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LONG LIVE HIS MAJESTY!

On December 5, all of Thailand celebrates the birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. His Majesty was born on Monday, December 5, 1927, in Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the third and youngest child of their Royal Highnesses Prince Mahidol of Songkhla and Princess Sri Nagairindra.

He became King at the age of 19. After his formal coronation in 1950, he began what has become the mainstay of his later life: traveling and meeting local people in the rural and provincial areas.

He listens to them, examines their needs and problems, and tries to find ways to give them immediate help. He himself has led a very simple life, a life with little pomp and ceremony that has earned him a reputation as "The People's King".

He has also shown himself to be a shrewd negotiator, an innovator, a social de-

veloper, a peacemaker and a champion of all his people.

He has established many funds and foundations to research and combat diseases including cholera and poliomyelitis, which were endemic in Thailand 50 years ago.

His concern for the needs of children has led to a strong commitment to education, and he has built schools around Thailand, especially in the poorer, more remote areas.

HM the King has a very special place in the hearts of the Thai people. As monarch and as the figurehead of Thailand, he is the symbol of national unity.

On December 5 all Thailand is decorated with the Thai flag and at night lit by lanterns in a celebration of fatherhood and of the Leading Father, HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Father of the Nation.

LONG LIVE THE KING!

- Asst Prof Pimpaporn Suwatthigul, Orapat Wong Bhumiwatana & Marian Fletcher



War of words over slow tsunami siren demo

By Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

PATONG: Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop rapped the Nonthaburi-based National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC) on November 25 for a mix-up that resulted in a delay in a demonstration of tsunami sirens in Patong.

But the NDWC and Patong Municipality in return slammed the DPM's retinue for not ordering up the test in advance so that local people could be warned that it was not the real thing, but only a drill.

The DPM, who was in Phuket to check on preparations for the December 26 tsunami anniversary, had asked for the demonstration.

"We are checking everything, especially the warning system [in Patong] and all the beaches will be ready by December 26," he explained.



Why is this taking so long? Deputy PM Suwat (left) waits for the sirens in Patong to sound.

At the DPM's request, an adviser to the warning center called the NDWC on his mobile phone to request a demonstration.

Nothing happened for 10 minutes. An irritated K. Suwat wagged a finger at the adviser and told him, "If this kind of situation recurs, the public may not get a warning in time. The

NDWC must find ways to respond faster."

However, Patong Deputy Mayor Chairat Sukbal told the Gazette that the reason for the delay was that the test had not been scheduled correctly.

"It was not coordinated beforehand with the NDWC or Patong Municipality.

"The officers from Bangkok who came with DPM Suwat wanted to demonstrate the sirens for the DPM, but we could not simply do that.

"We have to have a document from NDWC first - we can't just turn the sirens on for anyone who wants to hear them. We have to announce first that a test is to be held, especially now that the high season is here," K. Chairat added.

Adm Thaweesak Daengchai, NDWC Adviser, agreed. He told the Gazette, "The problem occurred because the K. Suwat's entourage initially asked for a test at Saphan Hin.

"But when the DPM arrived, his people wanted to test the warning towers in Patong.

"After the sirens went off we had complaints from many people in Patong because they did not know it was a test, and it alarmed and confused them."

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Bringing the blues

By Alasdair Forbes

KARON: The curtain rises on Phuket's first international blues festival on December 16, with nine bands taking to the stage in the course of the two-day event, hosted by the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa in Karon.

The first band to take the stage, at 6:30 pm on December 16, will be Blue On Blue from Bangkok. They will be followed by Pattaya-based Blues Machine, Soi Dog Blues Band from Bangkok, and, at 11 pm, Victor Brox from the UK, described by Jimi Hendrix and Tina Turner as their favorite white blues singer.

The following evening's music will begin at 6:30 pm with two Phuket bands, Groove Doctors and Big Fat Blues Band, followed by Cannonball from Bangkok and Kyla Brox – Victor's daughter.

Topping the bill will be the Rich Harper Band from Los Angeles, whose track *As She Moved In (My Guitar Moved Out)*, hit Number One in *Rolling Stone* Magazine's MP3 & More Blues Chart.



California's Rich Harper, photographed here during the closing show of the Amal Blues Festival in Sweden last year.

Tickets cost 1,000 baht for a one-day pass (either day) or 1,600 baht for a two-day pass. VIP tickets, which will allow holders backstage to meet the bands, cost 3,000 baht for the two days.

Tickets will be available from a variety of outlets. These are: in Karon, the Hilton; in Kata, the Kata Beach Resort and Jiva Resort; in Cherno Talay, the Albatross Café in the Laguna complex and Wine & Taste on the road into the Laguna complex; in

Phuket City, Central Festival, the Watermark Restaurant at Boat Lagoon, and the offices of the *Phuket Gazette*; in Chalong, The Green Man; and in Patong, Rock City and the Yorkshire Inn. The event is presented by HotelTravel.com and the *Phuket Gazette*.

For further information contact Andy Andersen at Tel: 06-6822639 or by email to phuketmusic@yahoo.com

Starwood buys Le Meridien

WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK: Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide has announced that it has completed its acquisition of the Le Meridien brand and the related franchises and management contracts.

It has paid about US\$225 million (9 billion baht) for control of the 130 hotels and resorts worldwide – including Le Meridien's two properties in Phuket, one in Khao Lak and one on Koh Samui.

"The acquisition of the Le Meridien brand is an exciting and significant development for Starwood that we believe further defines us as a truly global hotel operator," said Steven Heyer, CEO of Starwood Hotels & Resorts.

"We love the Le Meridien brand which is why we have pursued it over the past couple of years – we see great potential. [It] is a perfect complement to the Starwood portfolio."

"Le Meridien hotels are located in many markets where we don't already have a strong presence. This, coupled with the

brand's excellent reputation and its strong European [roots], is what made it such an attractive proposition for us," added Mr Heyer.

Starwood will continue to use the Le Meridien name on the 130 properties. Other Starwood brands include Sheraton, Westin, Four Points, W Hotels, St Regis, and The Luxury Collection.

Before acquiring Le Meridien, Starwood already owned, managed or had franchises on 752 hotels and resorts worldwide, including 94 in the Asia-Pacific region. These 752 properties contain a total of 236,000 guest rooms.

In corporate terms, Le Meridien has been the orphan of the hotel world for the past 10 years, having had no fewer than five owners. The group was originally a subsidiary of Air France, and then passed to hotel group Forte which was in turn bought by larger hotel group Granada and sold to Compass Hotels, then Japanese financial giant Nomura and finally US investment house Lehman Bros.

School closed after 'pupils possessed by spirits'

By Suwakon Rakmanee

THALANG: The Director of Cherno Talay Wittayakom secondary school sent students home for three days from Monday, November 28, following an apparent case of mass hysteria on the previous Friday.

On that afternoon, a number of students were allegedly "possessed by a spirit" after a backhoe being used in a renovation project accidentally damaged

an old Chinese shrine behind the school.

According to some accounts, one girl first became possessed by the shrine's spirit. She then began pointing her finger at School Director Nachai Keimnippatt, screaming abuse.

Other students also allegedly showed signs of possession, some screaming until they collapsed. The hysteria then spread in varying degrees to other students – and staff.

School Director Nachai downplayed reports that up to 100 students had been "possessed" and that some required hospitalization for shock.

One teacher told the *Gazette* that about 10 students went to the hospital after the incident, while the rest just returned home.

K. Nachai told the *Gazette* that after that Phuket Vegetarian Festival some students had undergone ritual purifications at a local shrine for cases of possession.

"My students regularly served as mediums for the shrine after the Phuket Vegetarian Festival, so rituals were performed

afterwards to help release the spirits from them," he said.

"But on Friday, November 25, one student became terrified and began screaming, claiming she saw an apparition that appeared to her after an old spirit house behind the school was damaged," he said.

"I had ordered a backhoe to do some landscaping work in an overgrown area behind the school, and the operator didn't notice the spirit house, so it was damaged," he said.

"The spirit [appeared to have] entered the girl's body. Through the possessed student, she told me she no longer had a

dwelling place and wanted a new shrine.

"I promised to rebuild the small shrine just for the Khaaw Spirit [which had possessed the girl] and another, larger, shrine for all the other gods and goddesses. After that I called the hospital. Then the police came too. It was all very tumultuous."

K. Nachai downplayed reports that up to 100 students had appeared to have become "possessed", putting the actual number as closer to 20 or 30.

"With all their screaming, they frightened the other students and staff, so I made the decision to close the school for three days," he said.

Ceremonies will be performed to ensure there are no more spirit possessions, he added.

Man found dead in rubber plantation

KATHU: The badly decomposed body of a man was found in Kathu on November 24.

Pol Lt Prathung Pholmana, of Kathu Police Station, told the *Gazette* that he received a phone call from locals saying that they had discovered a body in a rubber plantation near Patong Hill. Police recovered the body but have not been able to identify it.

Pol Lt Prathung said, "We don't know the cause of the death nor how long the man has been dead because the body is so decomposed. Local people have told me that he might have been a Burmese working in the area."

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HRH Princess Soamsavali touches a globe of light to begin the opening ceremony of the 'Phuket Is Back' party at the Dusit Laguna Resort on November 28.

Aussie teen latest jet-ski casualty

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PATONG: An Australian teenager was critically injured on November 23 when his rented jet-ski was in collision with another jet-ski operated by a friend.

Both men were rushed to Patong Hospital after the crash, which happened at the south end of the beach at about 4 pm.

Pol Maj Sophon Borirak of Kathu Police said 19-year-old Antonio Scognamigli was rushed unconscious to the Patong Hos-

pital. His heart stopped, but doctors managed to revive him.

He was later transferred to Bangkok Hospital Phuket, and then to Bamrungrad Hospital in Bangkok where he was still unconscious as the *Gazette* went to press. He was expected to undergo brain surgery.

The operator of the other jet-ski, 20-year-old William Forest, also of Australia, told police he had come to Phuket on holiday with Mr Scognamigli. Police said he admitted to being respon-

sible for the crash, explaining that he was just "horsing around" with his friend when he approached with his jet-ski at high speed.

It was not revealed whether either man had been drinking.

After his release from Patong Hospital for treatment of minor injuries, Forest was arrested and charged with negligence causing grievous bodily harm. If found guilty, he could face imprisonment of up to three years or a fine of up to 6,000 baht, or both. He was released on bail.

Vice-Governor's home burgled

By Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

PHUKET CITY: Police have few leads in their investigation of the November 22 burglary of Phuket Vice-Governor Niran Kalayanamit's official residence on Kamnan Rd.

Phuket City Police Superintendent Pol Col Nos Avetalekha told the *Gazette* that K. Niran's house had been broken into while the island's senior Vice-Governor was in Bangkok for a meeting on preparations for next month's tsunami memorial activities.

PATROLS

Col Nos said the initial investigation failed to turn up any fingerprints, probably because the thief or thieves were wearing gloves, a pair of which were found at the scene. He said there were also signs of forced entry into the two-story dwelling, which is surrounded by a 1.5-meter-high wall.

He noted that the Vice-Governor's home, which was unattended at the time of the break-in, was subject to routine checks by patrol police while he was away.

Volunteer police who were also keeping an eye on the home

discovered the break-in and reported it to police on the Tuesday afternoon.

V/Gov Niran told the *Gazette* the following day that he was informed of the break-in by Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Pol Col Chalit Thintanee.

Returning to Phuket on November 23, he found a pistol, seven Buddha amulets, an electronic dictionary and an unspecified sum of cash were missing.

"I think the thieves are teenagers," he said.

The theft is not the first time thieves have targeted the residence of a high-ranking provincial official.

In September 2002, a 17-year-old hairdresser stole an envelope containing 50,000 baht from the residence of then-Governor Pongpayome Vasaputi.

V/Gov Niran told the *Gazette* on November 29 that no progress had been made in finding those responsible for the burglary, but that he suspected it might have been Burmese construction workers living nearby.

"We now have 24-hour security and a red police report box, but all this was done after the theft.

"They took my sport shoes, too," he complained.

2 die, 4 hurt in Patong landslides

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: Landslides caused by torrential rains on November 25 claimed two lives in Patong and injured four others, according to Patong Hospital.

The downpour also caused extensive flooding in Phuket City and other parts of the island.

Padungkiat Utoksenee, Deputy Director of Patong Hospital, said that while flooding in Patong often resulted in accidents, this was the first time that anyone had been killed by a landslide.

The two victims died when the landslide crashed through the wall of their home on Nanai Rd.

They have been named as Sa, an 11-year-old girl, and Awerm, a 25-year-old woman. Both were members of Myanmar's Mon minority, who generally have no last name.

The four people injured were also members of the Mon community.

Nanai Rd runs along the base of the hills that encircle the municipality, and which have been the site of extensive, largely unregulated, hillside construction in recent years.

Noting that the parking lot of Patong Hospital was knee-deep in floodwater - as were other parts of the town - K. Padungkiat called on Patong

Municipality to improve its flood control measures.

Boonchai Somjai, head of the Phuket Provincial Office of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (ODPM), told the *Gazette* that the rainfall statistics for the 24-hour period starting at 7 am on November 25 were 92.9 millimeters at the Phuket City monitoring station and 25mm at the Phuket International Airport.

More heavy rain fell in the following days, bringing the total measured rainfall between November 1 and November 28 to 293.3 millimeters.

The total measured rainfall in November last year was 81.1mm.

Island has water to last until mid-March

PHUKET: Despite almost daily rain over the past few months, Phuket's principal water supply source is still only about half full.

The Bang Wad Reservoir in Kathu currently holds 3.86 million cubic meters - less than half its capacity of 7.31m³.

"Without more rainfall, the water will last only until mid-March," Isara Anukul, Chief of

the Water Allocation Division of the Phuket Irrigation Office (PIO), told the *Gazette*.

Rainfall this year has been below average so far, with some

308mm of rain in October and 293mm from Nov 1-28. October alone brought 167m³ of water to the island, enough to fill Bang Wad 23 times - if it could be collected.

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Mega-projects: the multi-million-dollar question

Immobilien Plus (Asia) is the company responsible for Oriental Garden Oasis, a mega-project in Ao Yon. CEO Sam Sethi told the *Gazette* that the company, headquartered in Spain, "saw Phuket's potential to be a high-end residential hub, instantly recognizable around the world".

The project has a modern tropical theme covering seven rai of land. It features three villas, each covering 1,200-1,600 square meters. All units are fully equipped and furnished with four- to five-bedroom suites and with a large swimming pool. Construction will begin early next year, and is slated for completion by the end of 2007.

Mr Sethi said that the top of-the-line building materials and electrical fittings, as well as the engineering, are all of German origin. Water storage and the electrical supply are safely enclosed underground.

"These villas are an investment opportunity that will reap rich rewards, and they can be family or holiday homes with a fantastic view over Ao Yon," Mr Sethi said. "The market is defi-

Phuket, some would say, is a property developer's dream location. Over the past few years many spectacular homes, apartments and villas have sprung up – in some cases quicker than the island's ubiquitous banana trees. Construction galore, there's no doubt about it. But hold on to your hard hats, there's more – now the mega-developers are moving in. Last year, the island's most expensive houses were selling for up to 40 million baht, but this year, Phuket has blasted out of orbit with a construction project featuring houses that are being marketed for more than 100 million baht. **Anongnat Sartpisut** investigates the phenomenon.



nately European, although we should not overlook the Asian potential as well."

He said that Phuket's high-end market has not yet reached

its full capacity, and that the mega-home market is continuing to grow.

"The price for properties such as these top-end develop-

ments depends on the materials used and how buyers would like their houses to be. Some people want gold fittings, for example. Every way you look at it, Phuket has good potential for the high-end property market.

"Location, too, will dictate future prices. In general, people equate a Phuket residence with a seaview, so that is a major factor along with the investment potential. Convenience is also high on potential buyers' wish lists as they will want access and proximity to shopping, beaches and golf courses. I feel that Phuket has about 80% of its infrastructure developed and ready.

"This place has definite potential, even if it has a limited land area. The government has laid down the rules regarding height, land encroachment and construction rules, and they don't let developers build any way they want; they try to keep the place looking beautiful. If the government strictly enforces the rules there will be no problems for property development in Phuket."

Vorasit Yssara, head of Hospitality & Business Development of neighboring mega-project Sri Panwa, said, "The property market is growing – there are still many niches we have not explored. I feel the market can expand a lot.

"In the past, we aimed at the British, German, and French markets, but in the next 10 years, the Russians will probably be our main customers as they have the purchasing power – and they can pay in hard currency.

"We're also not forgetting or overlooking the up-and-coming Chinese market."

Sri Panwa is another top-end luxury development. Built on 80 rai of land, Phase I prices are 47-128 million baht. Phase II and III will cost between 15-250 million baht from 200-2,000sqm. The project is expected to be completed by 2007.

K. Vorasit said that Sri Panwa's target customers are largely expatriates based in Hong Kong and Japan.

Asked whether properties were being bought as homes or to be rented out, K. Vorasit replied, "About 30% are customers looking for property investment, while 70% of the customers want private homes to fulfill their lifestyle needs.

"In the future, there will be no prime locations left near the beach, but at least Phuket has a good infrastructure to support these new larger developments. Cape Panwa itself will be a mixed bag, development-wise, with upmarket properties, residences and hotels all involved."

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An artist's impression of a villa at the Oriental Garden Oasis project, and (below) the view.



‘Every way you look at it, Phuket has good potential for the high-end property market’

Immobilien Plus (Asia) CEO Sam Sethi

As for the cost factor, K. Vorasit said that the 100-250 million baht price-tag on Panwa's properties compares favorably with house prices in Eastern Europe and Russia, but that houses there are smaller than those Phuket offers – and often come with no view.

“House prices will increase by about 10-30% on Phuket [in the next 5-10 years], depending on the world situation,” he said. “I wouldn't be surprised to see US Dollar 5-20 million houses here in the future.”

Phuket is a travel hub, K. Vorasit said. “Because of Phuket's location it is easy to fly here from anywhere in the world. Also, factor in Thai hospitality and a much lower cost of living

than Europe, and it becomes plain why developers and buyers are attracted to visit and live on the island.”

He said, “I believe that Phuket's governor will take care of property regulations. They [local government] want to keep Phuket beautiful and our project

fits in perfectly with its natural design.”

Phuket Provincial Land Office (PPLO) Chief Suphot Suwannachote said that there were 51 building projects registered in Phuket this year, compared with 43 projects in the previous financial year.

He said, “There are property developments spread out all over the island, and we control them strictly to ensure that the developers do not break the law. We found some projects were harmful because of landslides or other problems. In some cases, we didn't grant them building per-

mission but they ignored us, which forces us to punish them.”

K. Suphot added that property at Pa Khlok, for example, is 30% more expensive now than it was this time last year: “The PPLO will keep a close eye on the yearly increasing land prices, as it is a sensitive issue,” he said.

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Queer News

Woman zapped by her own security device

SURAT THANI: Sakhon Wichaidit was fed up with thieves trying to steal the mats of rubber stored outside her home, so she installed a security system – she surrounded her property, located in a rubber plantation, with bare wire, then plugged it into the mains power. But the only victim claimed by the system was K. Sakhon herself.

