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IN THIS ISSUE

NEWS: New round-up of stray dogs to begin; Hunt for missing catamaran.

Pages 2 & 3

INSIDE STORY: Another island eyesore.

Pages 4 & 5

AROUND THE ISLAND: Biker bliss and pieces.

Page 6

AROUND THE REGION: Going, going, gun...

Page 8

PEOPLE: Weddings; Phuket's condom campaigner.

Pages 10 & 11

LIFESTYLE: Mood music; Fair fairway fashion.

Pages 12 & 13

SPA MAGIC: Elemental fun.

Page 15

AFTER DARK: Saxus Nexus.

Page 17

MOTORING: A schizophrenic Chevrolet.

Page 18

FIRST PERSON: Digging the dirt on the bypass road.

Page 25

BUSINESS: Money Talks.

Page 27

SPORT: Japan volleyball girls on top; Windsurfing to Malaysia.

Pages 28 & 29

PROPERTY: Home of the Week: Laguna; Construction: Santé! for Villa Santi; Decor: The essential oil burners.

Pages 30-33

PLUS

QUEER NEWS 7; AROUND THE NATION 9; HAPPENINGS 14; WINE, PHUKET DIARY 16; TAKE A BREAK 19 & 20; OUTSIDE IN, BOOKS 21; YOUTH 'N ASIA, MOMMA DUCK, LAW 22; HOROSCOPES, TOWNINGS 23; EDITORIAL, LETTERS 24; ISSUES & ANSWERS 25; COMPUTERS, ON THE MOVE 26; GARDENING 32; CLASSIFIEDS 35-43.

Local Britons honored for their tsunami work

By Shiona Mackenzie & Sam Wilkinson

PHUKET: Cynthia Ratcliffe, President of the Phuket International Women's Club (PIWC), Martin Carpenter, Chairman of the British Business Association of Phuket (BBAP), UK Honorary Consul Alan Cooke and Disaster Victim Identification Unit Press Officer Lucy Norton have been made Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the UK's New Year Honours List for their efforts in helping tsunami victims.

"I feel quite amazed and it hasn't really sunk in yet. I never expected anything like this to happen to me," said Mrs Ratcliffe, who was awarded for her continuing services to disadvantaged Thai children and victims of the tsunami.

She tended to the injured, volunteered to clean up debris and helped tsunami survivors from overseas by using her linguistic skills in French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch.

"Last year so much assistance was needed and it is very nice to have all that hard work acknowledged, but I am happy, also, to be able to continue doing more," she added.

New MBEs (Members of the Order of the British Empire)



Cynthia Ratcliffe.



Alan Cooke.



Martin Carpenter.

Mr Carpenter said, "I am delighted and honored to have been presented with this MBE. It's very nice to be recognized for what I did. However, there were many people involved in many ways in the rescue and identification process after the tsunami. I would like to take this opportunity to especially thank those individuals who assisted me

in what was an incredible joint effort following the tragedy on December 26, 2004."

The PIWC and the BBAP presented a variety of fund-raising activities over the past year in aid of tsunami victims. Both organizations also regularly contribute financial assistance for needy children across Phuket, and provide clothing, shelter, food

and scholarships to Thai orphans and victims of child abuse.

Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Yates, who led the UK police response to identify British tsunami victims, was also recognized in the New Year Honours List.

He was awarded the Queen's Police Medal.

One killed and 75 hurt on roads over New Year

By Nattamon Ratcharak

PHUKET: One man was killed and 75 people were injured in road accidents in Phuket over the New Year's celebrations.

The fatal accident occurred at 4:30 am in Chalong on December 31, when a motorcycle collided with a pickup truck.

The motorcyclist, Suwit Mumngen, was killed instantly.

Siriporn Sasu, an officer with the Phuket Office of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (ODPM), told the Gazette that most road accidents over the festive season were alcohol-related and occurred largely at night.

According to the ODPM,

there were 59 accidents on the island between December 29 and January 2.

Some 2,003 road users were charged with committing traffic violations over the holiday period.

These included 1,333 found to be driving without a valid license; 399 motorcyclists fined

for not wearing a crash helmet and 156 drivers charged for not wearing a seat belt.

There were 74 drunk driving charges and 28 people were fined for driving illegally modified motorcycles.

Thirteen people were charged with breaking the speed limit.

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ROUND-UP OF STRAY DOGS TO BEGIN

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: Representatives from just five of the island's 13 local government bodies attended a meeting to address the island's long-standing stray dog problem. At the December 27 meeting it was also announced that dog owners in two areas can now apply for "passports" for registered pets.

The meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall, and chaired by Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura, was organized by the Phuket Provincial Livestock Office (PPLO), which was represented by its Chief, Sunart Wongchawalit.

Only four or five people were present at the start of the meeting, including representatives from the Tambon Administration Organizations (*OrBorTor*) of Mai Khao and Sakoo, along with Kata-Karon Municipality. Representatives of Wichit and Rawai *OrBorTor* arrived later.

Representatives of animal welfare organizations on the island were not invited.

Gov Udomsak stressed the need to control the number of strays at beaches and temples, saying that they pose a threat to tourism.

"I get complaints from many tourists who are afraid of

stray dogs roaming the beaches. It's no laughing matter if a tourist gets bitten, because we have a tourism-based economy and we must ensure that it is safe for tourists here," he said.

"The province will do what it can, but in the end success will come down to the effort of each local government body," he said.

Weekly round-ups of strays will take place on Fridays, starting on January 13 in the Chalong Bay area. There will be 13 round-ups altogether.

TEMPLES

The PPLO expects to remove some 380 strays from 12 beaches (Chalong, Rawai, Nai Harn, Kata, Karon, Patong, Kamala, Surin, Bang Tao, Nai Thorn, Nai Yang and Sai Kaew) and 330 more from Phuket's 11 main temples.

PPLO officials working with local government bodies will use tranquillizer guns to capture strays from beaches, which will then be taken to the Mid-Road Dog Shelter in Thalang for sterilization. Those rounded up at temples will be sterilized on site.

K. Sunart told the *Gazette* after the meeting that the Governor had limited the number of strays that the shelter could hold to 500.

There are currently 420-430 animals housed there, he said.

The shelter had enough resources to care for this number of animals.

K. Sunart denied that any animals would be put down to accommodate new arrivals.

"If the number reaches 500 we'll stop the round-ups," he said.

It is unknown just how many strays there are on the island, but a survey conducted last year by the PPLO estimated the number at about 3,500.

Gov Udomsak said that special emphasis would be put on controlling stray dog populations in the north of the island, in Mai Khao and Sakoo Tambons, and that the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint would be monitored closely.

K. Sunart also told the meeting that the Livestock Department has approved Phuket as a pilot province for a "passport project", under which all registered pet dogs would be implanted with microchips and issued with a permit by the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives that would allow the animal to travel internationally with its owners.

He said that Phuket was chosen because it is a small province and an island, which should make it easier to control the stray dog population and to microchip all registered dogs.



The aftermath: the bus on its side and anti-fire foam on the road.

Tourists hurt in bus crash

PATONG: A tour bus carrying 37 Israelis overturned on Prabaramee Rd in rainy weather at about 5 pm on December 29, while it was en route to Patong from Khao Lak in Phang Nga. Two passengers were seriously injured in the crash.

Theerayuth Prasertphol, Chief Technical Officer of the Phuket Provincial Transportation Office, told the *Gazette* that as the bus was traveling down the two-lane road, which was slippery from a recent downpour at the time, the driver lost control and was forced to turn into the hillside to avoid crossing into oncoming traffic.

The bus then rolled onto its side. Several motorcyclists trav-

eling behind the bus were also reported to have fallen from their vehicles as the bus skewed across the road.

Traffic to and from Patong was blocked for three hours, until about 8 pm, while spilled petrol was cleaned up and a crane was brought to the scene to clear the vehicle from the roadway.

Pol Lt Weerapong Rakito of Kathu Police Station told the *Gazette* that the police charged the bus driver, Sompong Tuanyai, 48, with causing injury by careless driving.

All those injured in the accident were treated at Patong Hospital, Bangkok Hospital Phuket and Siriroj Hospital.

— Anongnat Sartpisut

Governor calls for continued recovery efforts

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn

PHUKET CITY: At his monthly meeting with provincial chief officers on December 29, Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura called for the government

and private sector to continue their co-operative efforts to help Phuket to full recovery by next high season.

Gov Udomsak said that Phuket had recovered faster than other places affected by the tsu-

nami because the government and the private sector had worked well together, and he commended central government policy that all ministers involved must regularly visit affected areas in order to check on how recovery projects are progressing.

"It is lucky for us that we all understood what Phuket needed, which is different to other places where they could not agree and lost the chance for their

tourism to recover quickly.

"I heard that many hotels [in Phuket] have about 70%-80% occupancy, which, after 2006, I believe will back to 100%," Gov Udomsak said.

He added that he believes Khao Lak and the Phi Phi Islands will take about two more years to fully recover.

"Nowhere was left without feeling the pain of the tsunami, and for 2006 I would like to ask every official to get involved and help to improve tourism in Phuket," he said.

"And thank you to everyone involved in organizing the tsunami memorial services. We had many international media organizations, such as CNN and the BBC, help promote Phuket. I believe Phuket's good image will be restored soon.

"We have received a great deal of praise from the interna-

tional media saying that Phuket is fine now," Gov Udomsak said.

He added that tsunami memorial services gave him the opportunity to highlight Phuket's major problems to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and visiting Cabinet ministers, including Agriculture Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan.

"I explained to her about Phuket's chronic water shortage problems. She said she would return to look into the problem herself, but she could not give a date when," he said.

Similarly, he explained other problems and projects currently under way to other ministers, he said.

"I explained the many projects that are needed to solve Phuket's problems. Don't worry, I am always ready to take a shot at goal if the ball touches my feet," Gov Udomsak quipped.

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Bar girl 'added injury to insult'

KARON: Chalong Police are looking for a bar hostess named "Poo" who broke the heart of a Swedish tourist – then added injury to insult by smashing a beer bottle over his head on New Year's Eve.

A report of the incident was made by the victim soon after the attack, which occurred at around 1:30 am on January 1.

Swede Peter Kawe, 43, told police that he came to Phuket as a tourist late last year and had fallen deeply in love with Poo – real name not reported – with the understanding that she was single and childless, he told police.

As patrons of the Seven Beer Bar celebrated the arrival of 2006, one of Poo's friends told the Swede that not only was she already married – but that she also had a child.

When the Swede confronted Poo to ask if this was true, she smashed a beer bottle over his head and hurled the broken remains at him, he said.

Covered with his own blood, the Swede continued to demand an explanation from Poo about why she had lied to him.

He only left the bar after Poo chased him out with a fruit knife, he told police.

Pol Lt Col Anek Mongkol of the Chalong Police Station told the *Gazette* that if Poo could be found she would be arrested and charged with assault.

– Anongnat Sartpisut

Gambling top of the December arrests table

PHUKET: Statistics released by Phuket Provincial Police show that gambling again tops the arrests table, with 256 people arrested from December 1 to 25 for the offense.

Two murders were reported during the month, with one case solved. There were two cases of attempted murder in which no arrests were made.

There were 36 reports of theft, with three people charged with snatch-and-run crimes. Eight people were arrested for possessing firearms without a license.

One hundred and twenty people were arrested for the illegal possession of controlled substances – and 44 were charged with possessing a total of 4,760 *ya bah* (methamphetamine) tablets.

Thirty-four people were arrested for offenses related to prostitution.



Have you seen this catamaran recently? The distinctive 'Kilo' under sail during the recent King's Cup.

Reward offered for missing yacht

By Chris Husted

KATA: Yacht owner Chris Sieber is offering a US\$5,000 reward for information directly leading to the recovery of his 46-foot catamaran *Kilo*, which went missing off Kata Beach on December 18.

Mr Sieber told the *Gazette* that *Kilo* was last seen anchored offshore from the Kata Beach Resort on December 17, following the King's Cup Regatta, for which *Kilo* was chartered.

"At first I thought they [the charter crew] may have taken her for a trip, but the next day we realized that the boat was missing," Mr Sieber said.

He reported the boat as missing with Chalong Police and with the Marine Police the following day. Authorities in Ranong, Burma and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands have also been notified.

The Marine Police put out a call for all commercial fishing vessels to report any sightings of a boat matching the description of *Kilo*. However, they did not launch a search, Marine Police Lt Col Pratueng Siramanont told the *Gazette*.

Although theft is a possibility, Mr Sieber has not ruled out that *Kilo* may simply have drifted off her anchor. However, he could not give an estimated search perimeter where the boat, if adrift, might be found.

"If she's adrift she should be somewhere out between Sumatra and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, but with the shifting winds as well as the cur-

rents, it's nearly impossible to tell," he said.

"But if she's been stolen, she could be anywhere."

Two aerial searches by the Phuket-based helicopter charter company HeliThai failed to locate the boat.

