1,300 baht to a top-of-the-range 13,715 baht for the fold-down model (left).



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Home of the Week

Nai Harn



High life privacy

This 300 square meter, two-story, fully furnished home has recently been completed and is now offered for sale at 12.5 million baht.

The 700sqm plot (175 sq wah) with Chanote title includes a pool, a well-established fully fenced garden, a car port and a sala.

The three-bedroom, three-bathroom home is one of a group in a small, well-managed private estate in Nai Harn with its own security service. It is located on Saiyuan Rd, only a few minutes' drive from all the facilities in Chalong – banks, the Post Office, medical and dental services, shops, markets and Chalong Yacht Club.

Also a short distance away are the major shopping centers: Tesco-Lotus, Central Festival and Big C, as well as Phuket International Hospital and further to the north is the British Curriculum International School (for-

merly Dulwich College) and the airport.

The ground floor of this luxury home features a spacious open-plan living and dining area. The well-equipped Western-style kitchen has granite and timber cupboards and an adjacent breakfast bar. A guest bathroom and a laundry are also on this level.

A large terrace opens from the living areas to the landscaped gardens and a blue-tiled, free-form swimming pool.

On the upper level are three roomy bedrooms, all with built-in furniture. The master bedroom has an en suite bathroom and a large balcony overlooking the garden. There is a bright and airy main bathroom between the two further bedrooms.

This home is modern and eye-catching in both in its architecture and interior décor.

Ceilings feature timber paneling, and the color schemes are cool and tropical. Light and ven-

tilation is well catered for with ample doors and windows, but an added bonus to this well-planned home is the fully ducted air conditioning.

Timber, granite, high quality ceramics, sanitary ware and fittings have been used throughout. In keeping with the quality of the home, the furniture is also of excellent standard and includes many custom-built items.

Facilities include a home security system, Cable/UBC, two telephone lines, well water, a hot water system, septic tank, three-phase electricity, and 24-hour estate security service.

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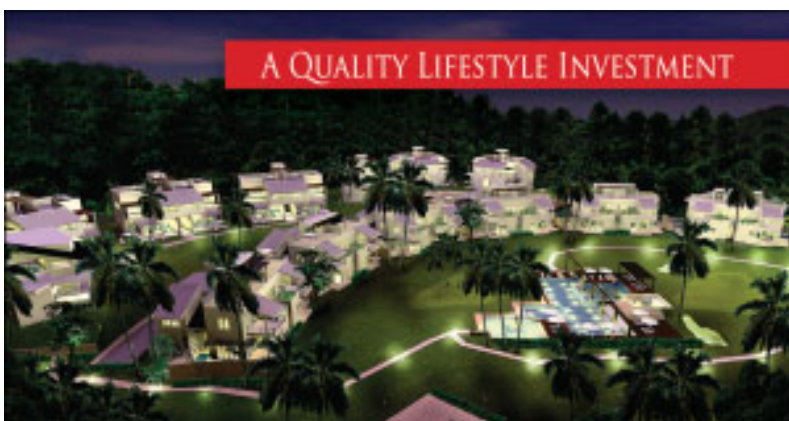


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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Bachelor's buttons (Oh yes they are...)



One of these in your buttonhole, ladies, and you're ready to audition for the role of principal boy.

Whatever happened to pantomimes? Do they still have them? For those of the non-British persuasion, allow me to attempt to explain what a pantomime is, since it is a uniquely British institution.

A pantomime is a curious type of entertainment – originally a form of ritual theater staged around the winter solstice, it now appears in British theaters every year over the Christmas season.

It started many moons ago as a form of mime, but is now anything but that, with non-stop exchanges from both the performers and the audience.

The stories are generally well-known, based on popular folk-tales and similar sources, populated with predictable characters, including a principal boy (generally played by a young lady with cracking legs), the heroine, also played by a young lady (which gives an added edge to the inevitable romance) and a "dame" (played by a man), a weird exaggeration of a lewd middle-aged lady.