At about 8:30 am on November 20, neighbors saw the 41-year-old run out of her home in remote Tambon Changkhwa to meet a friend.

As she ran barefoot out of the house and across the wet, muddy yard, she lost her footing and fell on the wire, which had been concealed in the trees and bushes surrounding her home.

Neighbors watched in horror as the current surged through her body. She was rushed to hospital, but died on the way.

At Kanchanadit Hospital, police noted deep burn wounds on her body, especially across the palms of both hands, where the flesh had been seared off.

One neighbor and a relative of the victim, 50-year-old Napha Wichaidit, said K. Sakhon lived in the house with her husband. The couple had five children, all students in Surat Thani Town, who came home only at weekends and holidays.

She said nearly every house in the village had strung electric wiring around their properties, concealing it in vegetation and

turning the current on at night to ward off thieves who regularly stole the raw rubber mats they left hanging in their yards.

The thieves, who are especially active when the price of rubber is high, had been running amok in Tambon Changkhwa and neighboring tambons in Amphur Kanchanadit, K. Napha said.

“They also go after other valuables as well, anything else with resale value,” she said. “They hit every house in the area, which is why almost everyone has set up electric wiring to protect themselves.

“When we report the thefts to the police, they seldom catch the thieves. Sometimes they say they have caught a suspect, but we never get our property back,” she added.

Many local residents first tried guard dogs, but without success. “Guard dogs didn’t work because the thieves came and gave them *ya beua maa* (dog poison). That’s when everyone started using live wires; we usually turn them off in the morning and until now, none of the homeowners has received a shock,” she said.

Kanchanadit District Police Superintendent Pol Col Praphan Khaawthong said that using electrified fencing to protect property was common in rural districts, where it was especially popular for trapping tree-dwelling animals and for securing livestock in pens.

Source: *Kom Chad Luek*

Gazette artist Thanawut ‘Wut’ Makawan (right) collects a voucher for dinner for two at Baan Yin Dee Boutique Resort Phuket, on behalf of Somsak Lakman, who had a ‘We Love Phuket’ sticker on his car. It is presented by Jason Allen Villarrino, Chef of Baan Yin Dee Boutique Resort Phuket.



‘We Love Phuket’ sticker campaign



Orapan Tungsomboon collects her prize of a one-hour refreshing spa treatment at the Aspara Spa, at the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket, from *Gazette* Desk Editor Sam Wilkinson for having a sticker on her car.

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

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



Sales sanctions: booze next in line

Hot on the heels of cigarettes, alcoholic beverages are the next "social evil" to be banished from sight in retail outlets, according to a proposed act drafted by the Public Health Ministry's alcohol consumption control committee.

Dr Narong Sahamethapat, Deputy Director-General of the Disease Control Department, said the Alcohol Consumption Control Act draft is awaiting a public hearing, which is expected to be held next year.

"It is hoped the ban on alcohol displays will reduce alcohol consumption among young people," he said.

The act will also ban promotion of alcoholic drinks through electronic media, and sales near schools, temples and petrol stations. The ban on advertising alcoholic products on radio and TV will be extended to the period between 5 am and 10 pm, K. Narong said.

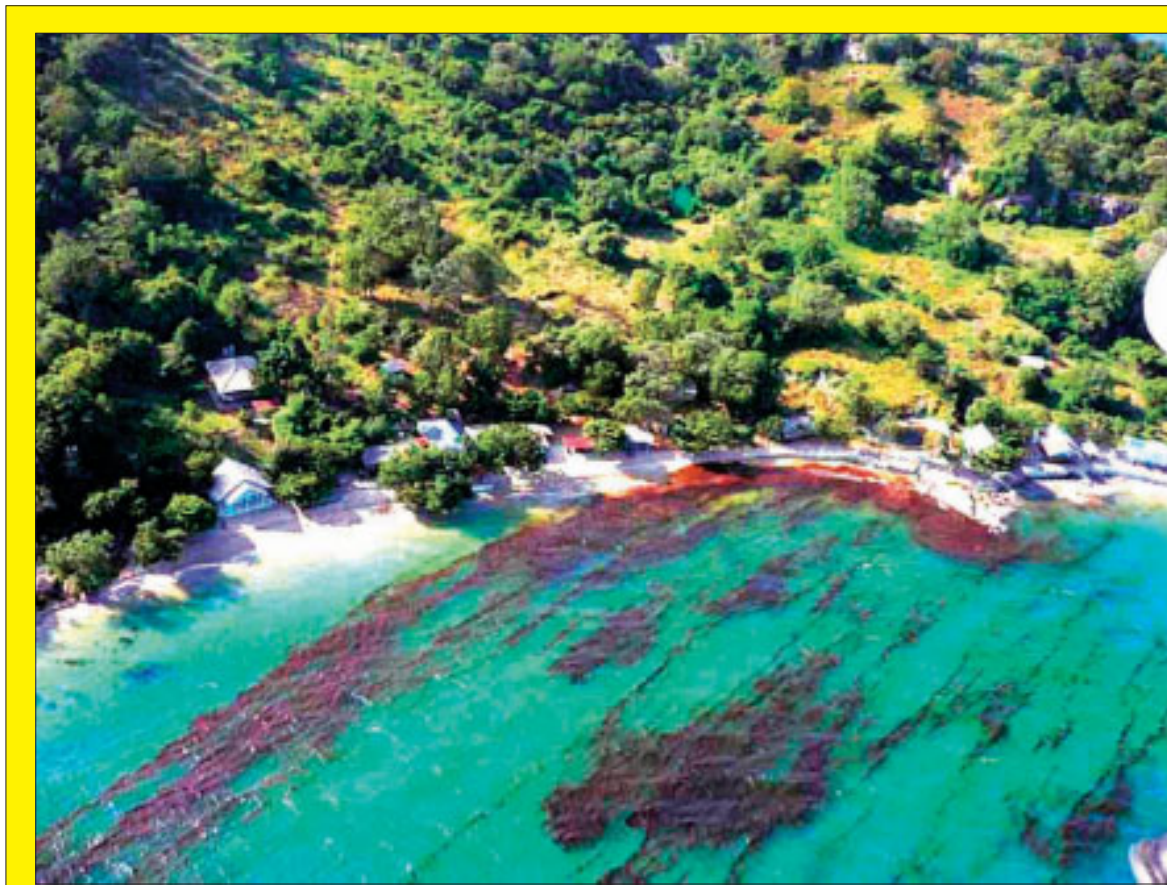
Bans on alcohol sales will also be enforced on Sundays, which is considered a family day, as well as on days of religious and royal ceremonies.

Undercover probe: The Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC) is to launch undercover investigations into alleged misbehavior by government officials following a flood of complaints from their subordinates.

OCSC Deputy Secretary-General Vanida Nualboonrueng said that in less than four months, a special unit at the OCSC received 448 complaints, many of them related to bullying or sexual harassment.

She said complaints of harassment are not only against males, but also against females. "An example is the case of a suicidal female teacher sexually harassed by her female supervisor," she said.

Another complaint accused married supervisors at a government agency of having so many relationships with subordinates that the practice is now consid-



An aerial view of an oil slick heading for the resort island of Khang Kao Island in Chon Buri Province. Marine scientists warned of long-term damage to coral reefs and marine life in the area after 30,000 liters of crude oil owned by Thai Oil were accidentally released into the sea from the Japanese-registered tanker *Ryaho Maru*.

Thai Oil and state agencies used huge amounts of chemicals to disperse the slick before it reached the island, but environmental scientists warned that it would simply sink to the seabed there, covering coral and killing marine animals.

ered normal behavior, and is followed by all supervisors, she disclosed.

Register your cock: In an effort to curb the spread of bird flu, owners of fighting cocks must register the birds by December 31, 2005, the Livestock Department's Director-General Yukol Limlamthong announced.

Even though there is no penalty for failure to register, the Livestock Department plans to begin a public relations campaign to inform owners about the benefits of registering their birds.

Registration should help people take better care of their birds' health, according to K. Yukol.

Currently, only 40,000 of an estimated 12 million fighting

cocks in Thailand have been registered as the authorities continue their battle to eradicate bird flu, which has killed 13 people in the country.

Reality TV: Eight closed-circuit video cameras are to be installed in the cells of the Lamphun Police Station, following the most recent suicide by hanging of a prisoner there.

The cameras, which are already installed at the station but are monitoring other areas, will be moved into the cells as a temporary measure to prevent more prisoners from committing suicide pending the construction of new accommodation.

On October 3, three suspects held for possession of methamphetamine pills were found

hanging by their shoelaces from an overhead bar in a detention cell at the same police station, less than 24 hours after their arrest.

Bog standard: After aspiring to be an international hub of major world businesses like tourism, fashion and medical care, Thailand is now striving for something that may be more achievable - becoming a toilet hub.

Impressed with the Public Health Ministry's Master Plan for Public Toilet Development in Thailand, the World Toilet Organization has announced that the

country will host the World Toilet Expo and Forum 2006.

World Toilet Organization founder Jack Sim said the 2nd World Toilet Expo, which will be held in Thailand from November 16 to 18, 2006 at Impact Muang Thong Thani, will establish Thailand as the Asian hub for the quest for new ways to improve the standard of public toilet services.

Mean cuisine: Amid heavy criticism, Chiang Mai Night Safari Director Plodprasop Suraswadi scaled down his plans to serve wild animal meat at the zoo's restaurants.

K. Plodprasop, also Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, said the restaurants would not sell the meat of any species roaming the night safari grounds.

However, other types of unconventional meat, including that of farm-bred crocodiles and ostriches, would be on the menu, he said.

"I thank you for all comments and complaints," he said at a news conference, after some non-governmental organizations threatened to initiate impeachment proceedings against him.

Bomb blast tragedy: Four students, all 14 or 15 years old, were killed and another injured after they accidentally detonated a bomb while walking to their school in Chiang Mai's Omkoi District.

Survivor Phapuausu On-trong said the boys thought it was just a fake and started tossing it about until it detonated.

Police are investigating what kind of bomb it was.

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

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30 Exclusive Boutiques in the Heart of Laguna Phuket

On Saturday, November 12, the Sheraton Krabi Beach Resort hosted its first annual World BeerFest, bringing food and beers from around the world to the scenic beaches at Klong Muang. Last year, the Sheraton had held a three-day Oktoberfest, but its imported German band, the Willems Brothers, was otherwise engaged this October. So the format was changed and the date was moved.

With the Willems Brothers providing traditional Oktoberfest music, the BeerFest was set up so guests could enjoy foods from different countries.

Dishes from Ireland (the corned beef was great), Japan, Singapore and Germany were available, along with the popular beers of those countries.

Personally, I liked the new format; you could move from one food pavilion to another, and you could even drink Guinness stout with sushi if you liked.

Outdoor games were set up for the kids, and despite a mid-evening rainfall, the guests enjoyed a night of good food, music and fun.

November seems to have been a good month for the tourism industry in Krabi. Hotels are filling, bars and restaurants are busy again, and there is a general improvement in the outlook for the season.

While many business owners have lowered their expecta-

Business may be booming, but there's a problem:

High season kicks off with a severe shortage of staff

tions and others are still guarded, waiting for the next unknown disaster, the overall feeling is that the increase in business is most welcome. There is also one other common factor binding all the local businesses together, however – a severe shortage of staff.

After the tsunami, many staff migrated to east coast tourist destinations such as Koh Samui or to Pattaya. Many have not returned, making those areas their new homes. In addition, many large resorts, such as the Central Krabi Bay Resort are just opening and drawing off considerable numbers from an already lean labor pool.

Hotels, bars, restaurants and tourism-related businesses are struggling to find competent staff, and it is not uncommon to find the owners themselves man-

ning phones, mixing cocktails or slaving away in the kitchen.

"This is the worst I have seen in 12 years," said Silvano Silvagni, owner of the popular La Luna Italian Restaurant. "I never thought my wife and I would be in this position after all this time."

Some smaller establishments have had to close their shops temporarily as staff shortages made it impossible to operate. As one resort owner said, "I am employing staff now that I wouldn't have previously considered."

Employers are also being pushed to add incentives and bonuses such as improved accommodation and transportation to entice workers.

So what is the solution? Everyone is advertising in all possible media, and even by word of

mouth. Several business owners have organized trips to other cities in their search for staff. So while everyone is happy to see the level of business increasing, several companies are struggling to staff their operations. This would definitely be a good time for Thais with work experience to find a well-paid job and enjoy a nice lifestyle in Krabi.

The police presence in Ao Nang has increased noticeably this high season. While crime in Ao Nang is rare, post-tsunami psychology dictates that tourists are now concerned about safety.

With the establishment of Marine Department personnel at various bays to monitor boating and the increased presence of police patrols, the visitor gets the sense that the authorities have taken proper safety precautions.



ACROSS THE BAY

By Gus Reynolds

One of the most high-profile differences has been that the police patrol in a new Honda four-wheel-drive off-road vehicle.

This patrol has been enforcing the no parking zone on the beach side, including wheel clamps for violators, and clearing the congestion caused by the three-wheel *samlors*.

However, in true local fashion, as soon as the motorized patrol has passed, the road again becomes cluttered with vehicles double parking and blocking the beach road.

It remains to be seen if this solution will help the larger problem – a lack of parking on the beach front – but it is good to see the men in brown (police) and the men in white (Marine Department) making their presence known.

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WILDFIRE

Right on Karon beach



By Natcha Yuttaworawit

Since 1953, the Samaritans have been helping people around the world deal with emotional crisis, and in July this year they opened the Samaritans Mental Health Recovery Center in Khao Lak.

This was the third Samaritans center in Thailand – to help people cope with the aftermath of the tsunami.

Now that center has closed, however, and co-ordinator Pa-weena “Mako” Usanakornkul, 35, from Bangkok, has set up operations in Phuket instead.

The Samaritans provide a non-judgmental service to people under severe emotional stress by simply listening to them as they talk through their problems – without offering any counseling or advice. They believe that giving people the opportunity to talk about their problems in confidence, and without prejudice, can alleviate despair and suicidal feelings.

VOLUNTEERS

K. Mako said that despite letting villagers know that the Samaritans service was available in Khao Lak, by visiting tsunami-struck areas personally, few people actually used the potentially life-saving service.

“People in Khao Lak prefer to talk about their serious problems with close friends and family. Phuket has many more people than Khao Lak, and people here are more likely to pick up the phone and call. So we are more likely to be able to help more people here,” she said.

She added that another reason for moving to Phuket was because they could not get enough volunteers in Phang Nga. Even now in Phuket, she is currently the only person answering the phones, from Wednesday to Sunday, 5 pm until 10 pm.

“People call us and say they



K. Mako: ‘Unfortunately, often those who are contemplating suicide don’t want to contact anybody.’

A FRIEND IN NEED

want to die, but usually when they stop and think about it they don’t want to die, they just want someone to care and to listen to them. Unfortunately, often those who are contemplating suicide don’t want to contact anybody,” K. Mako said.

“We have only one telephone line here, and we are short of volunteers. If possible, we would like to have young people or students at least 20 years old as volunteers, because most of the callers are also young people.

“We will train them, and even if they do not want to work as volunteers they can use what we teach them to help their own families or other people close to

them,” K. Mako said.

“In the past most volunteers have been housewives, and the callers have been common working people, but now many students have problems and are calling more than older people.”

She said that the other two Samaritans centers in Thailand – in Bangkok and Chiang Mai – had helped many people.

“Most callers have financial or family problems, and most of those who call the Samaritans are in northern Thailand.

“Two years ago, we had many callers from Lumphun Province, where many young people became prostitutes to make money for their families.

“They had no one to help them, and often contemplated suicide.”

She said that women were more likely to have suicidal thoughts than men, but that men were more likely to see the act through. Phuket has the 14th highest suicide rate among Thailand’s 76 provinces, she added.

K. Mako said the most common forms of suicide among young people were by hanging or leaping to their deaths.

The Samaritans center is helping not only Thais, she said. “If we have more foreign callers, we will train foreign volunteers to help us.”

In addition, the Samaritans organize other activities, including helping disabled people and supporting charitable foundations, she added.

To contact the Samaritans Mental Health Recovery Center in Phuket, call 076-255467.

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BANGKOK SAMUI PHUKET PATTAYA SINGAPORE






Daughter: Divia Lalvani, 27, London.

Dad: Gulu Lalvani, (international businessman and developer of the Royal Phuket Marina).

My father is an exceptional man and a great influence in my life. I accepted a while ago, as a child, that on occasion a board meeting might come ahead of a school sports day, but at the end of the day that is the nature of my father. He is a workaholic!

That said, he is an inspiration. He has built up his very successful business from scratch from a very young age. He is so sharp and I believe that he is the best negotiator on this planet; he doesn't miss anything.

He has taught me important

values including working hard, integrity and awareness of the community I live in. He does tremendous charitable work in India and he is tirelessly kind and generous to all those around him. He has made sure that myself and my two brothers have had the best education possible. In my opinion, this is the best gift a parent can give to a child.

My father has brought us up with a sense of value and everything he has taught us up to now is the cornerstone of how we live our lives.

His great work – with education programs in India, his telecom company and the Royal Phuket Marina, as well as all the support he has given to the local community in Phuket, make me very proud to be his daughter. He is the man in the world that I most admire. He is a great father.

To mark Father's Day, coming up on December 5, the *Gazette* asked the children of local luminaries, "Why is your dad a good dad?"



Son: Barama Thephabutra, 11, Phuket.

Dad: Tossaporn Thephabutra (businessman).

I know that both my father and my mother are so very busy almost every day, yet my dad always spends time with his family. I would like to be as smart at business and art as he is.

My dad doesn't give me everything I ask him for but he always explains the reasons why he doesn't and I trust him. He always helps me with my homework and looks after the family. I want to be a businessman like him when I grow up. I like his strength and many people tell me that we look alike. I'd like to tell him that I'm so proud to be his son and that I love him so much.

Why my



Daughter: Sophie Desjoyaux, 23, Phuket.

Dad: Pierre Louis Desjoyaux (principal of Desjoyaux Swimming Pools).

My father loves my two brothers and me. He always listens to us and shows us the right way. He teaches me how to be honest and generous and in spite of all the work he has, he takes time to give us a good education. I've learned a lot from his experience.

He's kind, funny, intelligent and people like him, plus he gives without expecting anything in return. He works for his family above all and likes spending time with us. I do everything I can to make sure he doesn't worry.

He is not only a very good father for his family, but he is also like a father for many others and he leads the way by being a good example. That's why my father is a good father. Today I wish him good health and from the bottom of my heart I hope he will be proud of us. Happy Father's Day, dad.

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father is a good dad

Daughter: Fleur Birch-Atkinson, 22, Phuket.

Dad: Tom McNamara (founder of the Baan Rim Pa group).

I hate to brag, but I sure do have one fantastic dad. He is an enigma too puzzling to solve. He's street-smart and he's cultured. He's tough, but he's kind, too. He takes no nonsense, yet he's extremely patient.

Dad is ruthless in pursuing his aspirations (all of which are out of love for his family), yet he's the most fair and genuine guy around.

He's always honest, some-



unpretentious, but self-assured.

Often he's serious or seriously busy, yet he can suddenly burst into a fun mood, making life a celebration. He is quiet, but if you pry him open, he's full of great stories and wonderful words of wisdom that I relish.