The first search, which took place on December 20, was southwest of Phuket, where *Kilo* is expected to be if she is adrift. The second search a few days later covered Phang Nga Bay, including Koh Yao Noi and Krabi.

Mr Sieber explained that *Kilo* had been stripped down for racing in the King's Cup Regatta. There was very little drinking water and no provisions on board.

"And I left only a little diesel," he said.

Kilo can easily be identified by its distinctive Tim Mumby design. "If it has been stolen, then the thieves are not the brightest," he said. "There are only four boats like this in the world. It's not like it's a Toyota or a Mitsubishi."

Anyone with information about *Kilo*'s current whereabouts is urged to contact Chris Sieber at Tel: 01-8871558 or by email at: seabear_1@yahoo.com or chris@katabigrock.net

Alternatively, contact Bob Mott at Tel: 01-7974061 or by email at: marineware@loxinfo.co.th

UK student found dead on Samui

SAMUI: The policeman in charge of the investigation into the death of British tourist Katherine Horton suspects foul play, but said that a preliminary police examination of the body revealed no signs of assault or rape.

Pol Maj Thanongsak Ak-sornsom of the Samui District Police told the *Gazette* that Miss Horton's body, in a black dress, was found floating in shallow water off Lamai Beach at about 10 am on January 2 by a jet-ski rental operator.

The Cardiff, Wales, native, a 21-year-old student at the University of Reading, was on holiday on Samui with a friend. The pair arrived in Thailand on December 27 and reached Koh Samui on December 31, in time to celebrate New Year's Eve there.

As her friend returned to their shared bungalow late on the evening of January 1, Miss Horton took a late-night stroll along Lamai Beach.

Her body was found the next morning.

Police are questioning people in the area, but have not identified any suspects, Maj Thanongsak said.

From the shoreline location of the recovered body police assume that death was the result of an accident or an attack on the beach, he added.

Miss Horton's body will be sent to the Royal Thai Police Office of Forensic Science in Bangkok for further examination to try and determine the exact cause of death, he said.

– Anongnat Sartpisut

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Broken spirit houses. Used cement bags. Foam packing. Shattered beer bottles. Cracked ceramic tiles. Mold-covered wooden planks. Black garbage bags, the contents of which can only be guessed at...What do these things have in common? All of it – and much, much more – can be found strewn along the shoulder of the Sapam-Samkong road, Phuket's newest garbage tip. The *Gazette's* Anongnat Sartpisut reports.

Not long ago, the Sapam-Samkong road was a quiet byway. A pleasantly winding road with little traffic, it runs north-south between the bypass road and Thepkasattri Rd. Neglected by motorists who prefer the nearby bypass road just to the west, it is perhaps best known to island residents as the detour route they must follow during blasting work on the bypass road widening project.

The road's central location on the island has not gone unnoticed by property developers, however. Developers love to boast: Five minutes to Tesco-Lotus! Five minutes to the airport! Five minutes to the international school! Five minutes to golf! While no such place may actually exist, the area from Sapam to Samkong is probably as close as it gets.

Among the new projects along the road are the new Juvenile Court building, a bus depot and two residential developments – Baan Rock Garden and Top Land – both major projects still under construction. With all the shophouse building along Soi Paniang to the south, it appears inevitable that the road will eventually be fully engulfed by the ever-expanding urban sprawl of greater Phuket City.

The use of the Sapam-Samkong road as a convenient – albeit illegal – garbage tip began three or four months ago.

Much of the problem, it seems, stems from confusion between the Tambon Administra-

tion Organizations (*OrBorTor*) of Rassada and Koh Kaew as to which is actually responsible for the area. Both *OrBorTor* have contracts with private companies to provide garbage removal services within their jurisdictions, with all the collected garbage sent to Saphan Hin for incineration.

The *Gazette* contacted both *OrBorTor* to try to find out who, if anyone, would take responsibility for Phuket's most unsightly roadside.

Rassada *OrBorTor* President Suthat Hongbood told the *Gazette* that it was not clear whether the area in question fell under the responsibility of Rassada *OrBorTor* or Koh Kaew *OrBorTor*.

"I feel that the area with most of the garbage falls under the responsibility of Koh Kaew *OrBorTor*, even though Rassada *OrBorTor* once helped them clear up garbage in that area because Koh Kaew didn't have a loader," he said.

K. Suthat said he plans to meet with Koh Kaew *OrBorTor* soon to devise a joint strategy for dealing with the growing piles of garbage.

As for the source of all the trash, K. Suthat said most of it was dumped under cover of darkness. Although there are no hotels or resorts in the vicinity, K. Suthat suspects that much of the refuse may have its source in the hotel industry.

"We put up a sign forbidding people to dump garbage in the area. It was effective for a short time, but before long people be-

gan dumping trash there again," he said.

"I am not sure how much garbage is there right now. Is it really getting worse? If Koh Kaew *OrBorTor* doesn't have the resources to clear it up, they can call us up and ask for help," he added.

Koh Kaew *OrBorTor* President Kuakiat Kitkuan told the *Gazette* that part of the road does lie in Koh Kaew, but that the area in question is not on the normal garbage collection route. Because the population density in the area is so low, the *OrBorTor* has not placed trash receptacles along the roadside.

It is only from areas with such receptacles that the garbage collectors are responsible for making pick-ups, he said.

"This waste is not being generated by the community. Someone is smuggling it in – and we don't know who," he said, although he suspects that its source is from nearby property developments and their workers' camps.

SOLUTION

"I ordered *OrBorTor* staff to find out who is doing it, but it's not easy because our staff can't be there all the time. Sometimes it is put there in the morning, sometimes at noon, sometimes at night. If we can find out who is responsible, we will have them arrested and prosecuted for sure," he said.

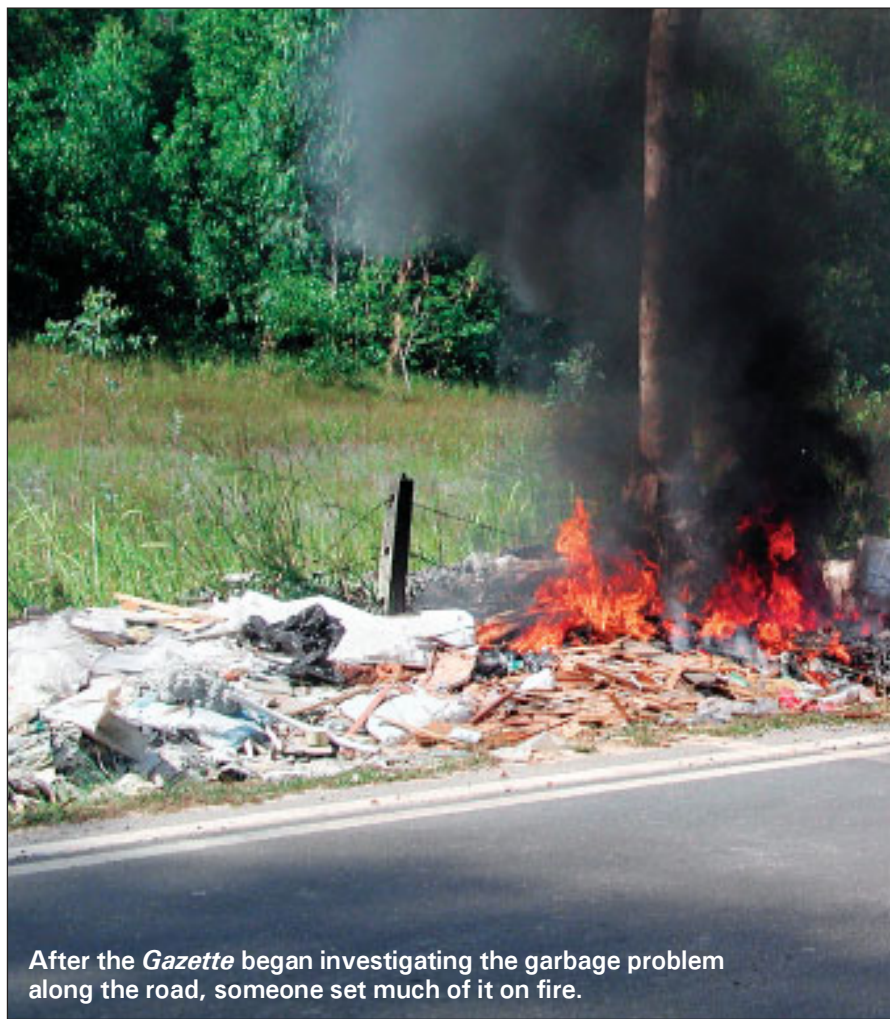
"The people who are dumping here can be in and out in three minutes. Since the police aren't doing anything about it, the only solution is for the *OrBorTor* to catch the perpetrators."

Like his counterpart across the poorly delineated Tambon line, however, K. Kuakiat does not think the bulk of the garbage is within his Tambon.

"The huge piles of garbage are in Rassada," he said, "especially the mess along the road north of the Baan Rock Garden project."

Phuket's

The roadside eyesore



After the *Gazette* began investigating the garbage problem along the road, someone set much of it on fire.

He showed the *Gazette* a document showing that while the section of road in question falls under the jurisdiction of Koh Kaew *OrBorTor*, Rassada *OrBorTor* is responsible for the roadside.

K. Kuakiat added that he appreciated Rassada *OrBorTor*'s past efforts in cleaning up garbage on the Koh Kaew side of the border.

"It would be impossible for our workers to have picked up that much garbage without a loader," he said.

Public reaction to the growing mess has been mixed. Some people react with anger, others with resigned acceptance. Still others are afraid to speak out for fear of retribution.

Amporn Singtilom, a fishmonger, happened to pull his motorcycle and sidecar up along the

side of the road while the *Gazette* was photographing the garbage.

"It started to mount up along here about three months ago," he told the *Gazette*.

"Last night, after I sold out of fish, I told myself that I would stop by here this morning and collect some wood to use at my home. At the very least I can use it for cooking fuel," he said, rummaging through the debris.

"I think most of the garbage is leftover construction materials. You can see that someone has tried to burn it. I think the people who did that are the same ones who left it here in the first place," he said.

Surveying the roadside, he added, "I don't think this is a good place to leave garbage... it looks dirty, and anybody passing by can see it clearly."

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messy mile

that just keeps on growing



Koh Kaew OrBorTor President Kuakiat Kitkuar.

'Someone is smuggling it in – and we don't know who'

Another local resident unimpressed with the state of the environment in the area is Uthaiwan Sujaritham, a teacher at the nearby Tunkka Boonyakajornpracha Asa School, just south of where the Sapam-Samkong road is becoming Phuket's "messy mile".

One of K. Uthaiwan's responsibilities at the school is to raise the students' environmental awareness by getting them to keep the school grounds clean and tidy.

As for the roadside garbage, she said: "I drive past it every day and I can't believe how negligent these people are, dump-

ing their garbage there like that. We are a tourism province... all this garbage is destroying the environment."

The worsening garbage problem in the area is a major setback for the school, which four years ago won a "Magic Eyes" environmental award from the Thai Environment and Community Development Association.

The school teaches its students about the need for conservation and environmental awareness.

It does this through songs, poster-drawing and speeches by the headmaster and teachers as

part of the morning flag-raising ceremony, she said.

There is also a recycling program under which students can get 500 baht each for bringing in target amounts of recyclable waste from their homes.

"The garbage along the road is partly from property development, but it's just part of a wider problem that stems from a lack of environmental awareness," said the educator.

Problems with garbage in the area are not limited to illegal dumping, she said. "Rassada OrBorTor used to do thrice-weekly garbage collections at the school, but now they only come once a week."

'CRAZY'

"We asked for more, larger, bins to match our growing enrollment, but they still give us only the small ones. When they are full we put them out in front of the school so that it will be easier for them to empty."

As for the mess just up the road, she had her own story to tell.

"One day, I saw some broken glass and nails on the road near where all the garbage is piled up. Seeing that it could cause a puncture to my vehicle, or to that of anyone else who passed by, I pulled over and tried to sweep the debris into a bag and get it off the road. People looked at me as if I was crazy," she said.

Another local resident the *Gazette* asked was the driver of a water truck. Identifying himself only as "Maew", he said, "The amount is increasing daily. It's mostly leftover construction materials. People keep leaving it there and nobody picks it up, so the pile continues to grow."



Despite a sign placed there warning against illegal dumping, the garbage just keeps on coming.



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

Motorcyclemania, live at Baan Anurak

By Shiona Mackenzie

It isn't easy for some people to drive by a house with a big rusty old bike suspended over the doorway and a rickshaw on the front porch. Baan Anurak Motorcycle Museum's owner and manager, Boonseub "Tong" Inmeung, is more magpie than mere motorcycle maniac.

"I want to rescue other people's unwanted items, and I love old things because they have so much character. I am interested in history," he says.

Upon entering his den of antiquity, I am amazed by sundry relics in, on, under, in front of and peeking out from behind ancient-looking cabinets. From clocks and sewing machines to gramophones, tin toys and a vintage dentist's chair, Baan Anurak has something for every collector.