Scripts change from year to year. They are visual, topical, corny, and sometimes downright rude, involving much slapping of thighs. In the UK this is considered to be family entertainment.

One of the bizarre things about a panto is that the gentleman playing the dame is someone you would never associate with anything even remotely female; he is always a "bloke's bloke". Hardly a *katoey* – the complete opposite, in fact.

Trying to communicate the idea of pantomimes is probably a bit like explaining cricket, as far non-aficionados are concerned. I can try to explain a pantomime until I am blue in the face, but it will not make much sense until you actually see one. Or would seeing a pantomime for the first time confuse a newcomer even further? Probably.

Anyway, tenuous link time. In the pantomime *Cinderella*, one of the large parts is that of "Buttons" for once a man playing a man (this is getting confusing now...). I've no idea why he is called that.

Buttons, as it happens, is also the name of the flowers of a plant that grows in abundance in Phuket. More precisely, Bachelor's Buttons.

Otherwise known as globe amaranth, (*ban mai roo roy* or *koon yee* in Thai), these aren't the most difficult plants in the world to grow. There are several steps, which are as easy as this: * Go to one of those local nurseries for some seedlings, which are widely available for just a few baht. If you are feeling adventurous, and are a little too dignified to cheat a bit, the plant is also relatively easy to start from seed. You can probably get the seeds from the gardening section of Tesco Lotus. If you are starting with seeds, though, soak them first for 24 hours to speed germination.

- Plant the seedlings a few inches apart.
- Water them regularly.
- Have a beer. You've earned it.
- Keep watering them, and wait for them to flower. This will not take long.
- Pinch off the first flowers that

appear, to create bushier, healthier plants with more flowers in the long run.

- Fight them back.

The Bachelor's Button prefers average, well-drained soil and is tolerant of drought, so will survive independently in the dry season once it is established. It also likes high humidity, so is very much at home here in Phuket.

It is yet another of those plants that is self-propagating. If you let the seeds drop to the flower-bed and germinate, rather than pluck out those nasty, weed-like new plants by the roots, you will be rewarded with volunteer plants very soon afterwards.

The only downside is that, if you leave it alone completely, it can sometimes get a bit straggly. It needs controlling, much like a teenager who wants to get a Mohican haircut.

The flowers don't lose their color once their useful life has passed, and will dry while still on the plant. In fact, the main reason many people have them in their gardens, apart from the fact that bachelor's buttons are happy

to fend for themselves, is that they are the perfect flower to dry. Just pluck them off once they feel light and papery.

Alternatively, cut the flowers when they are partly open and hang them upside down in a shady place for two to three weeks. I'm no flower arranger, so to be honest I haven't got a clue. Just do whatever works.

I do know that when they form part of the dangly flower thing that hangs from my car mirror, the color never changes. Everything else there turns a dingy brown while the bachelor's button flowers are still a bright, grinning purple.

So how about a pantomime in Phuket? Just as long as I don't have to be Buttons. There are a few individuals here who would make perfect panto dames, one being the owner of a certain drinking establishment. And even more people who have the legs to play principal boy... The problem is that some of them really are boys. You just cannot win.

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Construction Update

by Anongnat Sartpisut

Going green at Garden Place

THALANG: Garden Place Muang Thalang is a four-phase project on 19 rai of land with a budget of 135 million baht. Construction started in April this year, with Phase I scheduled for completion in October, 2006.

The houses will be “in the midst of nature, surrounded by plenty of green,” said Piriya Tantipiriyakit, Managing Director of developer T Places Company.

“The houses are designed to be simple and comfortable. We tried to cut unnecessary expense while adding to the functionality of the homes. Our focus is on Thai and foreign families with a monthly income of around 30,000 baht.”

The project is sited opposite the Mae Ju shop and just before the turn-off to the airport.

Phase I will consist of 68 units of three types:

- Ketlada (two units) – a single-story duplex of 92 square meters, with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Prices for these two homes will start at 1.3 million baht.