Dad is flawed, but he is perfect in my eyes. In fact, it is his flaws that I love the best. He's a complex and contradictory kind of man, but he

has an authenticity that is rare to come by, and that is definitely what makes him so lovable. I sure love him. Happy Father's Day, dad!

times a little too much so. He's incredibly charming, but rough around the edges.

He's strong, but he is gentle, and exceptionally generous. He's

Son: Thanaphum Hongsyok, 34, Phuket

Dad: Phummisak Hongsyok (Chief Executive Officer, Anuphas Group).

After my parents married, they moved to the USA for further education. I was born in Bangkok and was brought to Phuket where my grandma and my two great aunts raised me. I was three years old when I met my dad again.

My dad planned my education and my future while my mum implemented the plans. He used his own experiences, both good and bad, and applied them to my educational path.

He also inspired me to try golf when I was a kid. I guess I should be good at it since I started



to play when I was just nine years old but I am not as good at it as he is! My dad always gave me the best choices in my life but I could only take 80% of what he gave me. I will try to teach my son to accept 100% of what I give him. And I will tell my son that all the good things he gets are from his grandpa.

Son: Vorasit Issara, 24, Phuket.

Dad: Songkran Issara (developer of the Sri Panwa Project).

Dad is a businessman and a developer. He is very smart at marketing. He taught me to love fairness and honesty, and how to relate to others.

It's his example that I've followed in working hard and in not taking shortcuts and in taking care of the family. We share the same tastes in life and do fun things together such as sailing.

He's an open-minded person, accepting new things and listening to other people's ideas.



One thing that he always reminds me about is that if you promise something to somebody, you must deliver.

Daughter: Pantuda Jivavisitnont, 26, Phuket.

Dad: Uthai Suksirisamphant (property developer and candidate for Senate).

Ever since I was little I can remember my dad teaching me. I love his style of leadership and feel we're very similar in some ways. He never pushed me too much at school and was happy with my grades and he never upset me like some other parents



do when they push their children too much in their studies.

I can remember everything he taught me, such as how to be careful with money and to buy only what is necessary. I'm just married but he still reminds me to keep to the same lifestyle and not go for luxury goods because nothing in the future is sure, so we should be careful in our lives.

He also taught me not to look down on people. When I was at school he always supported me in my extracurricular activities and these activities have helped me with my social skills.

Lastly, I'd like to say that he works very hard in his political life and that I would like to ask him to take care of his health and to exercise more often as he's the only person I worry about.

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EAR CANDY with Andy Johnstone

Electric

Larry Coryell, Victor Bailey,
Lenny White
(Chesky Records JD308)

Chesky Records has pulled off a coup with *Electric*, a scorching set of jazz, blues and classic rock anthems as performed by the pioneer of jazz-rock, Larry Coryell, with veteran Return to Forever – Chick Corea's outfit – drummer Lenny White and former Weather Report bassist Victor Bailey.

On *Electric*, Coryell and chums have a blast working their way through a track listing of rock and blues tunes, bending and stretching covers of well-known tracks such as Plant and Page's *Black Dog* and *Sex Machine* by Sly and the Family Stone.

The trio also contribute their own pieces and, as Bailey comments, "We tried to straddle the lines between jazz, rock, funk and fusion and whatever other names people want to put on music."

This is balls-out electric jazz-rock with classic pieces of music dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century. Delightful stuff, too.

41st Parallel

Woodstore Quintet
(Nagel Heyer 2056)

Stunning is the only word to describe this album.

The band members, except for featured trumpeter Tim Hagans, are all Sardinian; the sensuality of the island, and also a vague notion of its dangerous side, both come through.

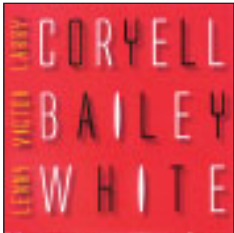
Blue Note recording artist Hagans is not afraid to take chances.

He has made some unusual and successful choices in his music, and his association with the Sardinians demonstrates his faith in them.

This recording is for open-minded people who want to be challenged as they listen; an easy ride it isn't.

The music is inspired and inspiring, and culminates in possibly the best jazz album of 2005.

Review albums provided by CD Warehouse Thailand. For further details email Siriporn Nurukkhe, Marketing Manager, at mm@cdwarehouse-asia.com



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More than 600 people turned out for the Phuket International Women's Club Annual Gala Ball, held this year at the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa on November 26.

This year's theme was the Oscars, with music performed by the Lai Thai Orchestra from Bangkok, and many a partygoer dressing up as a famous movie star or character from the silver screen.

As always, the event was primarily a fund-raiser, raising money to go towards scholarships for bright or needy students on Phuket.

– Photos by Dan Miles,
foto-asia.com



The PIWC's Annual Gala Ball



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This week



CONCRETE HELP: Long-term Kamala residents Don and Inge McMahon recently donated a million baht for building supplies for Kamala valley residents who suffered in the tsunami. The McMahons raised a total of 3.3 million baht from family and international friends, from a pub fundraising drive in Limerick and from an interview on Ireland's RTE TV station. Mr McMahon is pictured, left, after handing over a big check to Patchanee Wimonpan and Kwanta Kraibamrung of building supplies shop Sangchai Macro Thai Cement.



FOCUSED ANNIVERSARY: Central Festival Phuket celebrated its first anniversary by holding a lucky draw for shoppers who spent over 500 baht at any time over the previous two months. The prize was a Ford Focus car and the winner was Grid Yungwanidsas (2nd from left) seen receiving a 'key' from John Fink, Executive Vice-President of Ford Sales and Service, Thailand.



BUBBLY PERSONALITIES: Champagne lovers enjoyed a special evening at the JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa when a variety of champagnes from Laurent-Perrier were served at a winemaker's dinner. Pictured with some of the diners are Ekachai Mahaguna (standing, left), Managing Director of Cannon Pacific; Ludovic de Lageard (standing, 2nd from left), Regional Export Director of Laurent-Perrier; and, on the right, the Marriott's Executive Chef Nick Reade and F&B Director Theera Kanjana.



BUNCHA YAHOOOS: The Yahoo! Adventures team are pictured at Cape Panwa Hotel while making a special program about the area one year after the tsunami, and in particular the Moken people of the Surin Islands. The online program's Executive Producer, Richard Bangs (2nd from left) and cameraman John Canning (2nd from right) are pictured with their guide, John 'Ling Yai' Gray (right), Mr Gray's wife Amporn (left) and the hotel's Resident Manager, Claude Sauter.



DANCERS IN PARADISE: Siripol "James" Youngyuthavichai (right), Resident Manager of the Royal Paradise Hotel, welcomes students from the Osaka Furitsu Imamiya School Dance Club and their team leader, Haruna Hideko (center). The students were in Phuket to take part in the Sawasdee Phuket Fiesta at Patong Beach on November 19.



UNSHELLFISH BEHAVIOR: The Melbourne Cup came to the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa recently, with partygoers turning up in their finery to cheer on their favorites, both in the horse race in Australia and in a crab-racing event at the resort. The crab race helped raise more than 20,000 baht for the recently-launched Hilton Phuket Elephant Conservation Project.

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TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters

Xich lo or “cyclo”: the word – almost a benediction – swims up at any and all of Hanoi’s foreign visitors the moment they step out of their hotel.

For a handful of dong (the onomatopoeic Vietnamese currency) this grown-up perambulator – with the pedaler seated aft and the passenger before – is yours for the next couple of hours, a cradle from the vicissitudes of the capital’s buzzing thoroughfares and an unrivaled sightseeing perch. And the first stop on almost everyone’s itinerary has to be the Old Quarter.

The cornucopia of bargains – be it lacquerware, silks, embroidered linen, or art – is one of the best reasons to hop over to the Vietnamese capital. And even shopaphobics can revel in the ambiance and free-wheeling brio of the 36 Pho Phong – three dozen streets contrived six centuries ago by each of the city’s guilds.

RETREATS

Just about everywhere in Hanoi is ablaze with traffic, morning, noon and night. The simple exercise of crossing the road can take several minutes, as two-wheelers hurtle by in a cavalcade of engine-revving carbon monoxide.

In contrast, the sidewalks are usually cluttered with residents taking their ease, crouched over knee-high tables, sipping cups of tea, perusing the daily newspapers and utterly oblivious to the hubbub around. All the more reason to hop back aboard your cyclo, bridge the lingo gap by pointing out where you want to go on your illustrated map, and settle back in your seat.

Happily, there are a number of retreats from the metropolitan brouhaha, first and foremost of which is strongly reminiscent of Hanoi in its more stringently communist days. And logically so, for



Head over heels in Hanoi



Ho Chi Minh’s imposing mausoleum (main picture), and scenes from everyday life in the Vietnamese capital.

it’s the last resting place of Ho Chi Minh, the father of modern Vietnam.

There’s a certain amount of flummery attached to entering this vast, forbidding mausoleum – no shorts allowed, no photography allowed, and no messing about under the watchful eye of the honor guards standing rigidly to attention.

Encased in a glass sarcophagus, with his trademark wispy white hair and beard,

“Uncle Ho” looks wax-like rather than warlike, but the steely gaze of his sentinels is a telling reminder of the veneration in which their former leader is still held.

Rather more aesthetically pleasing, though seemingly far less visited, the Municipal Theater stands a short way from the southern end of Hoan Kiem Lake, which does duty as both Hanoi’s central landmark and lung. From the outside, the century-old building is a throwback

to French colonial days, an opera house built in the grand European manner.

Inside – and it takes a little “persuasion” to get past the main entrance when there’s no show running – the faded gilt and red plush seats cry out for regular patrons and barnstorming musicals.

Among the upper stories, a few bullet holes – in 1945 the Viet Minh stormed the building to announce their takeover of the city

– have been carefully preserved.

In his autobiography, Graham Greene wrote: “It was quite by chance that I fell in love with Indo-China; nothing was further from my thoughts on my first visit than I would one day set a novel – ‘The Quiet American’ – there.”

Not everyone will fall head over heels in love with Hanoi, but it’s impossible not to feel a certain affection for this low-rise, characterful and very Asian city.

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If you think it's off, just take another taste

A server in one of Phuket's fine dining restaurants recently related an unhappy incident concerning a customer who had ordered an expensive bottle of wine. Upon sampling the wine the customer said that it tasted odd and declined to accept the bottle, sending it back and asking for another. The guest was happy with the second bottle and later ordered another.

The puzzling thing for the server was that a short time after the customer sent the wine back he tasted it himself and thought it was delicious. The manager and owner also tasted the wine and declared it magnificent. They sold the remain-

ing wine by-the-glass as a one-off special to other guests.

What happened, and what went wrong? I am often asked this question by those who work with wine in restaurants and who also have similar tales to tell of customer disgruntlement with perfectly acceptable bottles of wine.

Unfortunately, it is true that there are some people who will order a wine they are unable to pay for, just so they can taste it once in their life. And there are others who, upon tasting the wine they have themselves chosen, suddenly decide that they really would have preferred something different.

In both cases these guests might falsely assert that the wine

WINE



By Steven Roberto

is unsound simply to avoid paying for what they have tasted. Thankfully, they are few in number. More commonly, however, the problem is not the wine but

rather the mouth. Let me explain.

Dinner at a restaurant often comes late in a day filled with chewing gum, toothpaste, orange juice, chili peppers, mint candies, cigarettes, salty snack-foods and maybe an oyster or two.

God only knows what remains still lurk in the parched membranes of a hungry restaurant guest who plops down in a chair to order a bottle of wine.

Not only can wine clash with unfriendly food and chemical residues, but wine's acidity, tannin and alcohol are also momentarily shocking to the taste buds. A second sip of wine almost always reveals the true character of any wine, the mouth having been tidied up and primed by the first sip.

In my own experience, politely asking a guest if they would not mind tasting the wine again often results in a favorable change of opinion.

If the wine really is off, however, that is another story. In most cases a second taste is all it takes to let a wine's deliciousness shine through whatever obstacles the dregs in the mouth may momentarily obscure.

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

PHUKET DIARY

December 4-10: 19th Phuket King's Cup Regatta. The 2005 Phuket King's Cup Regatta gets under way at Kata Beach Resort on December 4 with registration and the skippers' briefing followed by a practice race off Kata Beach. Race day 1 ends with a candle ceremony at Mom Tri's Boathouse to celebrate HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's birthday, followed by prize giving. More information can be found at: www.kingscup.com

December 4: 12th THAI Airways Laguna Phuket Triathlon. This international sporting event is expected to be the biggest triathlon on Phuket to date. In addition to the main event starting at 8 am at Laguna Phuket, while the triathletes are completing the cycling course, there will be a fun run starting at 9 am.



The King's Cup Regatta, 2004.

As fun-runners must complete one lap of the six-kilometer

course before the triathletes return, competitors must be aged 12 or older and the number of entrants is limited to 400.

For more information, contact Paula Himel at Tel: 076-324060, or email: triathlon@lagunaphuket.com

December 5: Birthday of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej. December 5 is the birthday of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and is a public holiday. Most government offices will be shut.

December 8-11: The Phuket International Marine Expo (PIMEX) 2005 will be held at Phuket Boat Lagoon. Around 100 marine, property and lifestyle companies are expected to exhibit. Highlights include 30 in-water displays from many top marine companies. The opening day will coincide with the rest day of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta. For more information, see www.phuketboatshow.com

December 12: Constitution Day. December 12 is a substitution for Constitution Day, which falls on December 10. It is a public holiday, therefore expect most government offices to be shut.

Dec 16-17: Phuket International Blues Festival. Hosted by the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort, the headliners are the Rich Harper Blues Band (US), and Victor and Kyla Brox (UK). They will be supported by five Thailand-based bands, including Soi Dogs, Cannonball and The Blues Machine. Tickets are 1,000 baht for one day; 1,600 baht for both days; and 3,000 baht for a two-day VIP pass. The festival is presented by the *Phuket Gazette* and Hotel Travel.com. See www.phuketbluesfestival.com for further details.


December 19-20: Phuket Invitational Superyacht Rendezvous. The Phuket Invitational is an exclusive superyacht rendezvous held here every December. Regular features of the rendezvous are a fun sailing event, afternoon cocktail parties on board the participating vessels, and a gala dinner party, complete with superb buffet and live entertainment.

For more information contact Tim Rice or Duncan McGregor on Tel: 076-340406 or 076-340932, or visit the website www.phuket-invitational.com

December 26: Tsunami Memorial events. Many ceremonies will be held in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi Provinces, to mark one year since the disaster. Details will be published closer to the time.

December 30-January 1: Greenspirit New Year Festival 2005. See 2006 in with a three-day psytrance festival at Na Thai in Krabi.

Enjoy an international and national line-up, a free camping area, foodstalls and bars. For more information, contact Tel: 01-8940208, email info@greenspiritkrabi.com, or visit www.greenspiritkrabi.com

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Sardinian toast

Well, who *wouldn't* accept the chance of taking a week-end break at a sea-side hotel in Phuket?

It all feels a little strange as it takes little more than 15 minutes – or five, if you believe the claims of some Phuket property developers – to reach Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort (LMPBR) from my house.

So close, in fact, that when I rather unexpectedly finished reading *Profiles in Courage*, I am able to nip back home, unplug the soldering iron, pick up another book – *The Traveller's Tree* – and return to my poolside chair before the ice in my Bloody Mary had melted.

LMPBR has 470 bedrooms, although the intimacy of the place gently fools one into thinking that it is far smaller. That said, however, it seems that while I am there most of the bedrooms are occupied by people hailing from Mother Russia.

"Splendid," methinks, in the knowledge that Russkies tend to enjoy themselves a bit, some 15 years after being unshackled from the bonds of communism and reshackled with those of capitalism.

PIZZA

Russian children are playing a novel form of water polo that involves bouncing the ball off their *dedushka's* back. The ball flies toward me, and I deflect it at the last second. The little Ivans apologize.

I meet some very pleasant personnel at LMBR, not least of whom is the charming Sales & PR Manager, Narumon Chansriharaj, who gives me a guided tour before introducing me to Emanuele Vaccargiu, the resort's Italian Chef.

The introduction takes place beside La Fiamma, the resort's pizza place overlooking the sands. Sitting there for lunch – a pizza, naturally, hot, fresh and crisp from the wood-fired oven – I am taken by the way the rocky cliffs at either end of the beach frame the view.

Looking beyond the seemingly perfect array of beach chairs and umbrellas, past gentle breakers to a scattering of boats near the horizon, I consider taking a photograph, yet to do so would somehow despoil my reverie.

Instead I eat almost all of my perfect pepperoni pizza. I say almost all, because every time I gaze seaward, K. Narumon half-inches another slice.

Dinner at 8 pm when on one's hols always seems a bit early, but after a few sunset drinks – Black Russians, what else? – in the modernistic Tonson Bar, again overlooking Karon Noi Beach, serenaded by a black-clad balladeer with a startling resem-

On the menu

with
Andy Johnstone



Portofino

blance to Harrison Ford, we are ravenous.

A short stroll past the last of the day's pool swimmers takes us to Portofino, LMPBR's Italian restaurant.

Emanuele's greeting is rather drowned out by the zealous clapping of another diner who takes demonstrating his appreciation of the wandering minstrels firmly beyond the pale.

He implores them to sing another song, and then another. The malevolent glint in my eye is reflected in the cold steel of the butter knife.

Emanuele, a canny Sardinian, has the gift of the gab and regales us with a brief vocal CV, yet he insists on apologizing – unnecessarily – for what he calls his "poor English".

He has cooked for such diverse celebs as Silvio Berlusconi and footballer Gianfranco Zola, with chicken on the menu both times. Emanuele grins when I ask if the Italian Prime Minister favored the right wing and if Zola was happy with either.

The first course – cannelloni filled with ricotta cheese and spinach – arrives. It goes without saying that the egg pasta is home-



made daily. The combination of the béchamel and sweet tomato sauce atop each cannelloni accentuates the cool taste of the divine ricotta and spinach.

More pasta arrives a languidly pleasant time after the cannelloni, this time lobster ravioli. The subtle hint of the white wine and brandy used to deglaze the lightly cooked lobster meat, and the herb butter each parcel was sautéed in, burst forth. The merest hint of pepper makes this a marvelous dish.

The service is as good as the food; discreet and adroit – at the raising of an eyebrow the staff bring another glass of wine or three, or more homemade bread rolls by the raising – they are to be commended to a man.

A brief stunned silence ensues as the main course is presented. The architecture and construction of this dish bears testament even more than anything else so far to Emanuele's skill and innovation.

It is a mini-tower of sea bass fillets filled with an array of pan-fried mushrooms resting on a bed of courgette, onions and peppers, dressed with a saffron and balsamic vinegar-based



The arrival of the main dish, a mini-tower of sea bass fillets, causes quite a stir. The cassata Siciliana (left) puts K. Wonka to shame.

sauce and surrounded by sea-soned potato pearls.

Later, pausing for a restorative double espresso and the first of a couple of ice-cold limoncellos, we scan the dessert menu. My companion's appetite after three stunning courses so far has deserted her.

Game lass is the Old Ball & Chain, though, and after some gentle persuading by Emanuele, she opts for cassata Siciliana. I've had my eye on the dolce supreme since I first saw the menu.