SELF-TAUGHT

At age 33, K. Tong has already acquired a remarkable miscellany of motorcycles, scooters and their parts. He is self-taught in motorcycle restoration, repair and maintenance, and has proved himself so adept that people now come from across Phuket to have him operate on their favorite motorbikes – as well as to buy and sell them.

"I got into motorcycles when I was 14 years old and first set eyes on a book about the history of Honda motorbikes," he explains.

"I never looked back.

"My family moved to Phuket from Bangkok's Yaowarat area – Chinatown – 13 years ago,

but it wasn't until about eight years ago that I was finally able to make my dream of establishing a shop specializing in motorcycle maintenance and unique antiques come true.

"Baan Anurak became quite a hit in Saphan Hin where it was launched, so I founded a motorcycle club for enthusiasts like myself to get together. From a group of four friends, it has since grown to more than 50 members from across Phuket," he says.

The Baan Anurak motorcycle club members meet at Wat Chalong and ride together to Laem Phromthep or to Rawai Beach a couple of times a year to picnic with their families. Only

occasionally do they take part in motorcyclists' festivals outside Phuket.

Takuapa Rd became home to Baan Anurak two years ago. K. Tong also runs a small bar next to the shop, open every day from noon till late.

"It keeps me happy as well as busy," he says. "I hope to remain here for many years to come, because this place is both spacious and convenient."

Every now and then, K. Tong takes time out to travel all around Thailand in search of unusual motorbikes, sometimes buying one or two, bringing them back to Phuket, refurbishing them and selling them to enthusiasts in the local biking community.

"My customers are generally guys 20- to 60-years-old who spend between 7,000 baht and 60,000 baht at a time, depending on what they want. I offer a wide range of services and items, from accessories to vintage motorcycles."

Interest in Baan Anurak has mushroomed.

"People who love motorcycles can't help sharing their zeal," he says.

"That's how I ended up being invited to take part in the Phuket Motor Show that was held in December at Central Festival – word of mouth.

"The organizer contacted me out of the blue and it was a surprising and welcome opportunity to display a couple of my most prized possessions," he says.

K. Tong's passion has broadened recently. "Electric bicycles are my latest favorite thing. I am learning all about them and may even buy one soon.

"Thanks to the people of Phuket, I have been able to build up a business from scratch and to thrive – I can live my dream. And this dream is just beginning."

Anyone interested in viewing K. Tong's collection or getting a motorcycle repaired is welcome to visit Baan Anurak Motorcycle Museum at 76/2 Takuapa Rd, T. Rassada, Phu-kei City. Tel: 06-2670945 (in Thai).



K. Tong on his 1969 East German MZ ETS 125, plus a selection of items from inside his emporium.



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Queer News

Bungled burglary nets bogus bill

CHON BURI: After arresting three teenagers for passing a counterfeit 1,000-baht note, Pattaya Police were stunned to learn that two of them had just stolen it from a nearby bank.

After a tipoff by a vendor at the To Rung Mae Wilai Market, police arrested two homeless boys, 15-year-old "A" and 14-year-old "B" [real names withheld because they are minors], along with a girl, Piyaporn Koonharn, 19.

The vendor became suspicious when the three tried to change a dodgy-looking 1,000-baht note for lower denomination bills. When police arrived, a search of the boys turned up the counterfeit 1,000-baht note.

Also found on the boys was an assortment of 50 bank cards issued by the Siam Commercial Bank.

The boys immediately confessed to having stolen all the items during a break-in at a nearby branch of the bank.

The girl had no involvement in the crime and was just someone they met and had lunch with at the market, the boys said.

"A" told police that he was a runaway and had been living on the streets of Pattaya for about a year, sleeping behind a

shopping mall and running around with other street kids. He eventually met "B", who had a similar story. The two became friends, every night breaking into homes or stealing motorcycles and selling whatever they could thieve.

"A" said that to break into the bank they first surveyed the area and determined that a wall surrounding the bank was not too high for "B" to scale. Once, inside "B", after breaking a closed-circuit TV camera to avoid detection, unscrewed a metal grate covering a window. Once removed, it was child's play for him to force out the panes from the louvered glass window and gain entry to the poorly fortified bank.

Inside, he searched the drawers and found the 1,000-baht banknote and other items, before escaping without notice. The boys then went to the market where they met their friend Piyaporn, and tried to exchange the bill for real money so they could all enjoy a nice breakfast.

That was when the police arrived and arrested all three. The young suspects will remain in custody while their other crimes and the role of Piyaporn in the bank break-in are investigated.

Source: Kom Chad Luek

We Love Phuket!



Pairoj Sieng-Ek collects his prize of a voucher for a Seafood Basket dinner for two at Old Siam Thai Restaurant from Athipa 'Pam' Bunnak, the *Gazette's* Events & Public Relations Manager, for having a 'We Love Phuket' sticker on his car.



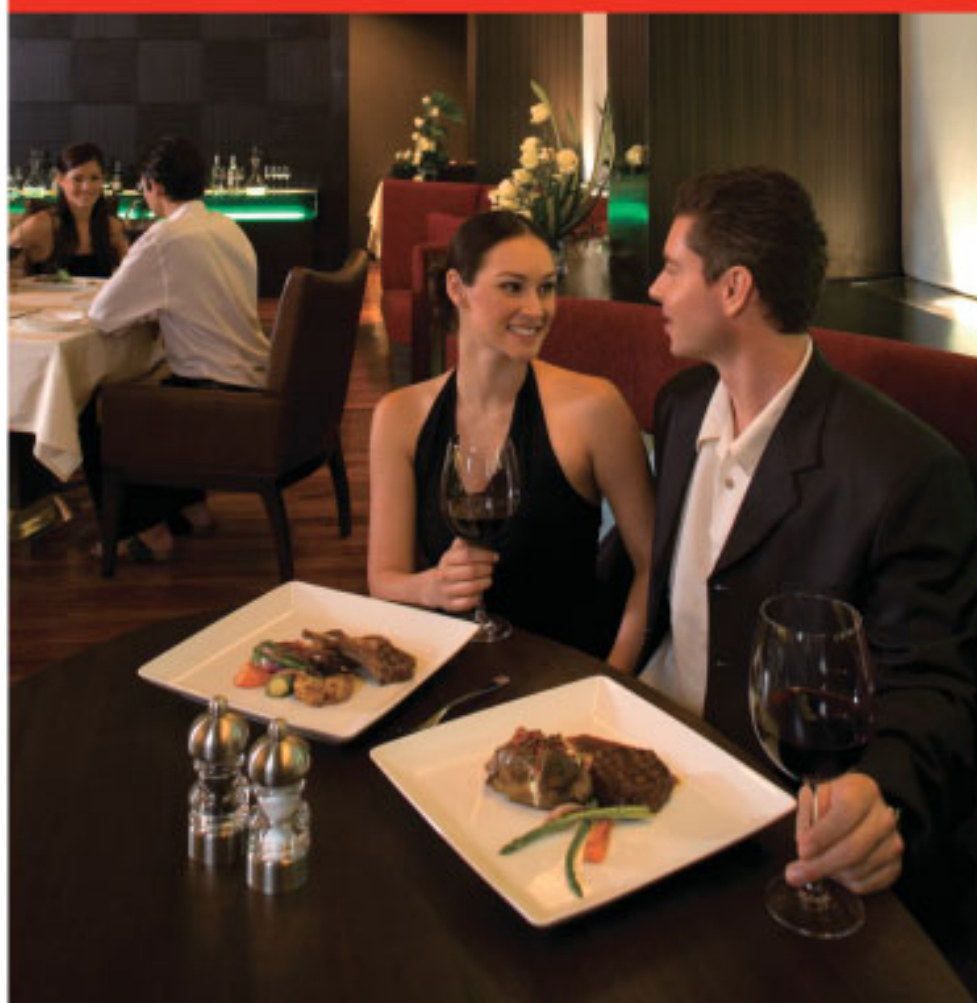
Padungsak Ruengroj (left) won a dinner for two at Karon Beach Resort Restaurant, and receives his voucher from Prasong 'Pomm' Pumsathit, the *Gazette's* Asst. Production Manager.



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FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND

By Barry Singleton

Police Region 8 Chief Maj Gen Thanawat Boonfieng recently set the ambitious goal of completely eradicating within five years the sale and possession of illegal firearms in all of the provinces that fall under his jurisdiction.

Following a series of shootings on the island, the police are particularly keen on reducing violent crime in tourist areas such as Samui. To this end, they have started using specially trained officers to accompany local police in checking patrons of island nightspots to see if they are packing heat.

So far they have focused on areas already known to be hotbeds of violent crime, arresting more than 20 people for possession of illegal weapons since the start of the initiative.

"We have also been following the movements of certain individuals and groups in a number of areas," said Gen Thanawat.

"Such undercover investigation is an important part of a policeman's job – and it works. Another part is conducting regu-



Drivers of meter taxis on Samui are infamous for not turning on their meters.

Arms and the policeman

lar searches and checks, as well as patrolling areas and watching places that have a high incidence of violent crime," he added.

On Samui, officers have been visiting bars, karaoke clubs and restaurants to search for illegal weapons, drugs and other contraband.

"If local police follow our orders, then these actions will reduce gun crimes significantly."

So expect more police presence than usual when you are out on the town – at least during the initial phases of this latest crack-down.

Currency converter: Over the past two years, Samui has seen a gradual rise in the number of yellow meter taxis on the island. Drivers of these cabs are renowned for never turning on their meters – despite laws requiring them to do so.

Complaints have been pouring in to local transport and government offices and frustration is so high that there have even been punch-ups reported as a result of overcharging. There was even a report of one driver charging US\$300 instead of the expected 300 baht for a single journey.

Largely as a result of customer complaints, an official notification issued by the provincial government will have come into force at the beginning of this year. The document states that drivers who do not turn on their meters when providing services to customers are in violation of the Royal Decree on Motor Vehicles No. 5 (14) of 1979.

Passengers are asked to report drivers who refuse to turn on their meters to the Technical Affairs Division of the Surat Thani Provincial Transport Office, who will impose strict penalties if any violation is proved.

Local businessmen welcomed the notification, as many felt the situation was beginning to damage the island's reputation.

On the beat: As the high season traditionally heralds an increase in such crimes as bag-snatching and petty theft, the Koh Samui Tourist Police recently announced plans to open a new "mobile unit" based at Chaweng Lake. The Municipality office will erect signs in the area directing people to the mobile unit for assistance.

Chief Inspector Thirawat Narisithan said his department

submitted a request for the facility some time ago, but only received permission from the government last year. The center will open from 1 pm to midnight and will be staffed by a Tourist Police officer who will provide advice and file reports for tourists in need of help.

Once they have the funds for more personnel, the Koh Samui Tourist Police hope to keep the center open 24 hours a day.

Bull market: After the recent heavy flooding, Surat Thani Governor Vichit Vijaisarn sent a team to Koh Pha Ngan and Koh Tao to investigate reports of unfair pricing for essential goods.

Despite a warning in late December that small craft should not leave port, larger ferries continued to carry passengers and supplies to the islands. Some shopkeepers, however, allegedly used the weather as an excuse to raise prices, telling shoppers that goods were scarce.

Provincial officials will visit retail outlets on both islands to make sure that not only are their prices fair, but that they are also applying the government's national "Blue Flag" discount scheme, which offers certain essentials at a reduced cost.

Bar humbug: After a recent visit to Samui, Sudarat Keyuraphan, the Agriculture Minister, said that there are too many down-market bars and discos on Samui. The minister, a Samui landowner, actively promotes the island in Bangkok.

She helped to persuade the cabinet to grant more than 200 million baht for water projects, and in her previous role as Health Minister also made Samui a pilot location for her "Clean Food Good Taste" initiative.

K. Sudarat is also keen to promote Thai cultural attractions on the island, as she believes this will create more of a family atmosphere.

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Plan for media rating to shield children

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra wants to give Thai children a Western-style film rating system, according to Ladda Thangsupachai, Director of the Ministry of Culture's (MoC) Cultural Surveillance Center.

The system will be announced on Children's Day, January 14.

The rating system will apply to films, television dramas and commercials, but not to news.

The rating systems of the US, Australia, the UK and Canada were used as case studies at a recent seminar on the subject, but the Thai system will be different.

"Our culture is different from those of Western countries. We can't just take and use their systems."

"We can take examples from them, but we have to come up with our own system," K. Ladda said.

She said there would be no more butchering of films screened in theaters or released on DVD or VCD once the rating system is implemented.

Instead of deleting scenes with what is deemed to be inappropriate content, each film will be given a rating to indicate the content and appropriate audience.

Censorship of films, once the responsibility of the Royal Thai Police, has now shifted to the MoC. Attempts to enact a rating system go back more than 30 years, but the current administration sees it as imperative to act quickly, she said.

Roi-Et reality TV: A 24-hour live television program is set to show how the Prime Minister is tackling poverty among poor villagers in Roi-Et's At Samat District.