- Ketkaew (27 units) – detached one-floor houses of 115sqm each, with three bedrooms and three



Piriya Tantipiriyakit, Managing Director of T Places Company, and a showhouse from Phase I of the Garden Place Muang Thalang project.



bathrooms. Prices will start at 1.8 million baht.

- Ketmanee (39 units) – detached houses with a 150-sqm living area. These one-story homes will have three large bedrooms and two bathrooms. Prices will start at 2.2 million baht.

All the houses will feature quality materials, said K. Piriya, including CPAC Monia roofing

tiles, water-resistant concrete sheeting for outdoor ceilings, American Standard or equivalent-quality fittings for bathrooms, and termite protection.

The project infrastructure will include a 1,600-liter underground septic tank for each unit; deep-well water supply and a government-certified water piping and delivery system.

K. Piriya said, “Our ceilings will be 2.8 meters high to reduce heat, for the sake of comfort.”

“We believe that the units will be sold out this December. Currently, 18 units of Phase I have already been sold – both of the Ketlada homes, six Ketkaew homes and 10 Ketmanee.”

Phase II will consist of 78 units, including townhouses,

shophouses and detached houses. Construction starts next year. Plans for the other two phases have yet to be finalized.

For more information, contact Tel: 076-274986 or 076-352174. Fax : 076-274987 or email: tplaces@samarts.com See the website at: www.gardenplace-phuket.com



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Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

LAND FOR SALE

on the bypass road. 27-rai, 180m wide. Please call for more information. Tel: 07-2670488.

PATONG CONDOS

Condos with a sea view, 28 and 56sqm for sale. Priced from 650,000 baht. Near bank and post office. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

PHANG NGA LAND

A 3.2-rai seaview plot on Haad Tub Tawan Rd, north end of Bang Sak Beach; 120m to the beach road & power. 68m of driveway, front 75m; 18km south of Takuapa. 75km from Phuket International Airport. Tel: 01-8947644.

NEW RAWAI VILLA

2-bedroom, 144sqm house with 2 bathrooms, kitchen and living room, on 400sqm of land. 400 meters from the beach. Asking 2.8 million baht. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

CHEAP LAND

near Laguna. 10-40 rai of lake-view land. 1.1 million baht per rai. Will sell the lot at 1 million baht per rai. Tel: 06-9520772. Email: kamala@phuket.ksc.co.th

RAWAI CONDOS

with sea view. 27, 54 and 81sqm. Priced from 350,000 baht. Financing for 3 years available. Foreign freehold. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

RAWAI LAND

1,030sqm plot, with fabulous hill and jungle view, for sale. Asking 1.7 million baht. Please contact. Tel: 076-248626, 01-0808557. Email: admin@phuketdeafeagle.com

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Land for sale near Ao Por, with Chanote title and electricity on 4 rai for an unbelievable 1.5 million baht. Please contact Phuket Land Deals. Tel: 06-2670898. Email: info@phuketlanddeals.com

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plots for sale. Ao Makham plots selling for 3.5 million baht per rai. Chalong, 2.9 million baht per rai. Mission Hill, 4.5 million baht per rai. Eastern beachfront, 2.8 million baht per rai. Please contact K. Joe. For more info. Tel: 01-693-6437, 06-6841260. Email: joe_mooky@yahoo.com

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Plots with full sea views, asking 3.2 million per rai. Please contact Phuket Land Deals for more info. Tel: 06-2670898. Email: info@phuketlanddeals.com

3 PLOTS FOR SALE

Asking 3.7 million baht per rai for 3 separate plots of 1 rai each, in Rawai. Please contact Phuket Land Deals for more information. Tel: 06-2670898. Email: info@phuketlanddeals.com

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Property Gazette

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Machinist wanted to manufacture curtains and blinds. Only experienced persons should apply. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-261358, 07-2760529. Fax: 076-261358. Email: jmicchia@yahoo.com

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Looking for 1 cook and 1 driver for location work in Rawai. English-speaking skills required. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-8933212. Email: scphuket@yahoo.com

TEACHER - KRABI

Teacher of English and Thai languages needed at private language school in Krabi. Experience of teaching essential. Only resumé in English accepted. Email: krabi.ls@gmail.com

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Attractive female bar staff wanted for a bar in Kata. Great conditions including drink commissions. Please call K. Richard at Tel: 04-846-7331 or K. Noo at Tel: 07-2669285 for more information.