Beneath the outer layer of ice cream – homemade again – of the cassata is such a blend of pastel shades that would put Mr W Wonka to shame. The delicate flavor of the ice creams and candied fruits, and the sublime light-

as-air custard sauce and strawberry coulis are exquisite.

My dolce supreme – milk chocolate and nut mousse, served with crème brûlée, hazelnut ice cream and a saffron sauce – is to die for, the perfect combination of as rich as Hell and Heaven-sent.

Top marks to Emanuele for the menu at Portofino. And judging by bums on seats and the satisfied noises of other diners, I'm not alone in my praise.

Portofino at Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort, 29 Soi Karon Nui, Phuket. Tel: 076-340480 or email: n.chansriharaj@phuketbeachresort.lemeridien.com for reservations and more information.

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Since its inception in 2003, PIMEX – the Phuket International Marine Expo – has gone from strength to strength, with predictions that this year's show will be the biggest yet. Organizer **Grenville Fordham** gave the *Gazette* a sneak preview behind the scenes and found more than a few exhibitors and products that piqued the collective interest. Check them out at PIMEX 2005, which runs from December 8 to 11 at Phuket Boat Lagoon.

PIMEX preview



The Thundercat inflatable.

Thundercat bares claws

Sea-Phuket Dot Com will bring the world-beating Thundercat Inflatable Sports Catamaran – made by Ceasar Cats of South Africa – to the Thai marketplace at PIMEX 2005.

The 410 Sports is the latest generation of this high-tech breed of boats, known by different names in other parts of the world – Pencil Boat and Zap Cat, to name but two.

At 4.1 meters long, these astonishing boats, in full racing trim, can exceed an exhilarating 50 knots. Whether racing with others or leaping through the surf alone, the Thundercat provides the ultimate adrenalin buzz.

Nano Speed Needle

The Nano Speed Needle, from KKG (Katamaran Konstruktions GmbH), is a new concept of power cat. The big brutal bow wave, absorbing and wasting energy, is now a thing of the past with this Austrian über-boat. Breathtaking in its radical design, she uses very little energy and can cut through the water at 22-30



The Speed Needle.

knots on a pair of 20 horse-power engines. She comes in a variety of formats, including a true built-for-speed boys' toy and even a floating cinema.

Jeanneau Cap Camarat 925 WA

If speed is your passion, then the Jeanneau Cap Camarat 925 WA 2005 model is a supremely powerful boat graced with elegance.

Sculptured forms, refined entry and with a fast hull designed by Michael Peters, this powerful boat cannot fail to be the center of attention. Two powerful and clean-running engines drive her effortlessly through any sea while still ensuring a comfortable ride.

The Cap Camarat 925 WA has integrated rod holders, an aerated live-bait well, removable passenger seating and a large

steering station with an adjustable wheel.

An open uncluttered deck plan, lots of room for sunbathing, a spacious and luxurious cabin and a host of other details mark the 925 WA as one to watch.

Jeanneau Merry Fisher 655

Jeanneau has announced the launch of the 655 Marlin, an addition to its popular Merry Fisher range, boasting features such as a large open cockpit with removable bench seats, high combings, lockers and rod holders, and above all, safety.

The typical Jeanneau hull and the inboard diesel offer exceptional performance.

The vast experience of the Jeanneau design team has provided a fast and stable hull with good water deflection and excellent lateral stability.

The deck house, with its two-person steering bench, double sliding doors aft and to starboard, handrails, rod storage and forward glass windscreen emphasize comfort, mobility and safety.



The Horizon 53.

The foredeck with the large anchor locker, an exterior bench and the deep-sided deck affords a safe, insulated and comfortable ride.

The Cruising Club Fractional Boat Ownership scheme

Royal Phuket Marina, as well as formally opening its new marina at PIMEX 2005, is launching the Cruising Club Fractional Boat Ownership syndicate.

Syndicating the ownership and managing the ongoing maintenance of each vessel will offer prospective boat owners the opportunity to own and enjoy an equity percentage of a boat from a range of power and sail vessels – without the high capital purchase and ongoing maintenance costs normally associated with large craft.

The Cruising Club currently has franchise locations in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and the US, and is now expanding further into Asia and Europe.

Horizon 53 motor yacht

A Horizon 53 from Kingfisher Marine will make its – and the marque's – debut at PIMEX 2005. The company's smallest, the Horizon 53, retails in the region of US\$750,000. This is excellent value for money, considering it still offers a stately and luxurious interior as well as zesty performance thanks to her twin 700hp Caterpillar diesels.

Asia Marine Technik

Asia Marine Technik is a powerboat and fishing boat manufacturer based in Thailand, which grew from an earlier incarnation called OSS Marine.

OSS Marine was well-established and specialized in restoring, rebuilding and repairing yachts and powerboats. The natural evolution for OSS Marine was to branch out into manufacturing, and Asia Marine Technik was born.

Skilled craftsmen produce Asia Marine Technik's signature range of quality powerboats and fishing vessels.

It also has a presence at Phuket Boat Lagoon as well as offices in Phuket City. The company offers a full management service for boat owners including maintenance and crew.



Thalang-based Asia Marine Technik boats will be at the show.

Rak Mak! Awards

This week's lucky numbers:

อร 2577
กรุงเทพฯ

Silver Isuzu Van

ขกม 237
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Blue & Green Honda Dream

กง 3319
ภูเก็ต

Red Toyota Soluna

ภย 1075
กรุงเทพฯ

Silver Volvo

กง 4256
ภูเก็ต

Bronze Isuzu pick-up

กค 694
ภูเก็ต

Silver Volkswagen

The first three of these vehicles' owners to contact us can choose from the following three prizes: a laser tooth-whitening treatment at Promjai Dental Clinic at either their Patong Beach or bypass road clinic; or a dinner for two at Noon Japanese Restaurant at Surin Beach; or a facial treatment with Majestic Cosmetics at the Jungceylon Clinic.



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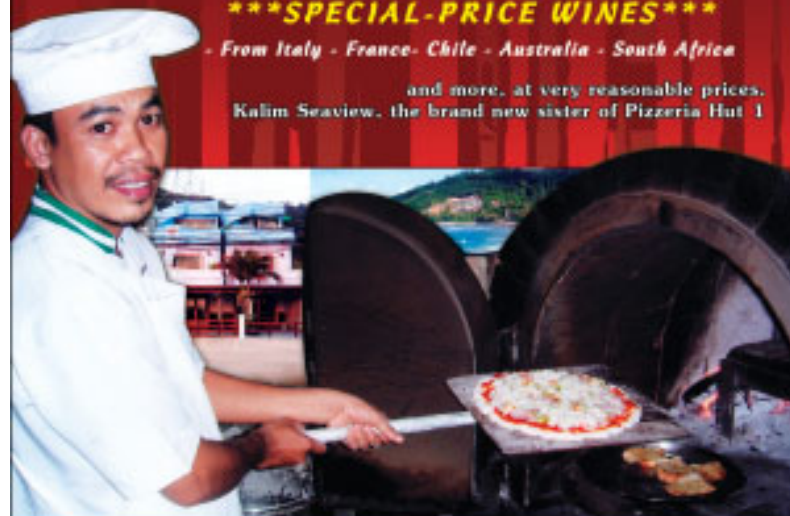
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The Cryptic Crossword

Hidden Words

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

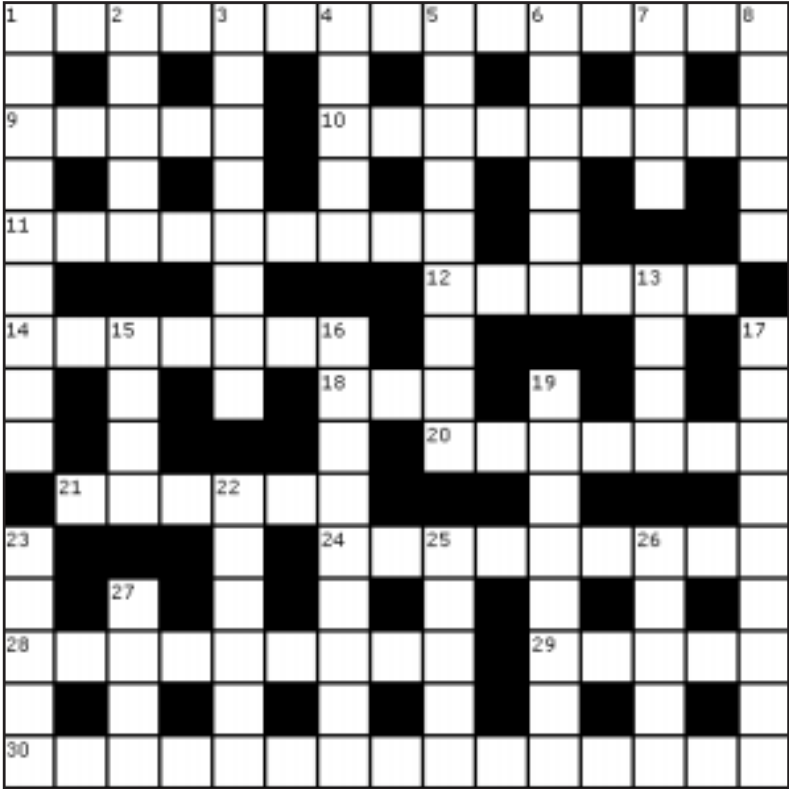
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F	A	W	Z	S	M	B	W	M	R	E	L	O	Z	Y
B	S	L	W	H	V	S	K	G	J	T	L	C	O	F

ACROSS

1. Giants' old home has lights – check gardens. (11,4)
9. Is Pooh's pal stealin'? (5)
10. Parker in a couple of bends in West Coast city. (9)
11. Tiny U-boat is nuclear. (9)
12. Confection in European Community den. (6)
14. In the east, 100 make scales. (7)
18. A couple of points about computer key. (3)
20. Flexible cardinal has learner in charge. (7)
21. Normal gravity attached toilets to round houses. (6)
24. Additional notes about it: send him back. (9)
28. Criminal tennis player? (9)
29. Zulu boss combines reggae with a laugh. (5)
30. Direction finder with charged particle consumed liter – yes, sensitively.

Down

1. Short sailing yacht in gram bobbing. (9)
2. Indian governor may grab Russian river. (5)
3. For crazy people, moon twitches. (8)
4. After South America, Pamela went to end of Bypass Rd. (5)



Compiled by Tortuus. © 2005

5. Naïveté of officer commanding a hundred in the east northeast – after the pub. (9)
6. Leonard back with Kenneth in the doghouse! (6)
7. Touch an objection. (4)
8. Car key color? (5)
13. In the street this month. (4)
15. Spanish gent takes a gram of Asian cash. (4)
16. Unconscious, perception may diminish. (9)
17. Boss's helper keeps confidence on a railway. (9)
19. The bad part of the continent? Sounds like it. (8)
22. Rage to confused Central American leader. (6)
23. Rice X is mixed dry. (23)
25. Body of rocky outcrop, thus. (5)
16. I am at era of icon. (5)
27. Direction of eccentric wheel is a trick (4)

Solution on page 20

Scribble Space



Brain Buster!!

Here is a set of letters that makes no sense:
IDETEP
But place a S at the beginning and add another S where a second word should start and you get
SIDE STEP.
Now take the following sets of letters below and turn each into a two-word phrase by inserting the same letter twice (not necessarily an S).

IGIRD
AKEIME

OGAYS
UNAIR

Answer on next page

EZ TRIVIA

1. What kind of gas is used in refrigerators and air conditioners?
2. What is the full name of MSG, the food flavor enhancer?
3. Greenland, the world's largest island, is a self-governing territory of what country?
4. Which hotel in Phuket has the most rooms?
5. Who is the President of Russia?
6. An image of what appears on the Cambodian flag?
7. In the cartoon *Dexter's Laboratory*, what is Dexter's sister's name?
8. What NFL football team has won three of the last four Super Bowls?
9. Cartoon creatures Chip 'n' Dale were what kind of rodents?
10. Which character in the cartoon series *South Park* gets killed in almost every episode he appears in?

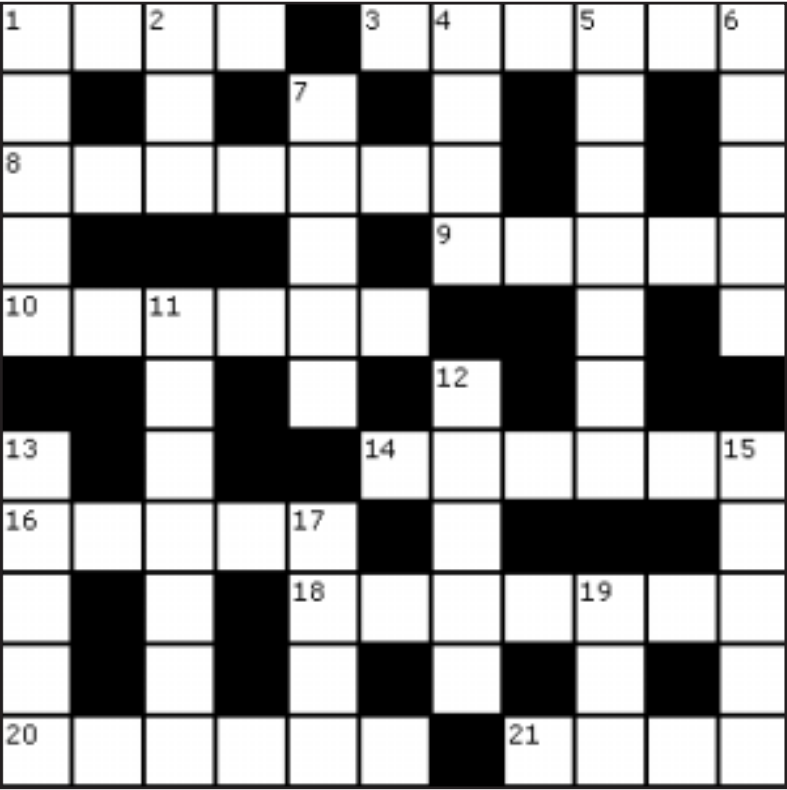
Answers on page 20

su | do | ku
© Puzzles by Pappocom

Solution, tips and computer program at www.sudoku.com

		4	7	1	
1	6		3		
	5				
			3		
	9	2			5
			2		
3					1
5				9	8
					2

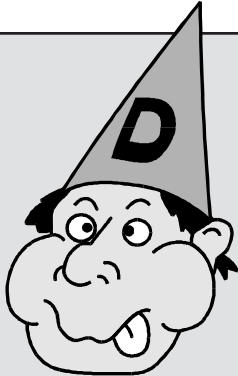
Sudoku is very simple: each row, each column and each "box" of nine squares within the puzzle must contain all the numbers from 1 to 9 with, naturally, no repetitions. Beware: there is only one solution to this puzzle, which is on the next page.



Quick Crossword

- ACROSS
1. Locate.
3. Ridiculous.
8. Hay fever, for example.
9. Footwear.
10. Ketchup source.
14. Distant planet.
16. Get rid of one’s beard.
18. Responses.
20. Type of engine.
21. Indonesian island.
- DOWN
1. Grand meal.
2. Zero.
4. Not girls.
5. Mythical animal.
6. Thick.
7. Great anger.
11. Dugong cousin.
12. Cleaning implement.
13. Requested.
15. Japanese snack.
17. Loosen.
19. Period.

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. Which five Ian Fleming stories featuring James Bond have not been made into movies?

2. Who played The Fonz in the TV series *Happy Days*?

3. Which 1990s hip-hop crew released the album *3 Years, 5 Months & 2 Days in the Life Of... ?*

4. How many players are there in a lacrosse team?

5. What species of creature are the pop-literature characters Monsieur Eek and Curious George?

6. In the movie *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, which actor portrays Lord Voldemort?
7. In the Bhopal disaster of December 3, 1984, how many kilograms of which chemical were released?

8. “Get fan sinew” is an anagram of which pop singer’s name?

9. What is the Cadre Noir of Saumur, France?

10. For how long did Mike the Headless Chicken supposedly live after decapitation?

11. In which part of the body is the amygdala located?

12. What is the name of Germany’s new chancellor?

13. By what name are love apples more usually called?
14. What was the Midwinter Feast changed to in the ninth century?

15. What mineral was discovered at Les Baux in France, in 1821?

16. Who was the first monarch to be addressed as “Your Majesty”?

17. What can Orange Tip butterflies do for up to seven days?

18. Film actress Angelina Jolie was recently awarded a passport by which country?

19. What popular card game originated in Turkey?

20. What is “gypsy rose lee” to a cockney?
- Answers below, left

Puzzle Solutions

Brain Buster Solution

The two-word phrases are: BIG BIRD; DOG DAYS; TAKE TIME and FUN FAIR.

Monster Quiz Answers

1. *Quantum of Solace, Risico, The Hildebrand Rarity, The Property of a Lady* and *007 in New York*; 2. Henry Winkler; 3. Arrested Development; 4. 10; 5. Monkeys; 6. Ralph Fiennes; 7. 40,000 kilograms of methyl isocyanate; 8. Gwen Stefani; 9. An equestrian display team; 10. 18 months. 11. The brain; 12. Angela Merkel; 13. Tomatoes; 14. Christmas; 15. Bauxite; 16. King Henry VIII; 17 Copulate; 18. Cambodia; 19. Bridge; 20. Tea

EZ Triva Answers

1. Freon; 2. Monosodium Glutamate; 3. Denmark; 4. Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa, 675 guest rooms and suites; 5. Vladimir Putin; 6. Angkor Wat; 7. Dee Dee; 8. New England Patriots; 9. Chipmunks; 10. Kenny.

Hidden Words SOLUTION

*****M*****
*****I*****
DYE*****R*
R*****ORFA*****T
*E*A*B*T*
*N*NL*U*
*O*ENC*
*A*I*E*
*C*ST*H*
*H*HI*
AD
MN
S C I S S O R S P O * * * W *
* * * * * O C * A N *
S N I P * * * * * T O V O * *
* * * * * C * * * * * N E I * *
R O Z A R U * * * * * E S * * *
* * * * * R * N * E * * *
* * * * * L E A R S * * * *
* * * * * T * M I N * * *
* * * * * S * X * * R N I * * *
* * * * * G W E * * * E G R B * *
* * * * * N * A * * * * P L * M * *
* * * * * A * S * * * * E * O * *
B * * * * H * * * * T * C * *

Solution to this week’s Cryptic Crossword



Solution to this week’s Quick Crossword



Solution to this week’s Sudoku puzzle



ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

OUTSIDE IN

By Lis Kinswoman

Some hate Phuket for many different reasons – its sleaze, property developers and tackiness. Yet some love the place for just as many reasons – its sleaze, property developers and tackiness. But very few remain indifferent, and therein lies the voyeuristic – some would say narcissistic – pleasure in reading rants and accolades about what many residents here have come to take as normal. C'mon and join Lis on the outside looking in.

Lis doesn't care how exotic or "entirely foreign" it all seems, she simply refuses to have a chocolate and banana crepe growing on her, let alone fried roaches and maggots. Really now!