Watching a demonstration broadcast in a vehicle crammed with electronic equipment from Shin Satellite Plc at Government House, PM's Office Minister Newin Chidchob said the program will air later this month on UBC channel 16.

Young Muslim women gather in prayer at Pattani's Central Mosque to honor His Majesty the King ahead of the 60th anniversary of his accession to the throne this year.



A Government House source said it was PM Thaksin's idea to broadcast the workshop, to be held from January 16 to 21. The Prime Minister, who has promised to end poverty in the area, will sleep in tents among the locals during the filming.

The broadcast will be relayed via iSTAR satellite, owned by Shin Satellite Plc.

Perilous playgrounds: Some 1.5 million children suffered from Thailand's lack of child-friendly and safe environments in 2005, said Dr Adisak Plitponkarnpip, head of the ThaiHealth's Child Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention Research Center.

Throughout 2005 children were hurt as a result of dangerous environments, including playgrounds. Of the total, 150,000 were hospitalized, 30,000 sustained serious injuries that left them permanently maimed and 3,000 died, said Dr Adisak.

Recommending tougher punishment for those at fault, Dr Adisak urged the government to ensure child-friendly environments and conduct a system for health clinics to record the cause of injury and death, in order to use the information to solve the problem and proceed with legal cases against those responsible.

Fool's gold: Numerous gold shops in Khon Kaen Province have fallen victim to a scam whereby partly-pure gold ornaments are pawned as real gold.

A department store-based branch of the Mae Thongphool Gold Shop chain in the northeastern province – all of whose 15 branches have been conned – pawned a partly-fake gold necklace weighing 91 grams for more than 40,000 baht.

Areerat Naononethong, a store clerk, said fake and real gold chains had been expertly mixed in single necklaces, making it difficult for staff to detect.

Inspection of gold to determine its authenticity is usually done by help of a simple chemical test performed on only the hook of each necklace.

Hoppy new beer: Thai Beverage Plc plans to further penetrate the beer market by launching at least three new brews in 2006.

The launch of new products is part of Thai Beverage's multi-brand strategy to expand its product portfolio from economy to standard and premium segments of the market.

Chang Light will be launched in the first quarter of this

year. Another two new beer products are scheduled to launch later in the year.

Economy beers now account for 85% of the total beer market in Thailand, followed by standard beers with 9%, and premium beers with 6%.

Gamesmanship: Chat Thai Party deputy leader Weerasak Khosurat has questioned the motive behind a draft bill on national gaming, saying the government might be attempting to allow casinos without a public hearing.

"The gaming bill is being sponsored by the government under suspicious circumstances," he said, charging that the government tried to sneak the draft through along with 376 other bills to the House – as if it wanted to avoid attention.

"Even though the draft is about the formation of a national gaming office, I suspect it is a first step to legalizing gambling and establishing casinos," he said.

"I understand that the government wants to regulate the gaming industry in order to boost state revenues, but gambling is a form of vice which should be discouraged," he said.

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

Happily Ever After

Recent weddings in Phuket



Saowanee Worathamaporn (right) and Pawat Nisakorn were married at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on December 14.

Kim Seung Hyun (left) and Chung Eun celebrated at the Mission Hills Phuket Golf Resort & Spa after a traditional Thai wedding.



Phuket ranks second in southern Thailand in terms of Aids prevalence and fifth nationwide. There are around 6,000 HIV-positive people in Phuket and about 3,700 people with full-blown Aids.

Eam-Orn Kittitornkul recalls the early days, 17 years ago, when the first cases emerged on the island.

"Right at the beginning we were dealing with only one or two Aids patients at a time," she said. The numbers climbed in the following 10 years but then, between 1998 and 2000, the rate of new cases reported dropped significantly.

Sadly, the respite did not last. "Today it's like a second wave is coming in," K. Eam-Orn said. "The first wave was caused by prostitution but the latest wave is prevalent amongst teenagers."

It is thought that HIV was brought to Thailand by gay men but then spread to sex workers, then to wives and eventually to children.

"Between Thais the ratio between HIV-positive men and

woman used to be 8:1 – that means eight men had the disease for every woman who had it. But now the number of women who suffer from the disease is almost the same as the number of men.

"The reason more women have HIV than ever before is that Thai society has changed over the years. Women have started to have more than one boyfriend. Married women sometimes enjoy a 'toy boy' or take a lover.

"Sometimes they don't care about the danger – they just want to have an extra man. And if that man has a relationship with another woman, the chain of infection is set up. This is how people put themselves more at risk of getting HIV.

"There is still a lot to be said for the old tradition of one-husband-one-wife," she noted.

At first it was very difficult to campaign for safe sex and condom use, she said.

"We offered free condoms and almost forced them on prostitutes. But sometimes they refused to take them. Some said that they were worried they would not be able to have sex any more be-

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30,000 condoms a month – helping to fight Aids among sex workers

Eam-Orn Kittitornkul, 54, a Phuket native, is Chief of the Aids Section of the Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO). She started working with the very first Aids patients in Phuket back in 1988. Here she gives the *Gazette's* Sangkhue Leelanapaporn insights into the difficulties of overcoming the social factors and changes that result in people living risky lives.

cause their genitals might react badly to condoms, or other strange reasons. They also said that men could not maintain an erection when wearing one.

"It's better now because [the sex workers] understand and have greater awareness of HIV and Aids. They insist customers use condoms. Now we have almost run out of condoms!"

The PPHO provides up to 400,000 condoms per year to sex workers in Phuket; distributing more than 30,000 a month.

"We ask the sex workers, 'What will you do for money if you contract HIV? Who will look after your children or your parents if you don't take precautions?' Sometimes it's not easy to explain these things."

When sex workers go for a check-up or treatment at the PPHO, they also receive free counseling.

K. Eam explains: "If sex workers come in with STDs [sexually-transmitted diseases] it means that they cannot work, so they suffer a loss of income. You have to understand that some nights they can have four to five customers and it means a significant loss of earnings if they cannot work."

"So condoms can preserve their livelihood as well as protect them from [HIV and] other ve-

nereal diseases. The PPHO always gives individuals HIV and Aids awareness talks though sometimes health officers have to go to the beer bar, karaoke, massage business or nightspot where the [infected] sex worker has come from, to deliver the message.

"Most of the women who become prostitutes have done so because they have domestic difficulties such as a violent husband or one who has taken a second wife.

"Sometimes they have been abandoned and left with children and elderly parents to look after."

Nowadays the PPHO has a new target for its Aids awareness campaign – teenagers. Officers go to college campuses and schools, raising Aids awareness by using lighthearted slogans such as "Are you sure? I'm sure."

"Teenagers tell me that the reason they don't want to use condoms is that it doesn't feel natural and that they'd rather feel trust between each other than rubber."

But, in K. Eam's experience, the reason teenagers con-

tract HIV is precisely that misplaced trust.

And the alternatives? "Masturbation, mutual and solitary, is a safe form of sex with no risk of HIV and there's no need to wear a condom.

"[As to full intercourse] there are three main methods recommended by the WHO, which we pass on to help people avoid the risk of contracting HIV.

"One is abstinence, the second is being faithful to your partner and the third, of course, is wearing a condom.

"If people would only stick to at least one of these methods they would be far less likely to get Aids."

The average time that untreated HIV takes to develop into full blown Aids is usually between six and eight years, depending on the health of the sufferer. With today's "drugs cocktails" that slow down the progress of the disease, people stand a far greater chance of living longer.

K. Eam-Orn added, "I would like to suggest to housewives, especially in rural areas, that if their husbands work in an-



other province and like to party at night, or even if they travel a lot, these women should use condoms when having sex.

"One never knows what the man does once he is away from home.

"From the information I've gathered from rural housewives, they don't use condoms because they trust their husbands."

"Because of medical progress one marriage partner can have HIV and yet feel healthy enough to carry on normally.

"But this doesn't mean that he or she won't pass the disease on so, again, it's best to wear a condom.

"People still need sex, even when they are HIV-positive.

"What makes life especially difficult for us at the PPHO is infected people having sex outside their relationship without telling anyone.

"We try to explain the dangers to them but it's hard for them to grasp because they consider sex to be their right, and a natural part of life."

In the case of sex workers, K. Eam-Orn says that most use condoms when dealing with customers but often don't when making love with husbands or boyfriends.

"In fact, I don't think men who have sex workers as girlfriends are honest with them – often the man may feel that she is not honest with him," she added.

So whether it is a case of too much trust, as in the case of teenagers, or too little, the result can be the same – that partners do not take precautions.

HIV and Aids take a terrible toll on lives. The saddest thing is that this need not be the case.

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Music From Two Basses
David Holland / Barre Phillips

Back in 1971, the idea of a set of improvised bass duos did little to ignite the imaginations of the majority of record labels, nor their bean counters. ECM – still run by Manfred Eicher – was not and is not in the majority, thankfully, and has never appeared to be motivated by returns on sales.

Eicher signed up the bassists in question – David Holland and Barre Phillips, arguably two of the jazz scene's most creative bassists – to produce the 11th recording, just re-released, for probably the most innovative and daring record label outside of Factory Records.

Three years earlier in 1968, however, Phillips recorded *Journal Violene*, which was the first solo jazz bass recording.

Around the same time, English bassist Holland ended his tenure with Miles Davis, hung up his electric bass, and was exploring the outer reaches of improv jazz with Chick Corea when Eicher suggested that he team up with Phillips in the studio.

On the opening brace of improvised pieces, called *Improvised Piece I* and *Improvised Piece II*, Holland and Phillips both reveal themselves as master players.

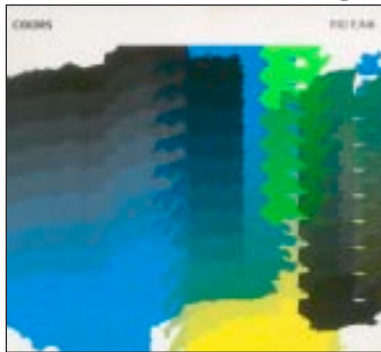
After nearly six minutes of playfully aggressive jousting, Phillips picks at a mournful chord while Holland solos; they swap roles, then trail off into



silence. The second piece is more episodic, with sudden shifts from low-end drone to lightning piz-zicato to cascades of harmonics.

This is a fine record by two masters of the instrument. It is also a reminder of how important ECM was to the birth of a creative, Europe-based improvised music.

Music From Two Basses David Holland / Barre Phillips,



ECM1011
Rio Funk Colors
Various Artists

Colors Music, the musical arm of *Colors Magazine*, presents contemporary music from all points of the compass with a series of sexy and fun compilations.

Rio Funk is a blistering selection of the best funk tracks produced in Rio de Janeiro's 600-



plus favelas last year.

The carioca style comprises raw sexual lyrics and bass lines taken liberally from the Miami and hip-hop sounds of the '80s, as well as more traditional Afro-Brazilian rhythms.

Carioca is the most interesting sound to come out of Brazil in recent years, and is today what samba was before: music produced by the lower class that makes it to the mainstream.

Most tracks on this album were produced by young, novice musicians from one of Rio's largest and toughest favelas, the Cidade de Deus or City of God, which was the setting for Fernando Meirelles' superb 2002 cinematic release of the same name.

Track 1, *Retorno de Jedi* is a hoot, while Track 9 *Sadomasoquista 2* – replete with the sounds of cracking whips and a pleased-woman in peril – leaves little to the imagination. The standout track, however, must be *C.I.D.A.D.E. D.E. D.E.U.S.*, a song about the sexual delights on offer south of the Equator, so to speak.

Rio Funk Colors Various Artists,
IRM 811
Grace
Rachel Z

One of the best recommendations for Rachel Z is that, despite being a female jazz pianist/vocalist, she is not Norah Jones or Diana Krall, those purveyors of bland, occasionally saccharine but consistently unadventurous mass-market muzak.

A gifted instrumentalist, who took her first singing lessons at age two, Ms Z is an improviser whose spontaneous playing is not eclipsed by the work of reigning luminaries such as Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner.

Ms Z – born Rachel Carmel Nicolazzo – isn't afraid to take risks, and makes some challenging choices of others' songs on *Grace*, her seventh album, as well as her five original pieces.

In this collection, where she covers songs by Björk, Kurt Cobain, U2, Kate Bush and John

Lennon, not only is Ms Z's piano virtuosity unhampered, but her voice avoids familiar schmaltz.

One says "unhampered", although she plays more softly than usual, perhaps affected by the acoustics or the sanctity of St Peter's Episcopal Church, NYC, where this beautifully captured recording, as ever with Chesky Records, was made.

Ms Z covers *Joga* by Björk. Her interpretation starts as a gentle cadence against languid bass-drum offbeats, before opening out into romantic chords. It rises into a fast improvisation before easing back lazily, allowing Chris J Luard's bass to whisper the return to the theme.

Chesky Records has done its best to make sure the casual punter doesn't suspect Rachel Z of being a jazz musician.