WANTED

for house in Kamala. Live-in maid-housekeeper-cook wanted. Must speak some English. Please contact K. Bow between 9 am and 5 pm. Tel: 076-317-017-20. Fax: 076-317021.

PAPAYA POK POK

Dynamic and experienced manager required for new concept restaurant/bar in Patong. Applicants must be Thai and capable of leading a young team and managing an efficient kitchen. Applicants must be 25 to 40 years old, with spoken English skills. Please call for more information or send CV by email. Tel: 07-0804258. Email: brian@kokawaii.com

WANTED:

secretary/manager. A small health center in Rawai is looking for a Thai lady to fill this position ASAP. The right person should be fluent in English, have basic computer skills and a pleasant personality. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-383046, 09-7689567. Email: sindhu_lim@excite.com

CREW WANTED

1 or 2 crew members needed on a 15-meter sloop. Depart in September to reach Cape Town for Xmas and visit points en route. Apply at: "Coconuts" 1/9 Ao Chalong Pier Rd. 8-10 pm daily. Please call. Tel: 09-2667514.

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- Welder

Food & Beverage

- Food & Beverage Manager
- Restaurant Manager
- Restaurant/ Bar Captain
- Waiter/Waitress/Hostess
- Bartender/Bar Boy

Kitchen

- Sous Chef
- Chef de Partie
- Chief Steward
- Commis I
- Commis II
- Commis III
- Steward

Duty Manager, F&B Manager, Restaurant Manager must be able to train and develop staff at both supervisory and entry levels, self-motivated and have a minimum of 3 years experience in a related field. A high degree of proficiency in English is necessary.

All other applicants should have a good personality, be fluent in spoken English with a minimum of 1 year's experience in the related field. Any candidates with the above qualifications should submit a resumé with a recent photograph to:

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TAMARIND GROUP**

106/27, Moo. 3, Cherngtalay, Talang, Phuket 83110

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Fax: 66 (0) 7632 5476

Email: hr@surinbeachresort.com or annop@kamalabaygarden.com

SPA MANAGER

We are looking for a Spa Manager and female Receptionist. Nationality not important. Please call for more information. Tel: 04-8478352.

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for a school. Must have good English. Please contact for more information. Fax: 076-248976. Email: info@kajonkiet.com

SECRETARY

& lawyer. Looking for a legal secretary & lawyer, full-time or part-time, in Phuket. Please contact. Email: scphuket@yahoo.com

COOK/WAITRESS

needed. Small restaurant in Karon needs cook/waitress urgently. Tel: 01-8914019. Email: tkoschig2000@hotmail.com

CONCEPT ARTIST

wanted. Working with an interior designer to produce perspective/concept drawings and other sketches for an interior design company based on the bypass road. Salary: 20,000 baht + per month for the right person. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-8937028. Fax: 076-254-827. Email: andamanartifacts@hotmail.com

Indigo Real Estate Co. Ltd.

Indigo, one of the leading real estate companies in Phuket, is looking to expand its operations. We are actively seeking applicants for the following positions:

Sales Executives

- Thai nationals between 25-35 years of age
- Strong written and oral communication skills in English
- University degree or equivalent in any field would be an advantage
- A dynamic, self motivated, confident and ambitious personality is essential
- Previous sales experience would be an advantage

Marketing Manager/Coordinator

- Thai national
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- Knowledge of real estate, ability to develop and implement strategic marketing plans is preferred

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Please send your resumé, detailing work experience, present salary and recent photograph with a contact telephone number to the address below:

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5/50 Moo 3 unit G6 The Plaza, Surin Beach
T.Cherng Talay A.Thalang, Phuket 83110 Thailand.
Or alternatively, E-mail your resumé to info@indigore.com