First service! "I don't know how Thailand manages to repopulate itself. I mean, all the boys seem to be gay and all the girls seem to be prostitutes for Western men... or maybe, that's just Phuket. This place is awful. The people that come here are either European families or creepy old guys who drool over nubile Thai prosti-

tutes. Since I don't properly fit into either category (yet), that's probably why this place appeals so little to me. I just can't help but wonder why parents would bring their kids here. They don't know any better? They wanted to have the 'birds and bees' chat with their kids using live props? Or maybe it's just that... they're European! Sitting on the outside deck of a sleazy bar on Patong Beach, I return to my menu as an impatient waiter hovers over me. 'Yes, I'll have a large Singha beer, Panang curry with chicken', and... searching for the x-rated menu on the table, 'yes, here it is... I'll try the Pussy Ping Pong please.' 'I'm sorry, sir,' he began. 'We only have that inside.' Nodding my head, I feign disappointment. 'Of course. Of course. Well, just the beer and the chicken then.' " (3)

Second service! "Beware the touts in Soi Seadragon who bait their hooks with graphic photos and lurid descriptions of spectacles that would shock the most hardened gynecologist, featuring props such as cigarettes, candles, ping-pong balls, razor blades, darts and even, God help us, kazoos." (4)

Deuce! "What these large pussies are up to in Thailand makes the mind boggle but they're jumping through hoops rather than obsessing over ping-pong balls, thank heavens." (5) Lis would like to point out that this gentleman was writing about tigers in captivity. What did you think he meant?

Game set and match! "All the best stories are about travelling i reckon. When you travel you put your life in someone elses hands. They are professionals, they know what they are doing, they are not high. Well last night we got a tuk tuk into Patong and back again later. The first one was the slowest thing on god's earth, you could have walked backwards faster, but it was at least relatively safe. The one on the way back was a race to remember, this guy was in training. The fastest way between two points was a straight line and this guy knew it. We didn't cut corners, we sliced them off at the knees, at 100kph. The windows were dirty, there was probably no warrant, he was out of his mind but hey this is the Phuket 500 baby and we were off. There is a resignation when you travel that you have absolutely no control over what happens and you don't let it worry you, last night (just like the motorbike ride) i was concerned.

Oh yeah did i tell you about the lady with the ping pong balls? Never mind" (6)

1. <http://forum.myredbook.com/cgi-bin/dcforum2/dcboard.pl>
2. <http://tremblingstar.com/wanderlust/places/thailand.cfm>
3. <http://kenexner.com/thailand.shtml>
4. http://www.farangonline.com/p_Giving_the_people_what_they_want234.asp?origin=
5. <http://www.smarttravelasia.com/check-in.htm>
6. <http://www.travelblog.org/Asia/Thailand/Phuket/blog-21368.html>

Yer blues: "I have reached the invisible age. I went for a walk this morning on Patong beach, it started to REALLY rain, so I saw a tuk tuk to get a ride, he says 'on break, maybe later', there was another behind him, his car was 'broke'. Ok, it's not that far to the hotel, what's a little water, I was going to shower anyway. I get to the hotel, no clean towels, I flag down my maid, she bursts into tears, and says 'I quit'. Oh well, the old ones were 'almost dry'. Time for lunch, so I go to a little hole that has really good food, and go in and sit down. The waitress says 'be right back', 20 min goes by, no sign of the waitress, and now the other girls are starting to put dirty dishes at the table I am sitting at. So I ask another girl if I can get served, she says 'not my table' So, I went to 7-11 and bought some chips.

This day is not going well! I try and take a nap, OH NO, they are rebuilding the place next door. Ok maybe I will go and get a massage. I walk around the corner and they are 5 ladies out front, I ask if I can get a massage, one says come back tomorrow, 'all busy'. What next?? So, I decide to check out the local beer bars. I walked down two Soi's and no one tried to drag me in, grab my crotch, or even say 'Welcommmmme' I guess I have reached the invisible age, and it's time to quit!" (1)

Strange fruit: "...the often strange food (fried roaches and maggots as well as chocolate and banana crepes) all seem to grow on you quickly. in my opinion it [Thailand] is probably the best cheap vacation available to westerners because every aspect of a good vacation is so accessible on our budgets. it is also one culture that is almost entirely foreign to our own." (2)

Zadie Smith is a wonder. At the age of 24, three years out of Cambridge, she published a fat, rollicking, ferociously funny novel called *White Teeth* that debuted to rapturous reviews and won Britain's Whitbread Prize for Best First Novel.

White Teeth told the story of two London families over the course of a quarter of a century: one Pakistani, the other, like Zadie Smith's own, the product of a white father and Jamaican mother.

The novel brought to the issue of race something badly needed: a sense of humor.

Smith, with her grand gift for mimicry, made the racial, religious and cultural differences of her madly mixed – English, Pakistani, Chinese, Caribbean, Irish, African – North London neighborhood wildly funny.

Her second novel, *The Autograph Man*, was something of a disappointment, but she is back in great form, better than ever, in *On Beauty* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 2005, 445pp).

Her narrative tone has turned magisterial; her plotting is tighter; her satirical eye keener; her characters more vivid; her dialog more hilarious and her passions more pronounced.

Most of all she has heart. She delves deeply under the skin of each of her five main characters in the Belsey family.

Again, this is a story of two families. Howard Belsey, a politically-correct English art history professor, met his wife Kiki Simmonds in New York during



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

the early 1970s, a time of high political ferment.

A great beauty then and a black American from Florida, Kiki is a hospital administrator and weighs 250 pounds 30 years later.

The couple has three children: Jerome, Zora and Levi. The elder two, having grown up on college campuses in England, France and the US, are successful undergraduates who speak with middle-Atlantic accents. Levi, at 16, attends a posh private high school but wants desperately to be a member of the hip-hop generation and apes the speech and dress to perfection.

The other family is the Kipps, originally from Trinidad and headed by the regal Monty, an Oxford professor, acerbic pundit and champion of Christianity and conservatism.

He has a sickly wife named Carlene, an industrious son, Michael, and a ravishingly beautiful daughter, Victoria or "Vee".

The loves and hates that spring up between the Belseys and the Kipps form the core of the novel.

Jerome is in London, an intern under Monty Kipps, and sud-

Poisoned Ivy League

On Beauty – Zadie Smith delves deep

denly winds up staying with the family.

To his father's horror, not only is Jerome becoming an ardent Christian but he is also falling in love with the voluptuous Vee. When Jerome proposes marriage, Howard flies to London to prevent it. The meeting is a richly comic disaster. Howard and his heartbroken son flee the Kipps' home.

Smith then abruptly switches gear: "We must now jump nine months later, and back across the Atlantic Ocean."

Howard and Kiki are throwing a party to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary, but all is not well at the Belsey home. When Howard returned from a conference in Minneapolis, Kiki discovered a condom in his luggage and Howard confessed to a one-night stand. Worse, at the party, she discovers that the one night-stand was actually three weeks and with poetry professor Claire Malcolm, an old family friend.

Meanwhile, Monty Kipps and his family have moved in

nearby. Monty is suddenly the big man on campus.

From this point on, the plot tightens in ever-narrowing spirals. Kiki initiates an improbable friendship with Carlene. Vee joins Howard's art history class and conceives a crush on him. Zora forces herself into Claire Malcolm's elite poetry class. Levi finds a new home with Haitian street vendors – "spring-footed, athletic, carelessly loud, coal black, laughing, immune to the frowns of Bostonian ladies passing with their stupid little dogs". Howard goes mano-a-mano with Monty Kipps in a faculty meeting and loses badly.

The plot becomes excruciatingly painful, ending in an explosion that would seem to rip both families apart. The last Howard sees of his kids is when all three flip him the bird. But the last scene arrives with a graceful note of forgiveness and redemption. The novel is not just a satire on academia – talk about a fat target! – but a warm-hearted immersion into the noisy dynamics of family life.

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On December 9, Patong's Soi Bangla will host one stop on the "Singha Taste of Thailand Challenge 2005" tour, which billed itself as "Thailand's funniest cross-cultural game show" before it even hit the road on its five-stop tour, which for some reason began at a Shell gas station on Bangkok's Khao Sarn Rd on November 25.

While Soi Bangla on a normal high-season night may offer enough cross-cultural shenanigans to suit most people's tastes, the event should be a welcome change from the normal routine. The theme of the game show is "Can Farang ever really be Thai?"

The aim of all this? "To find the *Farang khon Thai* – the person most likely to have the best time in the Land of Smiles", say the organizers.

The game-show segment of the night has been dubbed "Academy Farangtasia", in part because the sober judges deciding the winners will be none other

Stool Pigeon



than the Friday night riff-raff on everybody's favorite walking street.

In my opinion, it will be pretty tough to find truly Thai-like farang – but for the love of beer, the good people of Boonrawd Brewery are going to do their best to find them, putting tourists and expatriates alike through a grueling series of what they describe as typically Thai activities: "speaking, dancing, eating, drinking and even boxing like Thais".

Bangla seems well-suited for this type of thing, as these are not so different from the normal activities that take place there: screaming, slurring, go-go pole leaning, touting and badgering of

Singha staging big Soi Bangla show

tourists, binge drinking, and occasionally boxing.

Not included on the press release – and of great importance to this writer – was how many free samples might be made available for testing.

Anyway, it's nice – and even a bit nostalgic – to see what used to be the 100-pound gorilla of the Thai beer market staging a comeback in Patong, which these days is awash in Heineken and Tiger.

Headlining the six live music acts scheduled to play will be T-Bone, a Thai reggae/ska combo recently back from a "skanking" debut at Glastonbury Festival in the UK, and the rock 'n' roll stylings of Bangkok bad boys Flow.

Also appearing will be Futon, Shazam, DJ JoeKi and Galactic Soul, each with a different musical style. Let's hope the surrounding venues will be kind

enough to turn down their sound systems so that we can actually hear them – or that they bring *really* big speakers. The host will be Woratthep na Banglampu, né Bobby McBlain, one of the founders of *Farang Magazine*.

For visual appeal, there will also be the stunning Singha Pretties, whose job is to stand around looking pretty and, of course, to encourage people to drink. They'll fit right in on Bangla. There will also be an appearance by an individual who goes by the name of Mr Loop. Your guess is as good as mine as to what he'll be doing.

Gyrating onstage – and we hope they don't resort to some of the antics we see on Soi Sea Dragon – will be a troupe going by the self-explanatory name Sexy Dancers.

According to Bobby, the group will arrive in Phuket in a 10-wheel truck "that will hydrau-

lically morph into a spectacular light and sound show". It will have to be pretty spectacular to compete with the normal sensory bombardment there. The show kicks off at 8 pm. Admission is free.

Giving something back: A belated thumbs up to all the Patong bar owners – too numerous to list here – who kicked in 2,000 baht each to provide scholarships to needy kids in local schools. A total of 63 bars contributed, raising 126,000 baht.

The "direct scholarships" were handed over in cash at the Phuket Entertainment Association's 2nd Patong Entertainment Day on November 15. Now let's hope the kids don't blow all the money at the video arcade.

Send questions, comments, criticisms and queries to: stoolpigeon@phuketgazette.net

For native English speakers the Thai language can provide wonderful moments of mirth. For example, the Thai expression for a dentist is *mor fun*. I don't know about you, but unless you are some kind of perverted masochist, going to the dentist is hardly a case of more fun.

The word for something that stinks is *men*. I can just see a million feminists with clenched fists, pumping the air and cheering at that one. And if a girl tells a man, "Sorry darling, I cannot go with you tonight, I have men," it doesn't mean she's about to take on an entire football team, it means she is menstruating. So, men or *men* get a double whammy, either way you look at it.

Then there's the wonderful *jim*. Not Jungle Jim, as in the old 1960s TV series, although the words forest-like and foliage do come to mind in certain cases. The word is a polite term to describe female genitalia.

A favorite of mine, and just to show it's not all one-way traffic, is *sow*. The word means fe-

A crocodile just ate my girlfriend...

male. I quite enjoy replying to people, especially women, when they ask me where I'm going: "*Bai doo sow sow*". Sounds like I'm off to look at a bunch of pigs. Translated from Thai it actually means "I'm off to look at females".

One of the excuses used for not attempting to learn the Thai language is that it is difficult because of its many tones. For example, you might think you've learned how to ask for a plate of chicken and rice but instead wind up requesting the hand of the noodle seller in marriage.

Most bookshops have a veritable plethora of Thai-English dictionaries and phrase books for sale. All have their advantages, but they all basically peddle the same set of useful terms.

Nonetheless, there are situations that can arise, especially here in Pattaya, where it would be very useful to be *au fait* with a few uncommon phrases.

Years ago, Pattaya had a rainstorm that caused heavy flooding, and a number of potential handbags at the Million Stoned Crocodiles Park made a bid for freedom. City officials spent some time frantically trying to round these reptiles up before the crocs started having more than just chickens for lunch.

Now, let's imagine you've been out and about the beer boozers of Pattaya, with your girlfriend in tow, and you happen to be strolling home past one of the few remaining parcels of unimproved land. In the blinking of an eye, your girlfriend disappears into the jaws of a hungry croc. You want to alert all and sundry to what has just happened, but you don't know what to say. Believe it or not, my little phrase book will tell you. Approach the nearest official looking person, turn to the right page and read out loud: "*Jor-rakay kin fan pom*" ("A crocodile ate my girlfriend").

Pattaya nestles by the generally tranquil waters of the Gulf of Thailand and, to the best of my knowledge, has never had a person taken by a shark. There's always a first time, though, and let's say that you and a friend are paddling about the waters off Koh Larn in Pattaya Bay and suddenly the waters churn bright red.

You swim as fast as you can back to shore to raise the alarm, but you don't know the appropriate phrase. Once again, my little phrase book to the rescue: "*Blah cha-larm kin peuan pom*" ("A shark just ate my friend").

At night, the back streets of Pattaya become the haunt of mahouts and their hungry elephants. The mahouts wander about with bags of bananas and sugary goodies asking punters to buy some to feed to the elephant.

Needless to say, elephants must heed the call of nature, and when they do it is best to be as far away as possible. It could hap-



FROM THE STREETS OF PATTAYA
By Duncan Stearn

pen that your brand-new Merc is parked where Jumbo unloads. You will need to race to the nearest car-wash to prevent your paintwork flaking. But what do you say? You look the man in the eye and say: "*Chang bort kii tee rot geng pom*" ("An elephant has just defecated on my car").

Some of the most important phrases involve money. The following should be used at all times, whatever your circumstances: family/friends/acquaintances: "*Pom mai me nger*" – "I have no money"; to ladies of dubious virtue: "*Pom mee nger nit noi*" – "I only have a little money".

I know these phrases are effective because I tried them out on my long-suffering girlfriend recently and she understood every single one. I'm looking for a new girlfriend now. So if anyone happens to know any attractive single Thai girls with a warped sense of humor, and who may be willing to overlook certain physical and mental deformities, please get in touch.

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In The Stars

by Isla Star

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Your optimism is restored and you should be inundated with opportunities to enjoy life this month. A business deal that turned sour last month can be resurrected if you are prepared to do some serious nurturing. Scorpio has started to become romantically interested in you; expect to receive a sensual surprise this weekend. Number 4 is lucky on Monday.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): If you are single, you will enjoy a burst of romance in your life. However, those who doubt the motives of that certain someone are advised to heed the warning light sooner rather than later. If you are already in a committed relationship, your partner catches you unawares with a loaded question. The color deep purple will enable you to connect with the inner truth.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): You have a good chance of being in the right place at the right time this weekend. Saturday looks like the luckiest day for having informal business meetings, but a chance encounter on Sunday has real potential. Recent money problems will finally be solved. A personal relationship will benefit from allowing yourself and the other person to indulge in a little luxury.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): You will be tempted to rock the business boat by being greedy this week. If you are too keen to make a last end-of-the-year gain, there won't be any profit. There is much more to be achieved by being able to sit back and wait for the bite to be taken. Wear tomato red to create a juicy impression.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): An overdue family get-together is a good opportunity to make amends. Don't let your pride stand in the way of listening to another's perspective. You will feel better after offloading resentment. The wind of change is about to start blowing toward you; a change of location before the end of this month can't be ruled out. The color hibiscus red will help to build self-confidence.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Even if you're too busy to take on any more work at present, find a way to ensure that bridges are not burned for future opportunities. A previously platonic friend begins to shine in an appealingly romantic light; you will both be content to take this one slowly. Even if it means inconvenience for you, lending a hand to a friend in need will be appreciated on Thursday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): A minor success can be chalked up in your favor this week. Someone who is impressed by what has been observed from a distance is about to exert an influence that will benefit you. Romance with Capricorn doesn't look promising; there is too much water under the bridge for this relationship to take off. An old flame is poised to make a reappearance in your life.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): If you are bored, you don't have any excuse. A whole new world of fun and excitement is waiting to be experienced, but you will need to venture a little further into the jungle to find it. If you are tired of being single, stay patient a while longer, as romance is forecast for later in the month. Pisces will make their feelings known during the holiday period.

LEO (July 24-August 22): A quiet weekend at home is disrupted by unexpected visitors. Even if you're less than thrilled by this invasion, you should put on a smiling welcome. Domestic matters will remain subject to an unsettled astral atmosphere until the end of the month, but you will find a way to alleviate the tension. An early holiday gift on Monday will probably come in the shape of a modest cash bonus.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Those of you who have been waiting for some kind of astral sign to go ahead with a business plan won't be disappointed this week. A clear green light will be hard to miss on Monday, and the way forward to success seems fairly clear. The only stumbling block will be when you realize that a colleague can't be entirely trusted. The number 5 is lucky on Sunday.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Get ready to enjoy some good times. If you've recently been reunited with a loved one, absence will have made both your hearts grow fonder. A Scorpio friend is suffering from stress at the moment; lending a listening ear should be a restricted activity if you want to avoid being taken advantage of. The color sea green will encourage money to flow in your direction.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Your fiery temper is in danger of being activated this week, with Tuesday being a particularly sensitive day. You should devote this weekend to the art of relaxation in order to minimize possible damage done to personal relationships next week. You will be pleased to know that the rest of December won't be anything like as stressful. Wear the color lemon yellow to encourage tranquillity.

THE TIME machine

News from the past

Answering more than the call of nature

From the issue of December 1-15, 2000

PHUKET TOWN: Stopping to take a leak can be dangerous, as an Immigration Police officer found out recently.

Pol Snr Sgt Maj Wichien Petphang-nga said that on November 6 he was driving, in plain clothes, when he heard the call of nature. He decided to stop at the Sanamchai football field to answer it.

While unzipped, he noticed two men were robbing a woman.

He yelled at them. But seeing a chance for more easy money, the men approached Sgt Maj Wichien, stuck a gun and a knife in his face, and relieved him of a gold chain, his watch and 2,500 baht in cash.

The bandits then made their getaway in a pick-up truck, but not before Sgt Maj Wichien loosed off a few rounds at them. He then checked every hospital and on November 8, found his man: Prathueng Intarachuenchom, 33.

Prathueng confessed to robbing both Sgt Maj Wichien and the unidentified woman.

PHUKET IS BACK!

If your business or interest is in Thailand property, then you simply must attend
The Phuket International Property Forum

The Phuket Real Estate Club has invited five of the biggest names in the industry to join its seminar examining Phuket's property market.