The sleeve photography is fashion-shoot quality – Ms Z is rather pleasing to the eye, after all – and even sees her half-emulating the iconic Lewis Morley pic of Christine Keeler astride a chair. Why only half-emulating? Because Ms Z keeps her kit on.

The inventive Bobbie Rae's sparse and subtle percussion opens the soulful *Protect This Child*, and more than a touch of Keith Jarrett flickers around Ms Z's piano in the more conventionally romantic ballad *Moon In Your Hair*. Rae's delicately rolling toms introduce U2's *One*, which La Z explores as a minimalist instrumental.

Nirvana's *Come As You Are* is interpreted as a nimble instrumental, while Kate Bush's *This Woman's Work* stands out as Ms Z's best vocal track.

Her hardest task – and therefore her greatest success – is the free interpretation of John Lennon's *Imagine*. Rather than a full reworking, it is more being sung spontaneously, privately almost, perhaps to herself.

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Slick off the stick



Tiger Woods can bend the rules as much as he likes with his short-sleeved stretch mock turtleneck by Nike, but when it comes to acceptable golf apparel on Phuket, the classic "on-the-greens" look gets the hole-in-one.

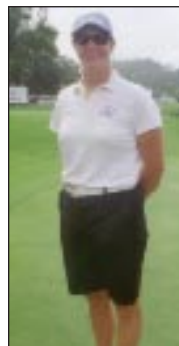
Golf has been on the upswing since the late 1990s and, with a rising number of women hitting the links, athletic casual wear is destined to become increasingly stylish.

Golfwear is still fairly loose-fitting to allow freedom of movement, but the days of gaudy plaids, golf knickers and flatcaps have given way to the pastel colors, flirty pleated skirts,

baseball caps and sun visors you see all around the island.

Notable brands, including makers of golf shoes and accessories, recently sighted on Phu-ke't's fairways include Adidas, Ashworth, Callaway, Cobra, Cross, Cutter and Buck, Ecco, Evertan, Footjoy, Gary Player, Greg Norman, Lacoste, Lady Fairway, Lilly Pulitzer, Mizuno, Oakley, Sassa, Stuburt, Turtle Creek, Wilson and Wolsey.

As the photographs on this page show, a number of the participants in the Phuket Thailand Ladies' Masters tournament at Phuket Country Club last month brought form-



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This week



BWINGING THE GOODS IN: Glenn de Souza, Best Western International (BWI) Vice-President of International Operations Asia, presents a check for more than 8 million baht to be donated to 88 BWI employees affected by the tsunami. At the handing-over ceremony at the Best Western Palm Galleria Resort in Khao Lak, Phang Nga Province, are Takuapa District Chief Chaloesak Vanichjaroen (front, white shirt) and hotel staff members affected by the tsunami.



HEALS ON WHEELS: Joseph Pernot (left) Mission Chief of the French Red Cross, presents a symbolic key to Public Health Minister Phinij Jarusombat at Royal Phuket City Hotel to mark the donation of six ambulances to Phuket's three government hospitals: Patong Hospital, Thalang Hospital and Vachira Phuket Hospital.



FARANG JAI DEE: Phra Khru Suwatthithammarat (2nd from left) of Wat Samakhitham accepts from Hajo von Keller, owner of the Mangosteen Resort in Rawai, a school bus paid for by donations from guests, to be used for children on Koh Phra Thong, in Phang Nga. Michael Bordon of the Farang Jai Dee Foundation and German Honorary Consul Dirk Naumann look on.



OPENING SALVA: At the opening of Thailand's first ever Salvador Dali "Exhibition" at Soul of Asia are (from left) *Phuket Gazette* publisher John Magee, Soul of Asia Owner Eric Smulders and Royal Phuket Marina Chairman Gulu Lavani.



PALMY DAYS: Celebrating the opening of the Baan Suan Loch Palm housing project are (from left) Project Manager Rachai Bunpapong, Project Director Virat Treampongphan, Managing Director Hatchapong Phokai and Senior Project Manager Panumas Chayentara.



QVC ARRIVES: Jumpoon Chavasiri (right), Senior Vice-President of vacation ownership company The Quality Group; Quality Vacation Club Resort Manager Pornrat Genprasertsiri (3rd from right) and guests celebrate the resort's grand opening last month.

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Here's a question for you: why bother decorating a sauna wall? Given that visibility in a typical sauna is usually worse than a Sherlock Holmes-like London pea-soup fog on a dark night, you'd think that it would be a bit of a non-goer.

But at Elements Spa in Access Pool Resort & Spa in Karon, no detail goes ignored. I suppose that's why there are twiddly little flowers all round the sauna wall. I know this, as I once studied Braille.

The Elements is a spanking-new resort on Patak Rd. It's so new that staff still go around peeling price labels off freshly bought items, and I have to be careful as I wend my way through discarded bubble and cling wrap to meet the equally bubbly Khun Nor, the spa manager.

She sits me down and offers me a glass of bael juice. Hmm? Oh, bael is an indigenous fruit known for its rich vitamin and mineral content. And it's delicious.

I had dragged my fast-aging carcass over Patong Hill in the fleeting hope of shaking off a lingering cold and sore throat. So it was straight into the steam room for me to chase those toxins out of my system.

Fifteen minutes later I'm not exactly jumping up and down shouting "hallelujah", but I am

**Spa
MAGIC**
By Sam
Wilkinson
Elements



feeling a lot better as I stretch out for a massage.

Khun Tuk, my therapist from Buri Ram, is very attractive – managing to put the “dish” into the Swedish massage she's so expertly delivering. She has the gentlest touch imaginable, and it's not long before I find myself in that delicious state between sleep and consciousness.

In go the essential oils and out go the worries and cares of the past few days. “Would you like it stronger?” K. Tuk purrs as she gently kneads away. I manage to suppress a crazed “Are you kidding?” and grunt a negative response before toppling back into the arms of Morpheus for a few more delicious seconds.

Ever tried covering all the jets in a whirlpool bath with your feet, hands and various other parts of your body – all at the same time? It's a fun and cool way to spend 15 minutes, but I guarantee that the novelty wears off soon after swallowing the third flower petal while you disappear underwater desperately grabbing for a handle.

Elementary, my dear Wilkinson



This is where I tried to be a submarine.

An Aroma Cleansing facial is next on the list for my two-hour Elements Indulgence Package (3,200 baht).

I settle down for a further 50 minutes of bliss at the fair hands of K. Tuk. She introduces each new oil, cleansing agent and

phase of the treatment in a decidedly *sotto voce*.

Frankly, by this time I'm in seventh heaven, fast entering the hallelujah-phase, and soon the speaking-in-tongues-phase if I don't come back to earth pretty soon. And you can't blame me;

a facial massage/cleansing, given in advantageous circumstances by such an expert, is comparable to a celestial experience.

Later, sitting in the long, dark wood-fitted compact reception area, we chat over a refreshing glass of lime and carrot juice. K. Nor tells me that the whole spa repertoire is available here, from Thai traditional to deep tissue to body scrubs to anti-stress cleansing facial to a mysterious-sounding “balancing elixir”.

The proof is most certainly in the pudding. I waltz out of Elements feeling like – well, better than James Brown ever could. Curbing a strong urge to leap in the air and do the splits *à la* JB, I walk back to my car and promise myself a stress-busting session like this at least once a month. When you think about it, it's elementary.

Elements Spa in Access Pool & Resort, 459/2 Patak Rd, Karon Beach. Tel: 076-398489; Email: info@accesspoolresort.com or visit the website at www.accesspoolresort.com

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Just pull that cork and drink up!

Q: Do plastic corks react with wine? Are they a better choice than real cork for a wine stopper?

A: Yes, plastic corks do react with wine. They are made from food-grade polymers and are generally regarded as safe, yet they contain residual oxidants and other compounds that react with ethanol. Little is known about the long-term effects of wine aging with synthetic corks, as they are not generally used with wines meant for aging.

Cork also reacts with wine and the effects are much more variable than plastic corks. In 1995 I wrote a paper on wine closures that was published in the *International Journal of Wine Marketing*. In the paper I outlined the steps producers

would have to take in order to gain market acceptance of screw-top closures on fine wines.

I am still a big believer in screw-top closures as the best choice for wine, and I am heartened by the ever-increasing number of wine-makers who are opting to abandon closures that require corkscrews.

By the way, glass may also react with wine. Glass is about 70% silica and the rest potash (potassium hydroxide), sodium and various heavy metals and their oxides. Most people think glass is inert but it can be quite reactive with some wines and may even react with minerals in the water or the color pigments in red wine. Many chemical reactions like these occur without our noticing them because of our limited

WINE



By Steven Roberto

perception of time. The erosion of mountains by wind and water is an example.

Q: What is an Ah-so?

A: It is a two-pronged corkscrew that is inserted on either side of

the cork in a wine bottle, and then twisted with an upward pulling motion to remove the cork. The device's purpose is to allow the cork to be removed without damage. It can be difficult to use and is not really very practical for most people. The name comes from the remark most people make when they discover for the first time that it is a cork puller.

Q: How can I know if a wine is fruity and light or heavy and oaky before I buy it?

A: Read the back label, which is where most wines' style is described. Alternatively, ask somebody in the shop where you are buying the wine, assuming somebody there knows something about the products they sell. Or you can look it up on the Internet.

The answer and information on the web may not be accurate, but at least it is available.

Take time to learn about wine. With a little study you can quickly come to know the style favored by major producers and the difference in appellations, for example, that Chablis is generally unoaked unless it is a premier crus.

Finally, just try the wine. Tasting a wine is always the best way to know about it.

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

PHUKET DIARY

of coming events



Photos of 2005 regatta courtesy of ArtAsia Press

January 27-31: QBE Phang Nga Bay Regatta. The ninth year of this fun regatta around Phang Nga Bay to Phi Phi and back to Phuket.

As always, it will take place over the Chinese New Year with the registration and the opening

party on Friday, January 27, followed by racing around Phang Nga Bay over the next four days, ending back in Phuket on the following Tuesday.

The racing will take the fleet to Koh Yao, Krabi and back to Phi Phi before the final dash to

Phuket.

For further information contact Tom Howard at Tel: 01-7971120 or by email to: tom@sea-phuket.com.

Race and party notices will be posted on the organization's website: www.bayregatta.com

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No violins, but lots of sax

By Shiona Mackenzie

It's another hair-raising Saturday night in Patong, and as the car squeezes into the last available parking spot on the beach road, I feel lucky.

With every step toward the new Saxophone Pub & Restaurant, an offshoot of the popular venue of the same name established in Bangkok in the late 1980s, a log-cabin-like building looms larger.

The contingent of staff welcoming me on the veranda look casual, yet serious, all in black amid the neon beacons of the neighborhood, but their smiles let me know that the effervescence of the new year is still in full swing.

As I cross the threshold, my eyes scanning the room for the best table from which to enjoy the live music, I somehow feel I should be wearing suede cowboy boots and bits of fringe in just the right spots.

LAIID-BACK

The place has a country-and-western feel to it, with its light-stained wood floors and walls and enough space for 350 or so people to kick up their heels in a stomping good hoe down. Chunky wooden chairs, tables and benches lend weight to this impression.

But this evening – it's only 9 pm and, judging by the relatively few customers, news of the jazz and blues joint has not yet reached Soi Bangla – I've come early, searching for something different and laid-back to ease me into my night on the town. The giant-sized portrait of Billie Holiday on the wall is reassuring.

Chain, chain, chain, chain of fools... one of the four all-Thai bands that play here, Blues Coin, already on stage and tuned up, launches into the first of many numbers I know and love. The female lead singer's



Mood Indigo goes down well with a whisky on-the-rocks, late on a starry night in Patong

raspy voice complements the music, played with just a touch of funk.

But humming along and tapping one's feet works up a thirst. The drinks list offers eight "Special Cocktails" but I only have eyes for the Saxophone Dropper

– a potent yet pretty concoction of vodka, brandy, blue curaçao and lemon juice for 210 baht.

The time comes to order from what turns out to be an extensive menu of mainly Thai fare, although there are western dishes available, including burgers, pasta,

steak and deep-fried ice-cream for dessert. I tuck into filet of red

snapper meunière, which comes with either vegetable-rice or a baked potato (260 baht), steamed fish with lemon sauce (260 baht), and fried prawns with garlic and pepper (210 baht).

Each is a generous serving – enough for two.

The fish in lemon sauce is so lightly steamed that it reminds me, in parts, of sashimi – not intentional, I'm sure. And, perhaps like the chef, I'm too lazy to bother with shelling the prawns slathered in the delicious peppery sauce. So, the winning dish is, for me, the red snapper meunière, which leaves nothing to be desired.

But, as their logo suggests, Saxophone is really about the music and *Mood Indigo* goes down especially well with a whisky on-the-rocks, late on a starry night in Patong.

Saxophone's New Year's resolution for the "pearl of the Andaman" may very well be to unveil a refreshing variety and rising standard of home-grown entertainment talent.