ACCOUNTANT

Diving/adventures company in Karon, Phuket, looking for experienced Accountant. Only Thai nationals need apply. Must be a graduate in accountancy with 2 years' relevant working experience. Must have Office PC experience and a fair command of English, written and spoken. Attractive salary for the right person. Send CV by email or contact. Tel: 01-8927847, 076-398364. Email: holiday@liveaboard-thailand.com

BOOKKEEPER REQUIRED

Layan Gardens requires a bookkeeper. Applicants should understand multi-company and inter-company accounting; knowledge of the construction industry would be a benefit. Good command of written and spoken English essential. Please send CV to email address provided or call for more information. Tel: 076-318111, 06-271-5319. Email: grenville@layangardens.com

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therapists wanted. Phuket Home Massage, the only 5-star massage service direct to customers' homes in Phuket, is looking for a few massage therapists and a trainer. We want to provide the best massage in Phuket. If you think you might be able to do so, call K. Noy. We offer two months of initial training on full salary. Tel: 076-270027, 01-0827703. Email: info@phukethomemassage.com For further details, please see our website at: www.phukethomemassage.com

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT

required for a busy Thai-speaking office. Proficient with Easy Accounting system plus Excel and Word. Good standard of written and spoken English a big plus. Office located near Phuket City. Email: arc.x@thecourtyard-phuket.com

URGENTLY REQUIRED

A live-in house manager, with previous experience working with foreigners in a villa or hotel, is wanted to take care of a house and to cook. Should be pleasant, hard-working, reliable and be able to speak English. Please call Khun Sim for more information. Tel: 076-316700.

WANTED:

secretary/ manager. A small health center in Rawai is looking for a Thai lady to fill this position ASAP. The right person should be fluent in English, have basic computer skills and a pleasant personality. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-383-046, 09-7689567. Email: sindhu_lim@excite.com

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MANGOSTEEN

Chief Engineer. The Mangosteen Resort & Spa, the 5-star boutique resort in Rawai, is looking for a Chief Engineer. English skills and technical experience required, as well as several years' experience in hotel engineering. Position available immediately. Tel: 076-289399. Fax: 076-289389. Email: myfuture@mangosteen-phuket.com

ACCOUNTANT

Fast-growing marine recreation company seeks a qualified accountant. Must have university accounting degree. Min 3 years' experience performing all accounting and administrative functions, including monthly VAT, withholding tax and social security reports, and general ledger entries. Duties will also include general administration and office management. Fax: 076-239559. Email: ftbrowsers@limestoneadventures.com

EXPERIENCED

programmers. AsiaDebit/Payzip is the market leader for Internet payment solutions in Asia. We are seeking 2 experienced programmers to work as part of the development team in our Phuket office. The job will involve developing both new and existing applications for the online payment market. The ideal candidates will work well in a team environment, be comfortable programming in different languages on Windows and Linux, and have good structured design and programming techniques.

Basic Requirements:

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Preferred Qualifications:

- Knowledge and use of object-oriented programming and design.
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All nationalities residing in Phuket are welcome to submit a full CV to me at the email address below. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. Tel: 076-282211. Fax: 076-283251. Email: jamie@payzip.com For further details, please see our website at: www.payzip.com

CONCEPT ARTIST

wanted. Working with an interior designer to produce perspective/concept drawings and other sketches for an interior design company based on the bypass road. Salary: 20,000 baht + per month for the right person. Tel: 01-8937028. Fax: 076-254-827. Email: andamanartifacts@hotmail.com

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DRIVER OR GARDENER

I am urgently seeking a job as a driver or a gardener. I speak Thai, French and English. Please call for more information. Tel: 04-844-8618.

30 YEAR OLD

English guy. I am coming to Phuket on the August 12 in the hope of finding employment. I have been coming to Thailand for many years and would now like to settle there. I have many years of experience in customer services and management. I have a Bachelor's degree in Business Studies. I am a hard worker and loyal. I would be very grateful if anyone who has a job opening - or who knows of a job opening - would contact me as soon as possible. Many thanks. Email: paulwhouston@yahoo.de

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TAILOR SHOP

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