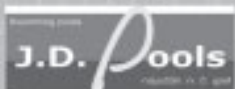
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- Why Phuket?
- Can foreigners own land/property?
- Where to find financial services?
- What does the future hold?

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- International Law Firm
- Banking & Financial Institution
- Worldwide Real Estate Agency
- Real Estate Information Center

Lucky Draw: 250,000 baht Harmony Spa pool (by J.D. Pools) and many other prizes



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Contact: Norbert: +66 (076) 238999



"Phuket Gazette"

Phuket Gazette
- Since 1994 -

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Another serious jet-ski accident – and counting

We are just one month into the high tourist season and already there has been a serious incident involving jet-skis, with a young Australian lying in hospital seriously injured – at one point his heart stopped and he had to be resuscitated.

His friend, who was quoted by police as saying that he was “horsing around” when the two rented jet-skis collided at high speed, is being held accountable, and has been arrested on charges of negligence causing grievous bodily harm.

Sadly, what is not on trial are the continuing lax rules regarding jet-skis and the even laxer enforcement of those rules that do exist.

Readers who are parents might try asking themselves, “Would I allow my teenage son or daughter, with no experience at all, to get on a 1,000cc superbike and roar off down the road? What do I think of people prepared to rent such bikes to inexperienced, underage riders? And what do I think of a country whose laws and law-enforcers allow this?”

Make no mistake: jet-skis are the superbikes of the sea. They are powerful, fast, exhilarating to ride and, in the wrong hands, frighteningly dangerous.

Many attempts have been made in the past decade to rein in the jet-ski rental operators. None of these attempts has been successful. There have been attempts to limit the number of machines, to bar them from some beaches and to segregate them from swimmers at others. None of these attempts has got anywhere. Push the jet-ski operators and they push right back. Hard.

Because of this, it is still possible for total beginners of all ages to rent one of these powerful machines. In many cases, these beginners are concentrating so hard on staying on board that they fail to notice swimmers or boats.

Two years ago a 13-year-old German boy died when he collided with a moored long-tail boat. After his death, his mother pleaded with the authorities to enforce rules in order to save lives. Has that happened? No.

The *Gazette* gets more letters of complaint about jet-skis than any other kind from tourists, who in general hate these noisy, dangerous machines and the people who ride them at high speed without a thought for others.

One despairs at the lack of will shown by the authorities to do something about this. This is not the first time the *Gazette* has urged the provincial powers to act in this matter. Sadly, we suspect it will not be the last.

– The Editor



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.

Damming ideas

My wife and I live on the island of Jersey and we spend our winters on Phuket. Traveling around we have noticed a lot of construction, but no noticeable development in water storage. This can only mean problems during the dry season. Water-saving solutions should be enforced in good time, and then long-term solutions be put in place.

Once Jersey had this problem too, but the importance of water to our tourist industry was understood. Our solutions were: 1. To build large reservoirs; 2. Dam even small streams to prevent wasteful runoff; 3. Sink deep wells to feed the water supply system, with care taken not to allow seawater contamination; and 4; Construct a desalination plant capable of converting two million gallons of water a day.

The plant has not had to operate for some years, but it is always ready and good insurance in case of water shortages.

All of this is expensive, but we think it is cheap in the long run.

Eric M Walker BEM
Phuket

Offloading about off-roaders

Why is it that all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) cannot be licensed for use on public roads in Thailand? They are 10 times safer than the so-called sidecar combinations used every day all over the country.

These vehicles are made for road and off-road use and have better braking systems than motorcycles; they also feature lights, indicators and mirrors. ATVs can be used on all European roads as

either fully licensed vehicles or as agricultural vehicles up to a 50kmh limit.

Japan, China and Korea all produce quads for road use. Isn't it about time Thailand came out of the Dark Ages and sorted its registration process out?

At the same time they might want to do something about the helmet laws that allow five people a time to ride on a Honda Wave with only the driver required to wear a totally useless piece of plastic on his/her head.

I recently went to Phuket City's Transportation Office to obtain a Thai license, only to see candidates driving or riding into the center before even taking the test!

As a motorcycle and ATV rider for more than 30 years in many different lands, I am both appalled and disgusted by the Phuket governing body's lack of interest in road safety and training.

David McGregor
Patong

Buzz off Bert!

For how much longer will the *Gazette* continue to subject its readers to the inane ramblings of its gardening columnist, Bloomin' Bert?

While he may feel his being English makes him superior to people from other countries, a gardening column is hardly the place for him to express his poorly conceived views on the topic. A Patong beer bar would be more appropriate.

For him to take issue with the obnoxiousness of Americans certainly seems like a case of the pot calling the kettle black to me.

I suspect his overt contempt for Americans is more likely based on his unease with his own

government's lapdog relationship with the US than on anything real.

May I suggest that if this column is to continue the writer change his byline to “Bloomin' Idiot” so that it more accurately reflects the drivel it contains.

Stacy Marion
Phuket

Happily missed on Patong Beach

Apart from two near-misses at the beach, my traveling companion and I enjoyed our recent holiday in Patong immensely, apart from two incidents at the beach that marred our holiday.

We swam most days at Patong Beach and one day my friend was hit in the face with the rope from a para-sail as the para-sailer was landing.

While not seriously injured, he was certainly shaken by the ordeal.

On the other occasion, I was nearly hit by a jet-ski while swimming quite close to shore. The driver of the jet-ski was too busy zig-zagging around to watch where he was going. It was his son – who wasn't wearing a life-jacket and was sitting in front of the jet-ski driver – who saw me and started yelling at his father to change course.

I was trying to work out which way to swim so the jet-ski wouldn't hit me. Luckily, the jet-ski changed course just in time.

I can only hope that there are plans to resurrect the roped-off area that was present at Patong Beach before the tsunami to ensure the safety of swimmers.

Good luck to everyone for a successful high season.

Chris Topp
Sydney, Australia

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

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The great gig in Phuket?

The biggest problem with staging large-scale events, which in the trade are those that attract more than 10,000 people, is meeting the bottom line.

In Phuket, the first hurdle is getting enough people to go to the event. Phuket has a population of about 300,000 to 400,000, of whom only about 10 % would be interested in seeing a major international act, and not all would agree on the same act, so a reasonable estimate of the potential local audience would be around 2,000 people.

The event also has to be affordable for local people. Many foreigners move to Thailand because it is an inexpensive place to live. The cost of a ticket to a large concert would traditionally be about 4,000 to 5,000 baht. In Hong Kong or Singapore, that would be the standard price for a ticket, (it wouldn't get you dinner and a meeting with the stars backstage after the show, mind you), but for a person living in Phuket, to pay that much for a ticket for a concert would be considered excessive.

That brings us to the difficulty of attracting people from outside the island. To understand this, consider the following: if you wanted to see a band in Phuket – the decision would be pretty easy. But if you wanted to see a band in Bangkok you would think about it more carefully, even if you had a friend's place to crash at and you could get a bus there for about 300 baht.

Now what if the band was playing in Singapore? Would you go then, even if you could get a flight for about 1,000 baht? When was the last time you traveled specifically to see an international concert anywhere in the world?

The organizers also need to factor in the costs of publicizing the event in other places. For example, the cost of one full-

FIRST PERSON

With the Phuket Blues Festival looming early next month and the Koh Samui Music Festival fading into memory, many people are wondering just why Phuket does not have many major artists coming to perform on the island.

Managing Director of Midas Promotions, Michael Hosking has been organizing and promoting major events since 1982 and has been living on Phuket for the past four years. Here he explains what it takes to stage large-scale events and why Phuket does not seem to get its fair share.



page, full-color ad in the *Straits Times* is about S\$50,000, not to mention the costs of advertising through media in Hong Kong and Bangkok. How many concert fans would you need from overseas to justify the expenditure on advertising alone?

Another factor is that Phuket does not already have a venue that could cope with a large-scale event. That means the stage and scaffolding must be brought in, set up, pulled down and taken away, which adds even more to the cost of staging a big concert here rather than at a locale which already has a venue.

Additionally, the sound and light systems, not to mention other technical equipment required for such shows, has to be brought in. Michael Learns To Rock, who played here last year, travel light with very modest technical equipment requirements, but even for them 80% of the equipment had to be brought from Bangkok.

One possibility for Phuket to host a major artist would be if the

band performed only one show in Asia, and if that show were to be held in Phuket. Currently, there is some talk about organizing such a performance, but the logistics make it very challenging.

If an event on Phuket could attract some 40,000 people, including about 5,000 local residents, that would mean that an extra 35,000 seats on planes arriving and departing, and rooms for these people would need to be found – on top of Phuket's normal load of tourists. (Phuket has about 35,000 rooms).

If the Tourism Authority of Thailand or some other major sponsor stepped forward, that would certainly help. That is what happened with the Koh Samui Music Festival.

A local resident wanted to do something for the island and was willing to put up a lot of money to see it through. My guess is it cost US\$1-1.5 million. If the festival was held annually for five years running, he would probably lose less each year, but

he would not break even in that time. He might recover his loss from the first event at some point, but the accumulated losses on subsequent festivals would be very difficult to mortise on a purely financial basis. Samui was fantastic, but, sadly, it was poorly attended, despite the fact that there were several good acts, plenty of fun, and interesting things to see and do.

I attended the closing night with the headline acts UB40 and The Wailers playing, yet probably only about 2,000 people were there. This was actually a good level of attendance considering the limited local population interested in those bands, but it was certainly not enough to justify the massive expense involved in putting on the spectacle.

Consider the costs involved – with just 2,000 people each paying 3,000 baht a ticket, that is not enough to cover the costs of bringing the major stars, the stage sound and lighting, air fares, freight, and all the publicity costs.

I love Phuket; I am raising my kids here and have made Phuket my home. For me, the better the entertainment here, the better the place would be. I try to organize at least one major act a year, and even that is difficult. I suggest to all the artists I work with that they visit Phuket for a performance. Many agree that it would be a great idea, if they had time on an Asian schedule, but most are less enthusiastic when I point out that we wouldn't be able to pay them.

With the Bond concert, the girls agreed to play as a fundraiser for the Life Home Project and they waived their performance fees and played for free. The Sheraton Grande Laguna Resort provided rooms and meals for free, and some money was put in to help with travel expenses. It was a major success for Phuket, and about 1 million baht was raised, (roughly US\$25,000), but if we had to use that sum to pay fees and cover concert expenses, then it would not be remotely close enough to bring in a major international act or even a minor one.

That is the same reason why the likes of Madonna and U2 do not play Mykonos or other idyllic island resort destinations. It is the nature of the music business, with "business" being the operative word.

Many high-powered people in the music industry, including some artists, have residences here – some even live here. Of all the similar "paradise island resorts" in the world, Phuket is well-placed to have the potential to attract artists to perform concerts, but the economics involved make it a herculean task.

In short, large concerts in Phuket are not likely until either the local population hits about two million, or magnanimous sponsors step forward and put their money down to make them possible.

Bio-diesel fuel in Phuket?

I have heard about bio-diesel as an alternative fuel for diesel-powered vehicles. Is this available in Phuket? If so, where?

Somchai
Rassada

Vichitpong Cheanthongsub, Phuket Oil Depot Manager of the Petroleum Authority of Thailand, replies:

Central government is now studying bio-diesel as an alternative to hydrocarbon diesel. As yet, however, it is not available because more tests need to be done to ensure that it will not damage vehicles.

If it is found to be safe and effective, then we will need to install tanks and other equipment before it will be available.

Bugged by bus business and coach company

I live in a quiet residential area near Wat Chalong. Recently, the owner of some land close to my house rented it to a tourist bus and coach company.

There are now as many as six coaches parked on the land and they run their engines any time from 6 am to midnight. Is this permissible? What can be done about this intrusion into a quiet community?

Jack McTavish
Chalong

Dechakanee Leelanond, Chief Administrative Officer (Palad) of the Chalong Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorTor), replies:

There are laws about noise

pollution. I should like to invite anyone who wishes to complain about this problem to submit a letter of complaint to us. Alternatively, you can come and see me at my office, Monday to Friday, during government working hours.

Once we have official complaints, we can go with officers from Chalong Police Station to check on the situation.

I would like to see more people have the courage to report problems to the relevant officials. Be assured that we always keep secret the names of people who make complaints.

The phone number for OrBorTor Chalong is 076-381304 or 076-282255.

Issues & ANSWERS

Want to know how to get something done? Want to pitch an idea to Phuket's authorities? Submit your queries or suggestions to us and we'll ask the appropriate people to respond.

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

Does UBC show commercials?

Does UBC air commercials?

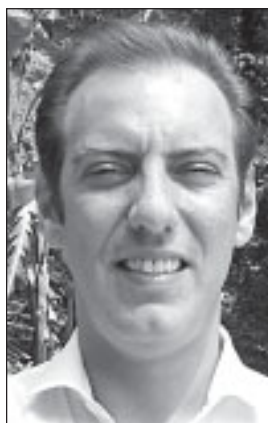
Wally

Dr Kantima Kunjara na Ayudhya, UBC Director of Corporate Communications, replies:

Yes, on some channels, al-

though no additional revenue or profit for UBC is generated by them. UBC members can watch programs on ESPN, Star Movies, AXN, CNN, and the Cartoon Network, and on certain terrestrial channels without interruptions.

ON THE MOVE



Hervé Duprat, 39, from France, has been appointed General Manager of Sabana Resort at Nai Harn Beach. He has a diploma in catering from Dijon, and is also a graduate of L'École Hotelière de St Quentin-en-Yvelines. Previously he was General Manager of Cabana Group, Koh Samui, Director of F&B of the Sofitel Silom Bangkok, and F&B Manager of the Novotel Ambassador Doksan in Seoul.



Jantira Kijomcheep, 40, from Ratchaburi, is the new Human Resources Manager for Le Meridien Khao Lak Beach & Spa Resort. She holds a diploma from Siam Business School. She worked for 16 years in Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort, most recently as the F&B Administrative Manager. Before moving to Khao Lak she worked in the Human Resources Department of Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts in Bangkok.



Natalie Brice, 29, from Canberra in Australia, has been appointed Financial Controller for Le Meridien Khao Lak Beach & Spa Resort. Previously she was Financial Controller at Le Meridien Port Vila Resort & Casino, Vanuatu, for two and a half years. She has been with Le Meridien since February 2003. Before joining Le Meridien, she worked with the Accor Hotel Group, Hyatt Hotels and Rydges Hotels.

KHUN WOODY'S COMPUTER

Sony BMG – the music arm of multi-billion-dollar Sony Corporation – has long been at the forefront of Digital Rights Management or DRM.

The basic tenet of DRM is this: we'll sell you the right to hear the music (view the movie, read the book), but we'll do everything we can to keep you from copying that music (movie, book).

Sony was part of the unholy alliance that spawned Microsoft's locked-up WMA audio files and WMV movie files. It is a big supporter of the Recording Industry of America Alliance, the group that's suing grandmothers because their grandkids had the temerity to use Napster or Grokster or eDonkey to swap music.

Now Sony has gone too far. In late October, professional virus catcher Mark Russinovich ran an experimental program to scan for viruses and other malware on one of his computers.

Mark was surprised – shocked – to find that his super-secure computer had been infected with a "rootkit".

Rootkits have become the zombie-creator's tool of choice for subverting computers and taking remote control of their operation. In its simplest form, a rootkit is a program that hooks into the operating system (Windows, in this case), takes control of the

Sony CDs: the gifts that keep on giving

computer, and stealthily hides itself, so you can't see it.

For example, if you push Ctrl+Alt+Del to bring up the Windows list of running programs, you won't see the rootkit itself, or any of the programs controlled by the rootkit. The most talented rootkits successfully hide themselves from anti-virus and anti-spyware scans.

Many of the zombie computers you've heard about – the ones that send out millions of pieces of spam, or focus a concentrated attack on a particular website – are running rootkits that are controlled from afar. Rumor has it that some rootkit authors are making millions of dollars selling their zombies' services to spammers.

Governments all over the world are concerned, because a rootkit-driven Denial of Service Attack (where tens or hundreds of thousands of PCs all try to access the same website at the same time, bringing traffic to a halt) could pose a major security risk.

Imagine what would happen if a totalitarian regime sur-



reptitiously installed rootkits on its citizens' computers, or if a politician planted a rootkit on the computers of an opposing party. Rootkits are, without doubt, a Real Big Deal.

Which brings us back to Mark Russinovich. He knows all about rootkits, and his machines are protected up one side and down the other. So where did the rootkit come from?

It took a while to track down the culprit, but the short answer is: Van Zant. Apparently Mark is a Van Zant fan. He

played the Van Zant CD *Get Right with the Man* on his PC.

Mark inserted the CD into his PC, clicked "agree" in the popup window, and the CD automatically installed a rootkit on his PC. No warning. No fuss. Van Zant played through the speakers – and Sony's rootkit took control of his PC.

Mark wasn't trying to rip the CD or copy anything. He was just playing the album, yer Sony took that as an invitation to install a rootkit.

Wait. It gets worse.

Mark posted a summary of his discoveries on his blog. He tried to remove the rootkit – and broke Windows in the process. Sony first denied the problem, then made a patch available: you had to fill out a form, send it to Sony, and wait for a response in order to get the uninstaller.

One little problem. The uninstaller didn't work. Sony made another uninstaller. Eventually Sony posted the uninstaller so people could download it without sending their personal information to Sony.

Another little problem. Sony's uninstaller leaves a security hole a mile wide. If you download and install the uninstaller (stay with me here), then any Web page you view with Internet Explorer can run any program it likes on your computer.

Fortunately there are in-

structions on the Web explaining how to uninstall Sony's uninstaller. Princeton researchers J Alex Halderman and Ed Felten have the whole story at www.freedom-to-tinker.com/?p=927.

That's not the end of the story. Malware authors and would-be zombie meisters have figured out how to use the Sony rootkit to hide their own programs. It seems that putting a simple string of characters in a malicious program's file name can get it hooked into the Sony rootkit – sort of a stealthy piggy-back ride.

Windows Secrets Newsletter (www.windowsecrets.com) ran a story on November 22 about the extent of the rootkit's reach. Ryan Russell estimates that *millions* of computers have the Sony rootkit installed – and each one of them is vulnerable, even if the owner has run Sony's uninstaller.

Meanwhile, the state of California has filed a class action lawsuit against Sony, and other states are jumping on board. Microsoft has announced that the next version of its antispyware software will detect and remove Sony's rootkit. (Irony alert.)

Sony has finally – finally! – removed infected CDs from store shelves, and now offers to replace customers' rootkit-infected CDs with clean ones.

I've joined the many people who are calling for a massive boycott of all of Sony's products. Dan Goodin of *Wired News* put it this way:

"This kind of behavior can never be tolerated. It may be unrealistic to think many will heed this call, but someone's got to say it: boycott Sony. Boycott them until they come clean and recall all the infected CDs. Boycott them until they distribute a removal program. Boycott them until they promise never do anything like this again."

Hear, hear.

– **Woody Leonhard**
woody@khunwoody.com

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THAI INTERNATIONAL FREIGHT FORWARDERS ASSOCIATION
THIFFA

By Anongnat Sartpisut

Duty-free shops and shoppers alike have expressed dissatisfaction with the domestic tourism promotion in the tsunami-affected provinces of Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi.