Saxophone Pub & Restaurant features live jazz from Sunday to Wednesday and blues from Thursday to Saturday. 188/2 Thaweewong Rd, Andaman Bazaar, Patong Beach. Tel: 076-341167.

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BEHIND THE WHEEL

By Jeff Heselwood

If ever there was a sedan with a schizophrenic personality, then it has to be the latest Chevrolet Optra.

Originally introduced as a Daewoo Nubira, it is still marketed as a Chevy Nubira in some countries, and in Europe it is known as the Lacetti. In Thailand it's the Optra.

Daewoo was a wounded animal for many years, out-classed by Korean rivals Hyundai and Kia, which itself was to come under the control of Hyundai ultimately. After various incarnations and name changes, Daewoo emerged as Shinjin Motor in 1965 and collaborated closely with Toyota.

The Japanese giant withdrew in 1972, however, and Shinjin began an association with General Motors. Initially, and logically, called General Motors Korea, someone, somewhere, in his or her wisdom changed the name yet again to Saehan Motor.

In 1982, when the Daewoo *chaebol* or conglomerate gained control, it finally became Daewoo Motors.

All Daewoo's models at the time were based on GM models, but following the Asian financial crisis of 1997, Daewoo made the (in retrospect) hasty move to take over 4x4 producer SsangYong, only for SsangYong to run into financial trouble in 1999.



The Chevrolet Optra – lacking soul but a good Korea move

General Motors came to the rescue in 2001, buying most of Daewoo Motors to form GM Daewoo.

The Nubira – Korean for “go anywhere” – is the four-door sedan, and the Lacetti is a five-door hatchback. In future, both models will be known as the Lacetti. The Optra is based on the original Nubira.

The Optra comes with a choice of 1.6- or 1.8-liter engines, the former sourced from South Korea, the 1.8 from GM Australia. Both feature 16 valves and,

significantly, GM was one of the first automakers in Thailand to fully test its cars for compatibility with the newly introduced gasohol fuel.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Energy and the Thai Automotive Journalists' Association, a successful 300-kilometer test drive was organized from Bangkok to Uthai Thani, via Suphan Buri.

Gasohol is 90% gasoline with a 10% ethanol mix, locally produced in the Kingdom, and is now available throughout Phuket.

Power outputs are modest, as you would expect, but are still perfectly adequate for Phuket's roads: 109bhp (80kW) for the 1.6-liter version, offering a maximum speed of 187kmh, while the larger

engine produces 122bhp, or 90kW – allowing 194kmh.

The 1.8 model was listed as “2004 Car of the Year for Best Sedan” by a leading Bangkok newspaper.

Transmissions are either five-speed manual, or, in the 1.8, a four-speed automatic. Curiously, the Euro-ride suspension originates from England, so no wonder the Optra has something of a confused persona.

Equipment levels are fairly comprehensive, even in the entry-level model, which features power front windows, central locking and electrically adjusted exterior mirrors.

The top-of-the-range Optra offers a five-disc CD player, complete with steering wheel remote

controls. Speed-sensitive power steering is also available, as is a rain sensor for the windshield wipers.

Rear seats can be folded in a 40:60 split for loading bulky objects, while there are standard cupholders in the front center console, oddments bins in all four doors and handy pockets on the outer edge of the front seats.

The Chevrolet Optra may lack a little inspiration in some areas, notably its looks, but as far as safety and comfort are concerned, this is a world-class car.

Owners can become members of the Optra Club Thailand, which organizes various activities “to know your Optra better”.

Its president, Sunil Thadani, says, “The Optra Club was initiated as a home for everyone interested in the Chevrolet sedan. People can meet through a dedicated Internet website [in Thai] www.optrclub.pantown.com, exchange knowledge, and pool information about buying, maintenance, accessories, or discuss news and technology.”

Jeff Heselwood may be contacted by email at jhc@netvigator.com

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PUZZLES

Spot the Difference



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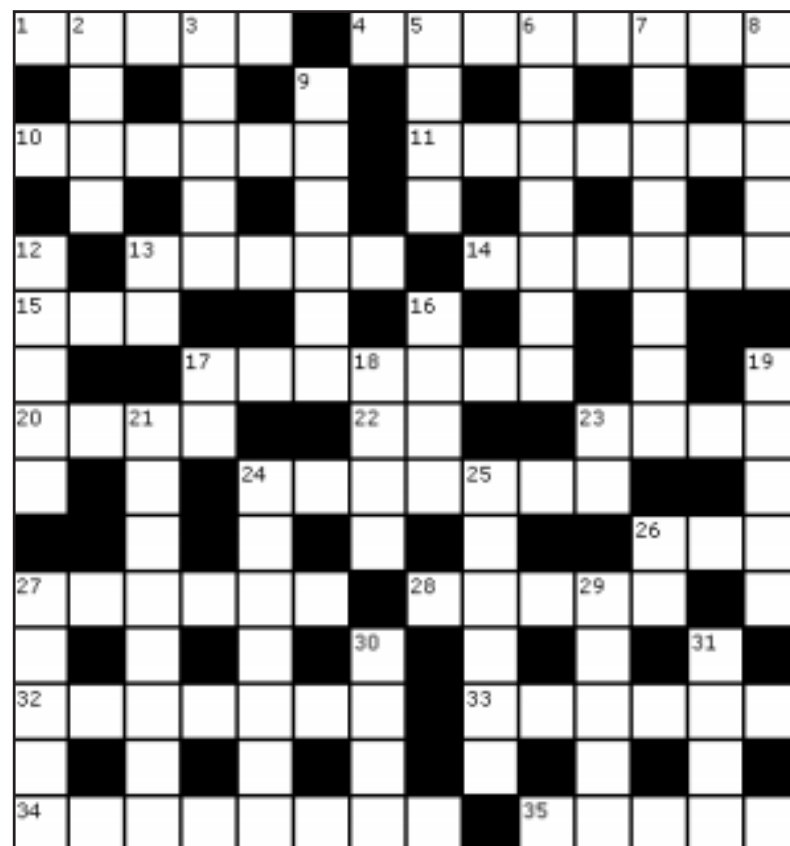
The Cryptic Crossword

ACROSS

1. Southern wood makes a good meal. (5)
4. Intrude on very French overture. (8)
10. Department desk. (6)
11. Lever to get prohibition on bird. (7)
13. Pierces saint – it takes muscles. (5)
14. Stink at heart of town. (6)
15. Government style for Church of England circle. (3)
17. Uncultured museum after robbery, perhaps. (7)
20. Charts manuscript with a quiet center. (4)
22. I note, that is. (1,1)
23. Decoration for South Africa. Quiet! (4)
24. Athlete straightens out my angst. (7)
26. Encountered in New York gallery. (3)
27. Aircraft in the morning leave beach debris. (6)
28. Almost indiscernable blackout. (5)
32. Crane to get the German 5dn. (7)
33. State has part of KKK stand by. (6)
34. Ed ate gel, bewildering representative. (8)
35. Learner got into alcohol to quench thirst. (5)

DOWN

2. Little pharaoh has nothing making him a pest. (4)



Compiled by Tortuus. © 2005

3. A lute, it's said, from 25dn. (5)
5. Richard's pile of hay. (4)
6. It's a slog to get answer to mottoes. (7)
7. Divine food makes Maria sob! (8)
8. Pointless source. Twig? (5)
9. Rot, but make fish. (6)
12. Rascal in southern tents. (5)
13. Back-up operating system, thus. (2)
16. Spotted four cardinals. (4)
18. Floppy way to walk. (4)
19. The boss calls them attempts. (5)
21. History spoken in the countryside. (8)
23. Saint in the street. (2)
24. Pasture scraping. (7)
25. State in oral, ask a question. (6)
26. Megaton Mountain. (2)
27. Worn out – stoned. (5)
29. Not old, the Spanish stair post. (5)
30. Sit with a thousand in playlet. (4)
31. Go down in the kitchen? (4) *Solution on page 20*

su | do | ku

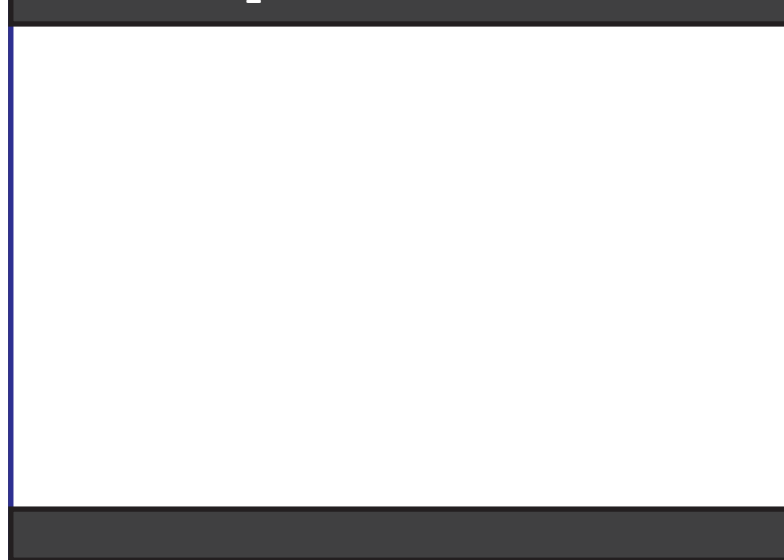
© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

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

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.

Scribble Space



Brain Buster!!

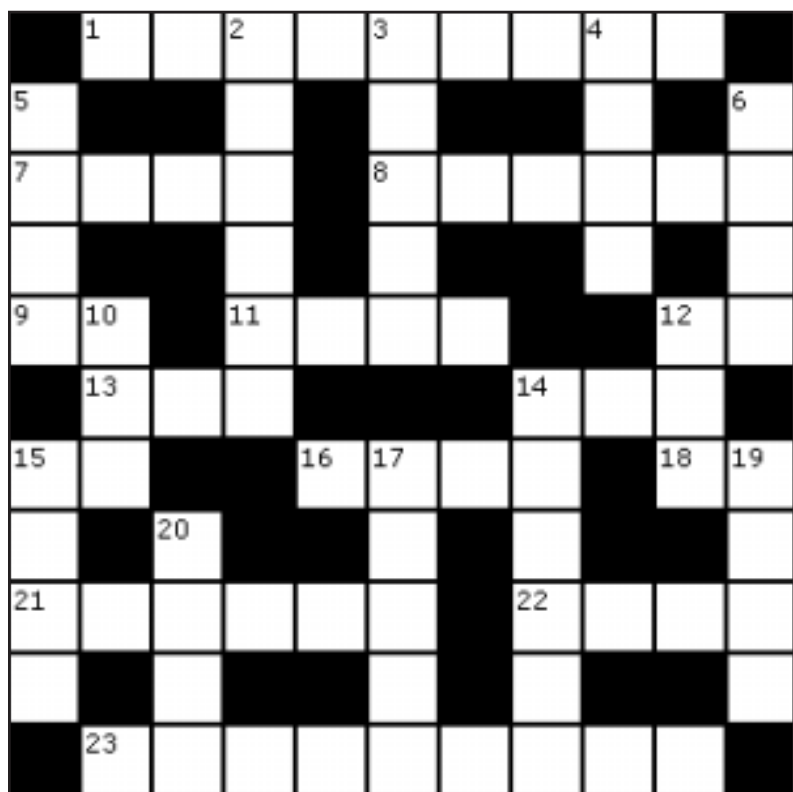
A man takes a two-week cruise to Mexico from the US. Shortly after he gets back, he takes a three-day cruise which doesn't stop at any other ports. He stays in his cabin all the time on both cruises. As a result, he makes \$250,000. How?

Answer on next page

EZ TRIVIA

1. What is the saltiest body of water on earth?
2. How many cards are in a standard deck, not including jokers?
3. In what Indian State is the Taj Mahal located?
4. Chinese New Year on January 29 will start the year of which animal?
5. What do you call the stamp in a passport that allows you to enter a foreign country?
6. What ape has long arms, reddish hair and spends most of its time in trees?
7. A drawing of what appears on the back of the latest 1,000-baht note?
8. What does TGIF stand for?
9. What do we call the part of the skin that grows hair?
10. The Heroines' Monument is at which four-way junction?

Answers on page 20



Quick Crossword

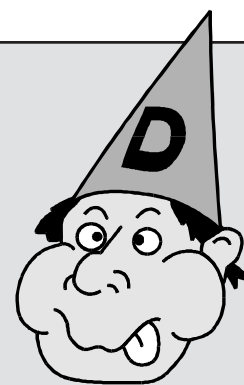
ACROSS

1. Very stupid.
7. Cool herb.
8. Cat's kid.
9. Thanks.
11. Impolite.
12. In regard to.
13. State.
14. Color.
15. Exists.
16. Taj Mahal location.
18. Take action.
21. Las Vegas state.
22. Mum's sister.
23. Height.

DOWN

2. Blood vessel.
3. Unclothed.
4. Location.
5. Leave out.
6. Leg joint.
10. Donkey.
12. Stop light.
14. Mid-Pacific island.
15. Taverns.
17. Farang.
19. Horse food.
20. Very bad.