The Finance Ministry, which initiated a duty-free shopping promotion in August, said that the purpose of the September 1 to December 31 promotion was to increase spending in tsunami-affected areas by domestic tourists.

The six duty-free shops have reported a total revenue of just 30 million baht since the launch two months ago, due, they believe, to a lack of publicity and overly complicated purchase procedures.

Four of the six shops are in Phuket: the Airport Duty Free shop at Amora Beach Resort; the Wang Thalung shop on Chaofa West Rd; the King Power shop at Phuket International Airport; and the King Power shop at the Patong Resort.

The other two are King Power shops at Ao Nang Villa Resort, Krabi, and at the Khao Lak Merlin Resort, Phang Nga.

The 30 million baht in revenue from the three provinces comprises: 11.4 mil-

DUTY-FREE FLOPS

lion baht from 2,840 shoppers among the 11,383 Thai visitors in September; 15.7 million baht from 3,973 shoppers among the 13,416 Thai visitors in October; and 3.8 million baht from 671 shoppers among the 4,723 Thai visitors between November 1 and November 16.

Suwat Duangpan, Head of the Phuket Customs Office, said his office has staff constantly on standby to go to hotels, when called to do so, in order to provide Thai tourists with a certificate of approval to purchase duty-free items.

"We offer this service for domestic tourists, but whether they use it and buy something or not is up to them. The products on offer have to appeal to them and the prices have to be within their budget," K. Suwat said.

He said many Thais did not know they can shop duty free. "Some tourists have complained that their hotels didn't tell them about the existence of the duty-free shops or that they could use them."

Chief Adviser Chaiyapak Siriwat of the Office of the Prime Minister said, in a

November 23 meeting about upcoming tsunami memorials, that he received complaints about a lack of variety of duty-free products and the complicated procedures for buying them.

To take advantage of this duty-free opportunity, Thai visitors must be staying in Phuket, Phang Nga or Krabi province.

They have two options for duty-free shopping. The first allows them to spend up to 20,000 baht on duty-free products per night stayed, not exceeding 50,000 baht in total. They may buy any items except alcohol, cigarettes, cigars or pipe tobacco, which are still limited by normal Customs regulations – no more than 200 cigarettes and one liter of alcohol per person.

The second option permits domestic tourists to buy just two products for an unlimited amount of money, but they may only do so once a month.

Domestic duty-free shoppers must produce an air ticket and proof of hotel stay or participation in a tour package from an airline or tour company, and they must show their ID card and boarding pass or

return airline ticket or tour package receipt.

K. Chaiyapak asked the Phuket Customs Office, which oversees the Phang Nga provincial Customs Office, to suggest how procedures might be simplified.

But K. Suwat said that the procedures are not all that difficult: "The procedures cannot be changed at provincial level, anyway, since the rules were set by the Finance Ministry."

However, he added that the rules should be more flexible and allow foreigners who live in Thailand to shop duty-free. "They have purchasing power; if we give foreign residents the right to buy duty-free products it would help boost the economy in tsunami-affected areas," he said.

King Power at Phuket International Airport earned the highest revenue among the duty-free shops, with some 15.6 million baht in September and October.

TAT Region 4 Director Suwalai Pinradap said, "This project was launched to support domestic tourism. However, it would have been better if it had been launched earlier, because hotels are now focusing on European and other international tourists. It is a worthwhile project which could yet serve its purpose if it continues."

The European Central Bank (ECB) appears ready to start raising interest rates. This may seem ridiculous in view of the weak economic growth in almost all Euro-Zone economies, but looking at the situation from another angle, it does make sense.

The ECB was given only one mandate by the politicians who negotiated its creation, and that is price stability, with a maximum rate of inflation of just 2%. It was never given a mandate of achieving economic growth or any broader objectives.

The ECB has been lecturing Euro-Zone politicians on the urgent need to restructure their economies, but the politicians have barely paid the message lip service. However, the politicians forgot one very important point when they agreed to the creation of the ECB – they gave it totally independent status.

When the ECB was established, its first president was Dutchman Wim Duisenberg, who proved to be a highly competent central banker. France, however, demanded that his successor be French, and nominated Jean-

Interesting times in the Euro Zone



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

The ECB lap dog is now becoming a pit bull

Claude Trichet. Paris politicians then believed that they had their own man in position – basically a well-trained and obedient lap dog.

This was a miscalculation; the lap dog, having slipped its lead, became something more akin to a pit bull. The ECB, having found its recommendations ignored by incompetent self-serving politicians, decided to inflict some pain instead.

It may be that by the time this article is published the bank has, at its December 1 meeting, decided to raise interest rates by one-quarter of a percentage point from the current 2%. Should it have held off, it is almost a foregone conclusion that the increase will take place in the first quarter of 2006. Currently, futures mar-

kets are predicting interest rates for the Euro Zone at 2.75% by mid-year.

European finance ministers are begging the ECB *en masse* not to take these steps, but they are powerless to intervene. Technically, Euro-Zone inflation is higher than 2%, caused almost entirely by oil price rises, and the ECB is free to move. The ECB knows that it can hold back, but having for long enough offered the carrot, it is now trying the age-old alternative of the stick. The ECB will not only ignore political pleas, but will also raise rates to demonstrate its independence and commitment to its charter.

In Japan a similar situation exists. The Japanese Central Bank is also independent, but is

supposed to move interest rates in accordance with prevailing government policy. It has been told publicly by the government not to raise interest rates.

There are believed to be some hawks in the Bank of Japan who are determined not to see a repeat of the bubble economy of the 1980s, and who want to tighten the current ultra-loose monetary policy. In this instance and at this stage, the current policy would be best left in place. There is ample evidence of a broad-based economic recovery under way, with bank lending to small- and medium-sized companies expanding.

Japanese banks have healthy balance sheets, with the largest exporters enjoying a windfall because of a cheap yen. Japan is still experiencing mild (-0.3%) deflationary conditions, and a loose monetary policy combined with effectively zero interest rates is still the best policy mix.

Looking to when deflation disappears and the economy is

more established in a recovery phase, raising interest rates will have some positive aspects.

Japan has a significant percentage of affluent elderly people. They will be more prepared to spend when they are earning interest on their savings, as they will not then be encroaching on their capital.

This will be a healthy development to assist in a truly broad-based economic recovery.

Any move on interest rates is not expected until the second half of 2006, but already, the Japanese stockmarket has moved strongly ahead and has reached five-year highs.

Many analysts are predicting at least a three- to five-year rally for this market.

Richard Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based financial planning service. He can be reached at Tel: and Fax: 076-381997, Mobile 01-0814611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th

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Reef recovery and protecting the marine environment

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has been actively concerned with Phuket's Marine Environment for more than a year, funding and supporting projects to help Phuket's coral reefs to recover and be sustained.

A former volunteer spoke to the *Gazette* about clean-up operations and how she became the technical co-ordinator for a United Nations Development Program (UNDP), eventually becoming involved in the ongoing Green Fins project at the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC).

Lynsey Hill, from Scotland, came to Phuket after graduating with a master's degree in aquaculture. She also received a bachelor's degree with honors in marine biology.

She and her fiancé, Dave Marsden, a firefighter in the UK,

Beneath the SURFACE
By Sylvie Yaffe

came to the island in September 2004 to complete an open-water to dive-master program.

The tsunami happened just days before they were due to complete their final certifications.

Fortunately, Lynsey was already interested in volunteering even before December 26. She was urged by Dive Asia to attend the Green Fins meeting in November 2004.

Green Fins is a UNEP-sponsored program implemented by the PMBC and the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR). The presentation was given by the head of the

project, Nippon Phongsuwan, a coral specialist for the past 20 years.

"I told [K. Nippon] I would help him voluntarily with his [Green Fins] project," Lynsey said. After the tsunami, K. Nippon made a request to the UNDP for emergency relief funds, and this created the position of technical co-ordinator for coral reef rehabilitation and protection, a post that was offered to Lynsey.

The UNDP-funded program, Coral Clean-up, Rehabilitation and Protection Thailand, was created with the PMBC and the DMCR. Its three goals are to clean up the reefs, to help the coral recover, and to protect the reefs by educating locals and tourists. The Reef Clean Up and Recovery Thailand (RCURT) is a big task as it covers all of Thailand's coasts, not just Phuket's. Since Green Fins is also a

UNEP-funded project and K. Nippon is the head of it, it was only logical to associate Green Fins with the current RCURT Project.

The first priority was to clean debris from the reef and treat the coral that still had a chance of surviving. Lynsey explained, "Coral fragments, such as staghorn coral, had to be placed in a secure setting before the monsoon season. When the monsoon hits, it turns the coral over and it dies. Putting the fragments in concrete blocks isn't pretty but it stabilizes them and we monitor their progress. Sea fans in the Similan Islands have also been placed in secure settings."

While the reef recovery was under way, community education plans continued. One project was on Koh Yao Noi. On one side of the island is a coral reef that is exposed during low tide. To get from one side to the other people, would have to walk on top of the reef. However, thanks to the DMCR and RCURT, there is now a designated walking trail on top of the coral, which preserves the surrounding coral, and creates an attraction for locals and tourist alike. Local guides were also trained to give walking information tours in the area.

"We've also created a mobile educational unit and are trying to get [local children] involved in taking care of their own environment. The unit has already gone to many schools, not just Phuket schools, and will continue to do so," added Lynsey.

Currently, Green Fins has become more active and will work on "creating a marketable interest to dive companies", says Dave Marsden, who has been working for the UNDP Technical Assistance Project: Coral Clean-up, Rehabilitation and Protection Thailand as a professional diver.

"We don't charge the dive companies; it's about education and standardizing them. This way everyone receives the same treatment and knowledge about protecting reefs and an explanation of why people shouldn't touch them."

Many dive operators complain that there are not enough mooring lines at sites.

During the low season, RCURT put up more mooring lines around Phuket and in the Similan and Surin Islands. They used concrete blocks (instead of commonly used coral heads) to secure the lines.

Lynsey has urged divers to report any missing lines and to return loose buoys to the PMBC, regardless of the location, to ensure their replacement.

Green Fins is a UNEP pilot project that will benefit the dive industry and the environment. There will be posters in airports and in magazines, to make tourists aware of the importance of using Green Fins dive shops.

People who patronize Green Fins shops can be assured that they are supporting a business that cares about the environment and about a sustainable diving industry.

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Top women's beach volleyball players coming

PATONG: Top women's professional beach volleyball teams from eight nations have already confirmed that they will compete in the US\$50,000 FIVB (Fédération Internationale de Volleyball) Beach Volleyball Women's Challenger tournament, to be held at Patong Beach on December 27-30.

Thus far, the top-ranked team listed on the tournament's website is the World #4 pairing of Vasso Karadassiou and Vassiliki Arvaniti, from Greece, followed by the #15 duo of Petya Yanchulova and Lina Yanchulova of Bulgaria.

The organizers expect more teams to confirm spots in the top

24 draw soon, including high-ranking teams from Brazil, China, Europe and from throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Four courts will be built at Patong Beach, three on the beach and a center court at the municipal football field, which will have seating for 1,500 spectators. Entry will be free of charge.

Other FIVB-ranked teams already confirmed are: #33 Tanaka-Koizumi (JPN); #56 Baburina-Osheyko (UKR); #104 Tenpaksee-Puklongploy (Thailand) and Kulna-Sannok (THA), (rankings tied); #119 Godtalang-Tongkamkak (THA); #122 de-Vries-Labee (NED).

— Anongnat Sartpisut

PATONG DARTS LEAGUE

Valhalla stun Queen Mary

With just one week of play left, Amigos hold a slim one-point lead in the league after a 3-point win over Piccadilly, while the Danes of Queen Mary dropped from first place to fourth after failing to get a point playing on the road against Danish compatriots Valhalla.

There are still 14 makeup games that need to be played, many involving teams with a legitimate chance to win it all. The results of these will likely decide who will win the league and get the right to host the league party. If all the matches are played, the results of the final week of play and the final league table will appear in the next edition.

November 22 results: Dog's Bollocks 2 Offshore* 7; Amigos* 6 Piccadilly 3; Valhalla* 5 Queen Mary 4; Shakers* 8 African Café 1; Didi's* 6 Two Black Sheep 3; Coyote 4 Nag's Head* 5. (* = Winner of beer leg)

Standings: 1. Amigos (39pts); 2. Nag's Head (38); 3. Shakers (37); 4. Queen Mary (36); 5. Offshore (35); 6. Piccadilly, Valhalla (31); 8. Dog's Bollocks (25); 9. African Café (19); 10. Two Black Sheep (18); 11. Didi's (16pts); 12. Coyote (11).

Cricket league gets under way

PHUKET: Sunday, December 4 will see the first match in the Island Furniture Cricket League (IFCL) at the British (Curriculum) International School (BCIS).

The first ball of the day in the 40-overs-per-side match between BCIS Cricket Club and the Island Cricket Club will — weather permitting — be bowled at 9 am. Spectators are welcome.

The IFCL's Rich Brown said, "We'd like to hear from anyone interested in playing, umpiring or scoring. Also, rather delicately, although we have had the match balls generously donated by Sunrise Diving in Patong, we'd be keen to find sponsors for the cricketers' boxes..."

For more information email Rich Brown at richardwkbrown@hotmail or Tel: 01-7193414.



KOH KAEW: The Hotel Travel Phuket Soccer 7s tournament was held at the British International School on November 20 and 26-27, 2005.

Master Category Results (Nov 20)

2005 Cup Champions Winner: Q-Spot (Thailand)
2005 Runners-up Cup: YG Team (Thailand)
2005 Bowl Champions Winner: Sexy FC (China)
2005 Bowl Runners-up: Orchard

Romeos (Singapore)

Open Category Results (Nov 26-27)

Master Bowl Runners-up: Bugils Jakarta
Open Bowl Runner-up: Boca Seniors
Master Plate Runner-up: Farangutans
Open Plate Runner-up: Red Lions
Master Cup Runner-up: Team Bondi
Open Cup Runner-up: Shanghai Shooters

Karon Mountain Bike Competition

Karon Municipality and the Mountain Tiger Beach Boys' Cycling Team are accepting entries for the 1st Annual Karon Mountain Bike Competition on December 11. All races will start and finish at the Nohng Harn Public Park in Karon.

The races will be over 25 kilometers, 15km and 10km, in the following age categories:

25k: Under 18yrs; Open; 30-39yrs; 40-49yrs; 50yrs+. 2 pm start. Entry fee 350 baht.

15k: Men's: Under 15yrs; Under 18 yrs, Open, 25-29 yrs, 30-34yrs, 35-39yrs, 40-44yrs, 45-49yrs, 50-54yrs, 55yrs+. Women's: open category. 11 am start. Entry fee 300 baht.

10km: Under 10 yrs: 11-12 years. 9 am start. Entry free.

For more information contact the Karon Municipal Education Office at Tel: 076-330478.

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Home of the Week

Cherng Talay

This substantial modern home close to the Laguna complex is set in a private, gated community with good ocean views and access to one of the best beaches on Phuket.

The 748-square-meter property, on a landscaped garden plot of 1,570sqm, has been designed with luxury and space in mind. It has four bedrooms and also quarters for two live-in staff.

The property has just been completed and has never been occupied, so the new owners will be able to add personal touches throughout the house to suit their own lifestyle.

The home was designed after taking advice from a local Feng Shui Master.

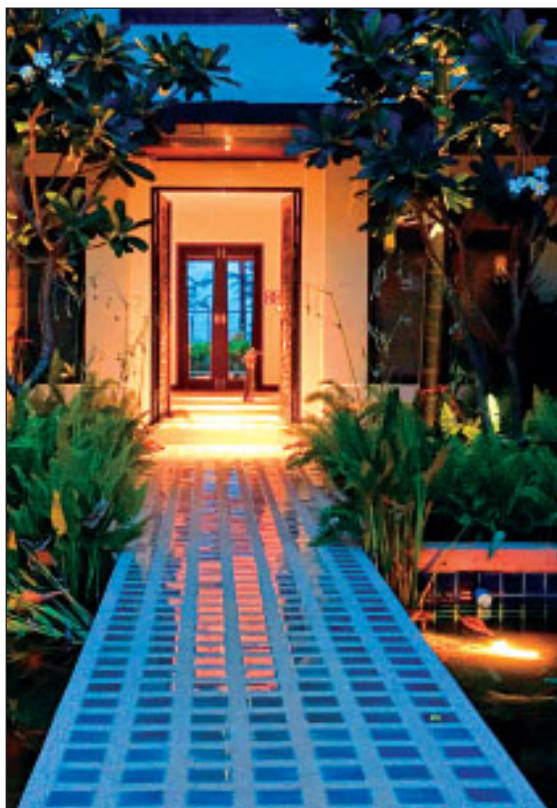
A large wooden door opens onto a private walkway with water and landscape features.

The main entrance is through large wooden doors which open into a 40-sqm entrance hall.

Large living and entertainment areas have been well planned throughout, and the outside entertainment areas are shaded, with direct access to the 140-sqm swimming pool.

The spacious garden and outside sala reinforce the feeling of space and provide ample room for relaxing.

There are two main indoor entertainment areas – a 67-sqm living area and a 30-sqm dining



The carefully designed lighting creates a warm welcome to visitors.



Shaded terraces lead out to the pool and the spacious gardens beyond.

SPACE TO SPARE

room. The kitchen is fitted with modern appliances and a Swedish storage system.

It also has a walk-in fridge and nearly 5sqm of chilled space beyond the kitchen.

The master bedroom, at 129sqm, has high vaulted ceilings and commands views across national park land to the beach.

The walk-in closet is fully fitted, and when added to the modern en-suite bathroom provides an additional 24sqm of living space.

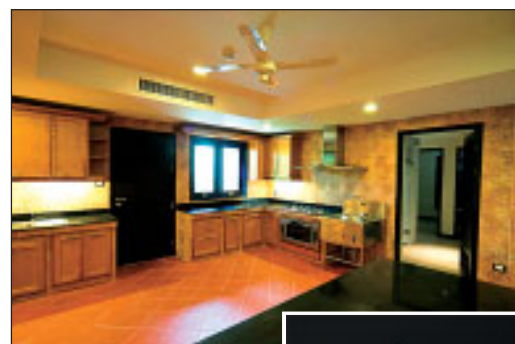
In the bathroom, the modern fittings include a steam bath and double shower unit.

Two further well-appointed bedrooms, each with en-suite bathroom, are on the second floor.

The property is fully air-conditioned throughout.

Nearby facilities include golf courses, five-star luxury hotels, spas and many excellent restaurants. The gated community has security guards and restricted access.

The land title is corporate freehold, and the price is 85 million baht.



The kitchen is fully equipped and has large amounts of frozen and chilled storage space.



The master bedroom, at 129sqm, is simply enormous.

For further information contact Engel & Völkers (Thailand) Ltd at Tel: 01-3977899, 01-5398118; Fax: 076-385294; or email phuket@engelvoelkers.com or martin.phillips@engelvoelkers.com



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Visit the show house... and choose your own view.

D&A

by Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

A bit of a soft spot

Looking for a soft spot to lay your weary head? Or comfortable quarters for your delicate derriere? For a Thai-style cushion, in cotton or silk, look no further than Buddy Mattress in Chalong.