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. The newspaper *The Deccan Herald* serves which region?
2. Tenzin Gyatso is better known by what title?
3. What – now – are the terminal cities of US Highway 61?
4. Which song begins "Oh God said to Abraham, 'Kill me a son'. Abe says, 'Man, you must be puttin' me on'"?
5. How many countries comprise the Commonwealth of Nations?
6. What were the 3,000 projectiles used in Laurel and Hardy's *Battle of the Century*?
7. Name the Cinque Ports.
8. Who won the 2004 Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word Album for Children for *Peter and The Wolf*?
9. Who composed *Rhapsody in Blue*?
10. Which is the world's most-crossed international border?
11. What flower was named after a Roman gladiator's sword?
12. What prize was given to the winning discus thrower in the ancient Olympics?
13. In a number of Commonwealth navies, the acronym PWO (pronounced pee-woe) stands for what?
14. Which comedian's autobiography is called *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People*?
15. Who wrote *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*?
16. Who portrayed Vincent Van Gogh in *Lust for Life*?
17. Which is colder – the north pole or the south pole?
18. Where can you use cruzeiros to buy a cup of coffee?
19. What color light is displayed on the star-board side of a boat?
20. Who was born William Jefferson Blythe III?

Puzzle Solutions

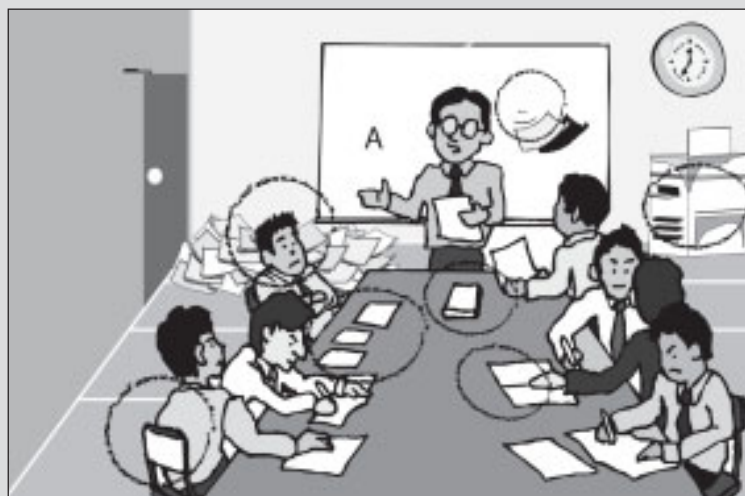
Brain Buster Solution

He's a smuggler.

Monster Quiz Answers

1. Karnataka, India; 2. The Dalai Lama; 3. New Orleans and Wyoming, MN; 4. Highway 61 Revisited; 5. 53; 6. Custard pies; 7. Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Sandwich and Dover; 8. Bill Clinton, Mikhail Gorbachev and Sophia Loren, along with the Russian National Orchestra; 9. George Gershwin; 10. The US-Mexico border; 11. The gladiolus; 12. The discus; 13. Principal Weapons Officer; 14. Lenny Bruce; 15. Toby Young; 16. Kirk Douglas; 17. South pole; 18. Brazil; 19. Green; 8. President Bill Clinton.

Solution to Cartoon Puzzle



EZ Trivia Answers

1. The Dead Sea, between Israel and Jordan; 2. 52; 3. Uttar Pradesh; 4. The Dog; 5. A visa; 6. The orangutan; 7. The Pa Sak Jolasid Dam in Lop Buri Province; 8. Thank God It's Friday; 9. A follicle; 10. Tha Reua.

Solution to this week's Cryptic Crossword



Solution to this week's Quick Crossword



Solution to this week's Sudoku puzzle

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

"Phuket was everything we anticipated, which means, in a nutshell, we hated it. That's not to say that there probably aren't spectacular beaches and resorts catering to the mass tourist market, but the small slice that we saw really left everything to be desired (and a few things to forget!). We stayed on an ugly overcrowded beach, and mostly hid out in the a/c of our room. The nights were pure entertainment, walking down streets lined with open-air bars full of Thai women soliciting the German and Swiss men. Many of the sexy women dancing on stages, on closer inspection, are actually men, eager to flash their newly purchased breasts." (1)

"The following day we caught a long tail boat out to the island of Hai (sometimes called Ko Ngai). Its 18 Km off the west coast, and from a distance it looked like a small forest covered rock with a strip of beach. On closer inspection, that's all it was." (2)

Some are downright wacky: "Bangkok is just as crazy as I expected it to be. Hot, dirty, noisy, and smelly (and that's just the hotel receptionist). The first thing to hit me about this place was the airport door, but I suppose I should have been looking where I was going."

Things get better, though: "Have you ever had a day where you go for a jungle trek with a German that looks like Moby and stumble upon a trail that leads to a waterfall, but you have to watch for falling coconuts from above and for giant elephant poo from below, before finding a stream and hopping from rock to rock for 2km to eventually find the waterfall, so you jump in to the refreshing cool water and

Travel blogs are big these days...

OUTSIDE IN

By Lis Kinswoman

Once you were lucky to get a tatty postcard in your letterbox from Jack and Jill in Kathmandu, but nowadays you can log on to what they're up to in a couple of seconds. TravelPod.com is a good start, with entries ranging from the fair to the decidedly unbalanced.

pose for more Japanese tourists who got there by elephant, then continue to follow the trail above the waterfall further into the jungle, clambering over steep and slippery rocks only to come to a dead end after an hour, when you find two more Germans just as lost as you are, so you decide to turn round but you slip and fall and cut your thumb and graze your ribs and end up in the water while three Germans laugh as you pick leeches off your legs and feet, then getting back to the waterfall to wash off the blood and finding yet more Japanese tourists, so you walk back along the trail to the road where you get covered in dust from a passing truck, but you make it back to the beach and the Why Not Bar for a Chang or two, only to stub and cut your toe on a rock in the dark

as you finally get back home six hours after having left for a two hour walk cut, bleeding, bruised, sun burnt, leeches, sweaty, and dying for a poo only to find there's no toilet paper? You haven't? You don't know what you're missing!" (3)

Football crazy # 1: "As a marker for the Thais' fervour for football, a golden statue in a temple near Bangkok has been cast in the likeness of Beckham. Although the statue's relevance to Buddhism has been questioned, the local abbot has said that football has become a world religion and that we have to open our minds and share the feelings of the millions of Beckham fans. The statue was made, he said, to keep the memory of the football star alive for a thousand years." (4)

More football madness: "Saturday 26th. Matchday and West Ham at home in the FA Cup. We hired a private taxi for our mission. As Patong is a two hour drive away from Khao Lak we thought £40 was a reasonable price for the return trip. After all, we're talking about watching Chelsea here, and our taxi driver waited for us until we decided it was time to go back. Still it was good money for him as petrol hardly cost anything compared to Sweden and most people just earn about a £1 on average per day."

The lads then decide that going to Patong just to watch a football match is a little OTT and go to a gas station instead. "Proudly entered the Esso in our Chelsea shirts and ordered two big bottles of

Singha. ESPN, Chelsea-Leeds. Watching Chelsea play football at three o'clock at night under the stars in Thailand just felt classic. Still 23 degrees in the air, rain in SW6. We were soon in the air too, as Guddy scored after just two minutes. After that, the whole Esso got involved and supported the Blues. Fantastic! Thought about my mate, Johan who was in the West Stand watching the match, ourselves being in Thailand watching it on TV and, Tobbe who was in Siberia refereeing, in -30 something, not knowing anything. Then came 2-0 to Chelsea, what a great holiday. Thank you Blues. Our little night trip cost us £25 for the taxi, money well spent. Happy and back in bed at half five in the morning. Still wearing the Chelsea shirt... By now, the whole Village knew about our football trips and everyone was interested in the scores and everything. You heard, 'Chelsii Chelsii' followed by a broad smile, everywhere we went. Nice, charming people." (5)

1. http://travelpod.com/travel-blog-entries/canuckdive/east_asia_2005/1116815400/tpod.html
2. <http://travelpod.com/travel-blog-entries/bush-trotters/rtw0405/1108225800/tpod.html>
3. http://travelpod.com/travel-blog-entries/dazzla/bigtrip_2003-04/1067675400/tpod.html
4. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/main.jhtml?grid=T6&xml=/travel/2002/05/11/etcupthai11.xml>
5. <http://www2.svenskafans.com/chelsea/english.asp#4>

In modern American literature, Cormac McCarthy is the elephant in the corner of the living room. The Eastern Literary Establishment doesn't know what to make of him. They didn't know what to make of William Faulkner either, of whom Lionel Trilling, the dean of New York literary critics, remarked: "It seems that he never heard of the Enlightenment."

Cormac McCarthy is very much in the Faulkner line. He spent much of his life in Tennessee, the setting for his first three novels. In 1976, he moved to El Paso, Texas, and began work on his epic historical novel *Blood Meridian* about filibusters who ride into Mexico in search of Indian scalps. One scene, in which the renegade whites suddenly find themselves in the midst of a huge herd of stolen horses being driven northward by wild Comanches, ranks among the greatest bravura passages in English prose, ever.

It was McCarthy's Faulknerian mode at its best.

The two polar opposites of modern American literature are Faulkner with his grand rhetoric, ornate sentences and ceaseless spiraling back into the past, and Ernest Hemingway with his simple words, terse sentences and preoccupation with action in the present. In his Western phase, McCarthy started moving in the simpler Hemingway direction in his Border Trilogy (*All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing* and *Cities of the Plain*). In his latest novel, *No Country for Old Men* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 309pp, 2005), he has gone full-bore Hemingway.



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

Early in the novel, 35-year-old Llewelyn Moss, a former sniper in Vietnam, is hunting antelopes near the Rio Grande.

"Even with the heavy barrel and the muzzlebrake the rifle bucked up off the rest. When he pulled the animals back into the scope he could see them all standing as before. It took the 150 grain bullet the better part of a second to get there but it took the sound twice that. They were standing looking at the plume of dust where the bullet had hit. Then they bolted. Running almost immediately at top speed out upon the barrier with the long whang of the rifleshot rolling after them and caroming off the rocks and yawing back across the open country in the early morning solitude."



The ultimate literary thriller

Now this is beautiful prose, followed by a typical Hemingway cadence: "He sat and pulled on his boot and picked up the rifle and ejected the spent casing and put it in his shirt pocket and closed the bolt. Then he slung the rifle over his shoulder and set out."

What he finds is three bullet-ridden off-road vehicles, four dead men and one dying, and a huge amount of Mexican brown heroin. Following a blood trail, he finds another corpse and a briefcase containing \$1.2 million in \$100 bills. What does he do? He's a welder living in a trailer home with a 19-year-old wife.

He takes the case.

This makes him the prey of a pathological killer named Anton Chigurh. There is no police record or photograph of Anton Chigurh because he simply kills everyone who gets in his way. He kills people he doesn't even need to kill. Bodies accumulate up and down the Tex-Mex border and spook the hell out of Sheriff Tom Ed Bell.

Bell, who periodically speaks in a colloquial Texan accent to an unnamed interlocutor, is the moral center of the novel. A World War II veteran, he has inherited the moral legacy of his father and uncle and grandfather and ancestors going back to the

settling of Texas. He sees his job as sheriff to protect the people of his county. But he knows he is way out of his league with the unknown mass killer.

"I've always known that you had to be willin' to die to even do this job. That was always true. Not to sound glorious about it or nothin' but you do. If you ain't they'll know it. They'll see it in a heartbeat. I think it is more like what you are willin' to become. And I think a man would have to put his soul at hazard. And I won't do that. I think now that maybe I never would."

The ending is unexpected. This is no conventional thriller.

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LAYING DOWN THE LAW

With Friedrich
'Sam' Fauma

Mr A, a foreigner living in Thailand, set up a business through a Thai company in which he invested 49%. His Thai partner did not have the necessary funds to invest in the company and therefore signed over her shares for Mr A to sell to another potential investor.

However, she still worked with him in the company and also became his live-in partner. It took Mr A some time to find another investor, but when he did he had the shares registration with the Company Registration Office amended to reflect the new investor's shareholding.

After some time his personal relationship with the woman came to an end, but not without a legal battle over their shared assets, as well as over company shares and profits that were never distributed to the shareholders as dividends.

The woman checked all legal registrations, including the company documents, and found that Mr. A had changed her shareholding in the company without informing her. She therefore filed criminal charges for theft of shares, and Mr A was invited to the police station to answer her claim.

Even though Mr A could show the share transfer documents as evidence and proof that she had signed the paper, she claimed that it had been signed blank and that she didn't know what it said as it was in English only.

In discussions between the legal representatives of both parties it became clear that the dispute was about compensation for the woman. Mr A's representation claimed that the ex had knowingly signed the share transfer document and that she had done so before witnesses.