Here you can find colorful *mon khit* cushions from the Kingdom's northeastern province of Yasothorn, famed for its population of migrants from Laos.

Traditional Thai homes are rather sparse by Western standards, with minimal furniture. Seating is usually on the floor, so cushions are an essential household item.

The popular triangular folding cushion, known by Thais as *mon ing* or *mon khwan*, costs 1,800 baht at Buddy Mattress, while a small bolster costs 150 baht. These lend any Phuket home interior a bit of local flair.

How can you resist a shop with the motto: "We are always ready to improve your well-being"?

The Lek Kanboa shop on the Phuket City bypass road takes comfort seriously. They do upholstery for cars and boats, but they also create lovely soft cushions for your sofa or chair.

Among the many designs on offer, the Thai silk and embroidered cushions and cotton cushions with elephants emblazoned on them are soft and sensual, though still not too delicate for everyday use in the living room.

For a dramatically modern or masculine accent, though, you may prefer a leather cushion. Choose one in a pattern reminiscent of a soccer ball for your footie-loving mates.

The cost of a Lek cushion ranges from 500 baht to 700 baht, depending on its size, material and design. For a custom-made cushion, an additional 150 baht is charged.

Finally, the mysterious east of ancient times beckons when you set your eyes upon red cushions adorned with hand-painted dragons. Intrigued? Such oriental inspirations for the tropical boudoir can be had for just 800 baht each at Phuket Golden in Kathu.



Traditionally Thai, from Buddy Mattress.



Glowing green – silk cushion from Lek Kanboa.



Lucky colors: traditional gold and red hard pillow from Phuket Gold.

SOURCES

- Buddy Mattress, 11/28-29 Moo 1 Chao Fa East Rd, Chalong, Tel: 076-282937 or call K. Raungyod Kingkaew at 06-5962249.
- Lek Kanboa, 108/23 Moo 5, Chalermprakiat Ror IX Rd, Ras-sada, Phuket City, Tel: 076-224308, website: <http://www.cushionandcurtain.com/en/products/home.htm>
- Phuket Golden, 46/42 Moo 6, Phra Barami Rd, Kathu, Tel: 076-323861

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Surprising as it may be, I'm a bit of a cynic. In fact, I'm not sure that there's anyone on the island who is more skeptical of ideas that drift off the straight and narrow than me.

Walking under ladders? I'm all for it, as long as there isn't some buffoon near the top who is tempted to drop a hammer on my head.

I've smashed more than a few mirrors in my time, and the threatened seven years of bad luck do not appear to have materialized. How can they? I live in Phuket.

And how about that salt thing? Spill it and toss a pinch over your left shoulder? I'm too stingy for that – I'd rather put it on my fish and chips.

Then there's that schoolboy excuse "superstition" – a pinch and a punch for the first of the month. Superstition, or just a handy excuse to leave bruises on the upper arms of smaller kids?

PESSIMISM

In other parts of the world, though, my pessimism is balanced somewhat by subtleties that Westerners can only dream of understanding.

There are cultures here in Thailand where superstitions are simply a way of life – there is no point in questioning them in any way.

I remember a Thai friend of mine getting married a few years ago, and the debate that went into choosing a date for the big day. The research he undertook was phenomenal, and he eventually chose one particular Saturday as it was considered a "good" day. There were a number of other choices, as it turned out, but none was a Wednesday, since entering wedlock on any Wednesday could bring bad luck to the marriage. I didn't ask why.

THE WONDER OF SUPERSTITION



The lanthom, or frangipani, and (inset) the chabaa, or humble hibiscus.

There are many Thai people who also believe that it is less than advisable to plant certain kinds of trees and plants near their houses or in their gardens. These plants are simply considered unlucky. Avoiding them certainly isn't a problem in this part of the world, as there are plenty of alternatives.

One of the most visible is possibly the frangipani tree, or *lanthom*. It's also known as the temple or pagoda flower tree.

In Thai, the word *lanthom* has a sound resembling the word *rathom* which means "agony",

and this is probably the original reason for the taboo, which seems to be waning today. You can usually find the frangipani in the grounds of temples (*wat*) or monasteries, where, according to traditional beliefs, the effects of anything considered to be unlucky will be reversed.

The *clerodendron fragrans*, or Chinese glory-bower (*nang yaem*) is a shrub with rather fragrant flowers. It is easily propagated as its roots run far and wide underground and shoot up as new plants, to the extent that they become a nuisance. Tra-

ditional Thais believe that *nang yaem* will turn into a ghost (*phi*) when it grows old, and disturb the peace of the house by pelting stones at it.

In Thai, *nang yaem* means to open slightly in bloom or the "peeping of a damsel", hence its poetic name is found quoted in early Thai "adult" literature.

Recently, we looked at the canna, or *phutaraksa*. In Thai, the literal translation is "Buddha's protection". It is usually cultivated in the gardens of most houses for its spectacular, showy flowers. It does, however, have a dark side, as some people object to these plants growing near the house. They believe the name Buddha has a great deal to do with the superstition, as anything considered to be connected in any way with spirits shouldn't really be in the same area as an inhabited house.

Even the humble hibiscus, or certain varieties of it, is thought by some to bring bad luck. The *chabaa* is a spectacular plant with particularly distinctive flowers. Originally from China, there are now hundreds, if not thousands, of varieties of the plant, all with various vivid colors and hues.

In ancient times, an adulteress was punished by being exposed to the public on a kind of stilt affair, with red *chabaa* flowers tucked above her ears. A convict to be executed was also decorated with a hibiscus flower behind the ear, on the way to being put to death. In southern India, a garland of these flowers is still hung around the neck of a criminal about to be executed. Scary.

The *ficus religiosa*, or religious fig tree (*po*), is the tree under which, according to legend, the Lord Buddha was sitting when he received his enlightenment. Nowadays, you can still find religious fig trees in the grounds of most *wats* in Thailand. This sacred tree is traditionally not grown in the garden of a house.

The *po* tree in the *wat* is usually a tall shady tree around which people sometimes wrap a yellow robe, in the same manner as robing a Buddha image with yellow fabric inside the temple. Some people place bamboo poles, trimmed and whitewashed, as supports to the holy tree. So for all those who have wandered around temple grounds, wondering what those tree supports were all about (myself included), now you know.

In those same ancient times, cowrie shells, used as token money, were inserted inside the bamboo poles. Some Thai people still bury the bones and ashes of their loved ones near the roots of the *po* tree so that they can be close to the holy symbol of their Lord Buddha.

I may not be the most accepting of individuals at the best of times, but with cultural beliefs like these around me every day, I'm in no position to debate or dispute any of them. And that's certainly not like me. This is culture.

Want to know more about a plant in your garden?

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Construction Update

by Anongnat Sartpisut



Above: a penthouse view; and (below) a two-bedroom Suite.



Building on the sweet Mangosteen brand

RAWAI: The Mangosteen Suites Estate, a 250-million-baht investment, will cover four rai on a hillside in the south of Phuket, next to the well-known Mangosteen Resort & Spa.

Mangosteen Resort & Spa's Managing Director Hajo von Keller told the *Gazette* that construction will start in February, and that he expects the project to be completed within 15 months. He said the marketing campaign had been due to begin last year, but it was delayed for 12 months because of the tsunami.

"It was impossible to forecast income at that time, but now we are confident enough to start construction early next year," he said.

Mr von Keller said that a five-star quality management team is already in place and the project is something of an extension to the Mangosteen Resort & Spa.

The concept of the Estate is modern, open-air living. A tropical ambiance will be created with ponds, warm, natural materials such as wood and stone, and large windows for uninterrupted sea views.

The 22 Suites are split into two types: 18 two-bedroom suites, providing 168 square meters of living area, priced from 13.6 million baht to 16.8 million baht; and four one-bedroom suites of

140sqm, priced from 13 million baht to 16.8 million baht.

In addition, there will be two three-bedroom, 300sqm penthouses, with private rooftop pools, priced from 31.8 million baht.

The first five units to sell will qualify for a 20% discount.

Quality building materials, similar to those of the existing resort, are to be used throughout the Suites, which will be fully furnished and equipped with an entertainment center.

Floors will be made of stone tiles and hardwood decking; the 20cm-thick walls will be plaster with washable paint; ceilings are to be of glass fiber-board with concealed lighting and low-noise and low energy-consumption air conditioning.

The exterior will be solid, plastered and painted concrete; doors and windows are to be made of solid hardwood, using safety glass where appropriate. The furniture will be custom-designed and made especially for the project, with a selection of finishes and fabrics available for buyers to choose from.

The water supply will come from the Mangosteen Resort's own well; electricity supply will be cabled underground. All pipes will be of the highest quality with a no-leakage guarantee. Central hot-water heaters will be installed in every Suite.

The Estate will also feature generous services and common facilities: housekeeping, maid and baby-sitting services; 24-hour security, a laundry, a large swimming pool, restaurant, bar and deli, landscaped gardens and covered parking lots. There will be a low monthly maintenance fee of 25 baht per square meter.

The Suites will be available on a 30-year lease, plus a 30-year extension. Owners can expect a return on investment of approximately 9% to 13% over a 10-year period (calculated on the basis of 10 months' rental per year, and an average occupancy rate of 60%).

Mr von Keller said that most of the Mangosteen's clients are from Asia and Europe. "People trust the Mangosteen brand to deliver – that's why they invest with us," he said.

"Two units have already sold, and I expect a lot of prospective buyers to visit the Estate before Christmas."

The architectural design is by Gary Fell, (Gfab), designer of the luxury Samujana residences on Koh Samui. The sole agent is First Choice Properties (FCP).

For more information, visit the Mangosteen Resort at 99/4 Moo 7, Soi Mangosteen. Tel: 076-289399 or Fax: 076-289389. Visit the website at: www.mangosteen-suites.com

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Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

KATA TOWNHOUSE

For sale by owner: a nice, 2-story, 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom townhouse in safe surroundings in Kata. Fully decorated. Asking 4.5 million baht (90,000 euros). Freehold or leasehold; 50% financing available. Tel: 01-7888280. Email: mauram7@hotmail.com

WEST COAST LAYAN

Gorgeous 460sqm plot with sea view. Great location. Gated community. Price: 26 million baht. Please call for more details. Tel: 01-8924497.

RAWAI SHOPHOUSES

2 new, connected shophouses on Wiset Rd, in Rawai, are for sale. Ground floor: sales office, staff room, kitchen, dining room and toilet. 2nd floor: master bedroom with separate bath and 2 separate bedrooms with connecting bath. 3rd floor: living room and ensuite bedroom. Living area 200sqm, freehold land: 100sqm. Price 4.5 million baht. (US\$113,000). Please contact K. Peter. Tel: 01-8928526. Please see our website at: www.phuket-besthomes.com

NEW HOUSES IN PATONG

3 new, connected, deluxe houses on Patong hillside, Soi Maneesi, for sale. Ground floor: garage and separate 1-room apartment with toilet. 2nd floor: 2 bedrooms and bathrooms, balcony. 3rd floor: living room with balcony, built-in kitchen and dining room, toilet. 4th floor: big roof garden with Jacuzzi. Usable area: 200sqm; freehold land: 100sqm. Price: 6.2 million baht. (US\$155,000). For more details, please contact K. Peter at Tel: 01-8928526 or visit the website www.phuket-besthomes.com

FOR SALE

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5-bedroom, 5-bathroom west-facing villa overlooking Kata Beach. One of 5 individual houses in a secure, walled compound but with no shared land and no monthly charges. Finished to a high standard with Italian granite floors, it includes a deluxe kitchen, large balcony overlooking Kata Beach, swimming pool and parking for 3 cars.



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NEW HOUSE IN PATONG

Brand-new, deluxe house with a swimming pool on a Patong hillside, Soi Maneesi. 2 floors, modern Thai-style architecture, completely furnished, ready to live in. Ground floor: big living room, Western-style kitchen and dining room; guest toilet. 2nd floor: big master bedroom and bath with Jacuzzi, 2 bedrooms and a separate bathroom. Each room has an air conditioner and a balcony. Living area: 200sqm; freehold land 150sqm. Price: 8.5 million baht. (US\$210,000). Please contact K. Peter at Tel: 01-8928526 or visit: www.phuket-besthomes.com

RAWAI LUXURY VILLA
144sqm house with 400sqm or 600sqm of land for sale. Located 350m from the beach. Priced from 2.4 million baht. Please contact for info. Tel: 06-6865567. Email: free_holdprop@yahoo.com

2-STORIES, RAWAI
130sqm house with Chanote title, brand-new, close to a school, 400m from the beach; asking 1.3 million baht. Tel: 06-6865567. Email: free_holdprop@yahoo.com

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RAWAI, 2-STORY
house. 200sqm house with Chanote title, brand new, close to a temple, 450m from the beach; asking 1.8 million baht. Please contact for further information. Tel: 06-6865567. Email: free_holdprop@yahoo.com

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HOUSE FOR SALE

A new, detached, house for sale, just 5km to British Curriculum International School. Size: 75 square wah, with 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. Price: 2.15 million baht. Please call Tel: 04-8516115.

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5 rai on Koh Sukorn, Trang. Asking 550,000 baht per rai for a bungalow and natural, quiet beachfront. Tel: 01-8913013. Email: odo-jp@hotmail.com

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Property Gazette

TOWNHOUSE

located at Boat Lagoon Marina. 200sqm. Asking 9.5 million baht. Please contact for information. Tel: 01-2734000. Email: charly@bonello.de

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Property Gazette



14 RAI

13 rai 3 ngan 98 talang wah (5.598 acres). Very quiet place, hill and sea views from second floor, just a few minutes' walk to the beach and 3 minutes' drive to the ferry for Phi Phi Islands and surrounding islands. Very cheap price for Phuket: 20 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



2.6 RAI WITH SEAVIEW

The size of the plot is 2 rai 2 ngan and 53 talang wah - 4,212sqm - and all the land is under the 80-meter height restriction. This plot is very interesting for a small villa project. Great spot with many opportunities. Price: 30 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



1,500 SQM SEAVIEW PLOT IN PATONG

This great seaview plot is located in Kalim (north of Patong). It has road access, and water and electricity supply are available. The land is 3 ngan 75 talang wah (1,500sqm) with Chanote title. Price: 13.5 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



3-BEDROOM THAI-STYLE VILLA

Besides the nice landscaped garden, you can enjoy a common pool. There is also space to park at least 3 cars. The living space is 440sqm and the land size 468sqm with Chanote title. Value for money. 6.7 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



3-BEDROOM VILLA WITH POOL

Villa comprises 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, guest toilet, kitchen, living and dining room, maid's room, outdoor shower, terrace around the house, pool and a garden.

Price: 14 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



6 RAI ON THE BEACH

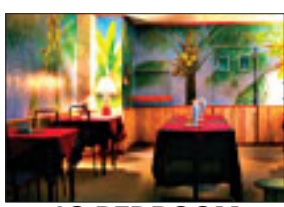
The plot is located on the east coast at Ao Por and has beautiful views of islands in Phang Nga Bay. The land is flat with a slope at the back. It has road access, and water and electricity supply are available.

Price: 40 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



6 RAI WITH SEA VIEW

Only 5 minutes from Mai Khao Beach, 10 minutes from the airport, 10 minutes from the Blue Canyon Golf Course and 20 minutes from Phuket City and Lotus. It has electricity supply and access road. Price: 12 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



12-BEDROOM GUESTHOUSE

All rooms are fully furnished with bathroom, air conditioner, safety box, TV and mini bar. Built in 1999, 4 stories, all main maintenance work re-done last year. The land title is Chanote.

Price: 20 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



2-BEDROOM VILLA WITH POOL

The villa is located in the south of Patong with amazing hill and valley views. It comprises 2 bedrooms, 2 en-suite bathrooms, living-dining room, kitchen, guest toilet, and a pool with sala where you can enjoy great views. Price: 12 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



6 RAI

Includes 200 meters of unspoiled beachfront. This beautiful land is located on the east coast of Koh Naka Yai. All covered by tropical trees and coconut trees. You can reach the plot by boat from Ao Por in 20 minutes. Price: 20 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



2-BEDROOM VILLA

Has a nice sea view. Villa comprises 2 bedrooms, 2 en-suite bathrooms, balcony with sala, a kitchen, living room, dining room, laundry room, guest toilet, a car park for 2 cars; surrounded by a garden. All features throughout the house are made from teak. Price 9.5 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



3-BEDROOM VILLA

Has a sound system throughout the house, plasma TV in the living room with satellite TV. Around the house is a well-designed tropical garden with Buddha image features. Price: 14.9 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



2 RAI SEA VIEW

With Chanote title, public road access, water and electricity. Only 2 minutes to Rawai Beach. Price: 8 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



1 RAI

The land, with underground infrastructure, is ready to build on, and the area boasts some of the most expensive housing on the island. A very good investment; a beautiful area with nice, quiet beaches. Price: 8 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



2 SHOPHOUSES

There are 4 floors with 6 rooms in each unit and the ground floor is ideal for entertainment. Very good location. Price 18 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



3-BEDROOM VILLA

Beautiful sea view. Located in the southern hills of Patong. Comprises 3 bedrooms, 2 en-suite bathrooms, 1 guest bathroom, Western kitchen, living room, dining room, a terrace where you can enjoy the sunset; storeroom and a carport. Price: 13.5 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



3-BEDROOM VILLA WITH SEA VIEW

The villa is surrounded by a tropical garden and has 24-hour security. Comprises 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a Western kitchen, living-dining room and 2 terraces where you can relax and see the sunset. It is fully furnished. Price: 15 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



9 RAI WITH SEA VIEW

This 9-rai plot is located in Chalong and has a slight slope with a sea view. It is a nice square plot and has water and electricity supply. Ideal for a villa project.

Price: 36 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



3-BEDROOM THAI-STYLE VILLA

It comprises 3 bedrooms, 2 en-suite bathrooms, guest bathroom, Western kitchen and a spacious living-dining room. Besides the nice landscaped garden, you can enjoy a common pool.

Price: 6.7 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



9 RAI WITH SEA VIEW

This plot is located in Chalong and has a slight slope with a sea view. It is a nice square plot and has water and electricity supply. Ideal for a villa project.

Price: 36 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



7 RAI SEA VIEW

A good piece of land in a quiet area with public road access, water and electricity supply.

Only 10 minutes to Rawai Beach. Price: 38.5 million baht. Tel: 09-8715192.



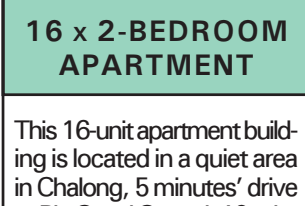
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2-BEDROOM VILLA

With sea view. It comprises a master bedroom with en-suite bathroom and Jacuzzi, guest bedroom with en-suite bathroom, kitchen, living room, dining room, study, guest toilet, 2-car carport, nice garden, solar-heated hot-water system, UBC, phone with Internet. Price 7.5 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.



16 x 2-BEDROOM APARTMENT

This 16-unit apartment building is located in a quiet area in Chalong, 5 minutes' drive to Big C and Central, 10 minutes to Phuket City and 15 minutes to Nai Harn, Karon and Kata Beaches. All apartments have 2 bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, living and dining room, and are fully furnished. It has an office, manicured gardens and the property is very well maintained. 20 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.

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