The representation added that the shares were still registered with the company, therefore any criminal charge should not be for theft but for misappropriation, and further that she had no right to dividends or mutual gain as an ex-spouse as the couple had not been legally married. As no out-of-court settlement could be reached and as the police did not accept the charges as filed, the woman's lawyers filed the charges directly in court.

Through the court arbitration system it was possible to find a settlement to the satisfaction of both parties and the case was closed.

We therefore should be aware that a signed document can still be disputed, and that any evidence of payment should be made separately and should be clearly mentioned in the agreement.

The holidays are over, which brings a sense of relief: no more mad relatives to deal with, no more worrying about presents, and no more singing of carols about a "holy infant, so tender and mild".

Although I do recognize that *Silent Night* was not meant to advocate cannibalism, this carol always reminds me of a recipe in a cookbook: *Heat oven to 350°C, put in holy infant and baste until meat is tender and mild.*

The relief that follows the passing of the New Year also comes with dread, however, for now is the time when we start to realize just how difficult it is going to be to keep all of our hastily conceived "New Year's resolutions".

I can count the number of resolutions I've kept on all the toes on my hands. Over the years, they've ranged from the unrealistic "Grow at least another two centimeters this year," to the more achievable "Don't leave cleaning the cat's litter box to the last minute."

Why do we choose New Year's Day to begin our resolutions? Why not our birthdays? Why not a random date, like March 14 or November 2?

The celebration of a new year is the oldest modern holiday, and the only one celebrated in all cultures and religions. The Babylonians first celebrated it 4,000 years ago on March 23, the most popular Babylonian resolution being to return borrowed farm equipment – of course, resolutions could start only after the traditional eleven days of hard partying, which included stripping the king of all his powers for that time so he couldn't be a party-pooper.

The whole thing crystallized into something resembling the modern form when the Romans – after much nagging and fighting over the calendars – finally

New Year's Revolutions



Youth 'n ASIA

By Ella Micheler

decided on the Gregorian version and declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year.

The new year symbolizes change and new beginnings. In Columbia, "Mr Old Year", a big male doll made of unwanted material, is burned on huge bonfires, effectively symbolizing the forgetting of all the bad happenings of the previous year. In a way, New Year's resolutions are also meant to burn the Mr Old Year in us.

However, it's not so simple to reach into yourself, cut out the parts you don't like, and toss them onto a bonfire. It takes work and commitment – which is why most of us fail.

Those who make rash resolutions are the first to fall off the wagon. A study conducted at the University of Washington found that 65% of their participants reneged by the second week of January; these having made their resolutions between December 28 and New Year's Day.

Janus, January's namesake, was the two-faced Roman god of change, transition and beginnings. One face looked to the past and one to the future, signifying

It's a pity Google hasn't launched some sort of Life Search that could locate that shirt the cat dragged off, or the sock that was lost in the laundry

the importance of balance. Do we fail because we look only forward, when we should be looking back as well? For strong commitment, you need an honest look at your past, to see what you have to change about yourself and why. You must also have hope for the future – the determination and motivation not to give up.

But what would I know about any of this? I don't keep any of my resolutions. In fact, most teenagers don't. Younger teens usually resolve to work harder in school or to get along with their families better, while older teens tackle whatever more intractable bad habits they might have accumulated.

Most teens make between two to 10 resolutions each year, and, according to studies made at the University of Virginia, only one in five keeps all those resolutions for at least half a year.

Almost all teens resolve to be a better person in the New Year. Being so vague, it's a very easy resolution to keep. It's simple to say, "Yes, I was a better person this year because I did not laugh at the crazy man who lives down the road, and I only

punched my little brother twice a week."

I asked my friends if they ever keep their resolutions, and the resounding answer was "No!", delivered with a derisive snort. Even before New Year's Eve, when asked how sure they were that they could keep their resolutions, most said that they wouldn't be able to.

So, why bother making resolutions at all, if you know you won't be able to keep them? I wondered. So I did what I always do when in doubt: I Googled it. (Although it's a pity Google hasn't launched some sort of Life Search that could somehow locate that shirt the cat dragged off, or the sock that was lost in the laundry.)

The most touted tip on the Internet was this: Be realistic, and don't be disappointed if you don't see any immediate changes in yourself, or if you fall off the wagon early on. You're not going to change into a sex god/goddess overnight, and you're going to have some difficulties giving up smoking, and so on – but don't let yourself become discouraged.

You need a thorough plan: if you want muscles like Adonis by the end of the year, plan your exercise regime and your diet to every last detail.

Put up a huge sign on the wall, with your resolution written out. Pair up with someone else for moral support.

But if you really want to change, then don't even bother waiting for the New Year – start now. Right this minute. Put out the cigarette you're smoking, and let your dog eat the rest of the bacon on your plate.

As for me, perhaps my New Year's resolution should be to stop preaching and take my own advice – and I'm going to start right now.

What is the best way to raise my daughter as a Buddhist?

Dear Momma Duck,

I have a young daughter and I would like to raise her as a Buddhist. I would like her study the *Dhamma*, but do not want her to get involved with and/or distracted by all of the ritual aspects associated with mainstream Thai Buddhism. Where can I send her to learn the basic teaching of the Buddha? Are there any Buddhist "Sunday Schools" in Phuket?

Steve

Dear Steve,

The Lord Buddha teaches us to lead our lives by the middle path, neither too much nor too little.

I quite agree with you in not getting distracted by all the ritual aspects associated with mainstream Thai Buddhism, although ritual has its place in helping us to structure our learning and practice, such as by establishing certain times and places for meditation. A "strict" Buddhist, meaning someone who follows all the

rituals, does not necessarily mean that he or she is a good Buddhist.

To my knowledge, there are no Buddhist "Sunday Schools" in Phuket because we introduce our children to Buddhism by taking them with us to the temple or meditation retreats.

I feel that teaching your child at home from an early age would be the best way to learn about the basic teaching of the Buddha. There are many good books in English and Thai which explain the basic philosophy and practice of Buddhism. Also, if you and your wife participate, you will be tremendous role models for your daughter.

For example, you and your wife could teach her three of the basic five rules for laypersons (dealing with killing, stealing and lying).

The other two rules, about adultery and using intoxicants, do not really apply at this stage, but you could introduce the idea. Teach her to chant the various

prayers (in Thai rather than Pali or Sanskrit whenever possible), primarily as preparation for the practice of meditation, when we try to shut off the endless conversations and speculations our brains produce. Children are good copy-cats, and again you are a role model in showing her how to practice Buddhism.

Take her to the temple periodically and listen to the monk's preaching, and also take part in temple ceremonies on auspicious days of the year. Explain to her the meaning of each auspicious religious day in terms of what the Buddha intended – rather than the blind ritual. This would be a good start for the child.

I do not believe in teaching her strict, formal, theoretical Buddhism at this age, because this could turn her off later on. Let it seep into her slowly. Gradually teach her about meditation. Teach her to *tham boon* [make merit] by offering alms to monks and giving money to the poor. This



Momma DUCK

By Wanida Hongyok
momma@phuketgazette.net

is the best way of living as a *Bhuddhammakah* (Buddhist follower). For example, in the King's Birthday speech, he stressed leading our life in a "sufficient" style, in other words being content and living within our means and leading a simple way of life.

In The Stars

by Isla Star

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Expect to be pulled in two different directions this weekend. You are advised to be careful not to offend either of the people determined to have you on their side. The atmosphere settles down by Tuesday and fun is on the agenda, particularly if you're celebrating a birthday. Just when it seemed that all your energy had been burned up during recent partying, a second wind comes out of the blue.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Financial affairs are about to reach a long-awaited turning point. As this is happening, pay no attention to advice offered by Sagittarius; the wise words offered by Libra are well worth listening to, though. A recently lost good luck charm will turn up again this week. Romance requires careful handling as the object of your affection is subject to changing moods.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Getting back to basics is suddenly important. You receive a wake-up call, which should be seen as a positive event. This is not the right time to take chances where serious amounts of money are at stake. Play your cards right and the ball will be in your court later this month. Wednesday is the best day for delicate discussions. The number 4 is lucky on Thursday.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): You can be forgiven for thinking that the New Year is getting off to a slow start. You are advised not to force the pace to pick up – let business matters slowly simmer until the end of this month. Love is in the air on Sunday when Taurus shows a new, sensual side. This particular attraction stands a real chance of growing into something meaningful.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Your attitude is positive this week, which will ensure that steady progress is made. Those of you currently working on a creative project should receive encouraging news from overseas. Resist the temptation to share secrets, particularly with Virgo who is a fair-weather friend. You will enjoy an impromptu get together on Sunday; make sure to exchange contact details with someone who has the same interests. Wear jade to encourage good luck.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): You are about to take a long, hard look at all areas of your life. There is definitely room for improvement regarding work possibilities and someone is about to make an offer you can't refuse. This will probably necessitate some changes in your daily routine; be prepared to give up some leisure time in order to really get ahead. The number 8 looks promising on Tuesday.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): If you have been toying with the idea of leaving your present job you will receive a surprise offer. You could be packing your bags before the month ends. If life feels somewhat insecure at the moment, stay cool and wait for the wind of change to settle down. Wednesday is the most auspicious day for contacting someone you had a recent minor disagreement with.

LEO (July 24-August 22): Those who are low on energy after all the holiday fun will benefit from clearing out some unused belongings and considering a change of color scheme. Aim for brighter touches and incorporate bright jungle green to help you achieve more. Another Leo is about to come up with a peculiar proposition; don't reject it immediately, as there is promise of good gains.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): You will discover that every cloud really does have a silver lining. Those of you who couldn't see a way out of a disagreeable situation will cheer up when good news arrives this weekend. Romance will be subject to misunderstandings until the middle of the month. If you're looking for love, stay close to your usual watering holes. A family member puts you on the spot by asking a generous favor.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): You will feel an unaccustomed urge to splash out this weekend. Listen to a friend's advice and spoil yourself for a change. If you start expecting to have good things in your life, these will come more naturally. This year will be very much about living for the moment, whether you like it or not. Early next week, you will be confused by a colleague's mood swings – all will be revealed in due course.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): You will be in a reflective mood this week. Those close to you could find this unusual quietness hard to understand; you will need to explain that it's nothing personal as far as they are concerned. A financial dispute is solved on Wednesday; this will probably not be in your favor, and you should make a mental note to keep better records.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Your mood is upbeat this week with the emphasis on streamlining work obligations in order to have more free time. Being part of a social whirl over the holiday period has made you realize that there is much more to life than making money. Those of you who are in a relationship will discover that your partner has hidden depths; if you're single, get ready to meet an intriguing person in an unusual setting.

Recently I read a news item that set all sorts of alarm bells clanging. Scientists have discovered that "... Women who fail to orgasm during sex may be genetically programmed to weed out unreliable men who are a flop between the sheets... The failure of some women to orgasm regularly is not a dysfunction, but a sophisticated mate-selecting strategy that evolved during prehistoric times... The orgasm is an evolutionary way of seeing if men can prove themselves to be good providers, dependable, patient, and caring enough to look after the kids... Women who orgasm very easily may be more likely to be satisfied with poor quality men."

This opens up a huge can of worms that has catastrophic implications for the future of the human race. But strangely enough, since reading the article I have heard nary a peep out of any of the commentators, pundits, or prognosticators who habitually flood the newspapers with their pontifications. Nobody wants to touch this sucker.

But Tsow wades in where smart men fear to tread. With the courage, the boldness, and the daring intrepidity which mark my every lordly move, I propose to tackle this explosive issue with my customary elegance and grace.

But first, an etymological quibble. Orgasm is usually used as a noun. It doesn't look right as a verb. So let's invent a new verb form – "orgazz".

The ego of contemporary Western man has been knocked around for the past several decades by feminists determined to throw off the yoke of oppression under which women have traditionally groaned. We can't blame them for that.

The problem is that the male

COME AGAIN?



By S. TSOW

of the species has an extremely fragile ego. When the woman nags him for being a sexist slob and a patriarchal pig, the man cannot handle it.

He becomes Man the Hen-pecked. Ultimately he may take to drink or drugs, or become gay. In extreme cases, he may flee to Thailand to find peace of mind and unspeakable happiness as a sex tourist. What he usually finds is moral and financial ruin.

How to give the man both a fulfilling sex life and an unbattered ego? There is no answer to this question which a respectable family newspaper like this will print, although I can think of several that are unprintable, mostly involving sheep.

The result is bound to be a drop in human reproduction, possibly culminating in the extinction of our species.

Why is this discovery about female orgasms a lose-lose proposition for the male ego? Consider Scenario A:

Man (after a robust sexual performance): Erm, uh, dear, uh... you didn't orgazz, did you?

Woman: No. Sorry about that.

Man: It's because I'm not up to snuff, isn't it? Your genes have sized me up as a flop between the sheets, a poor provider: un-dependable, impatient, and uncaring, a lousy future progenitor of

your spawn. They're waiting for a non-flop to come along – then they'll let you orgazz.

Woman: Hey, I can't help what my genes do.

Man: I can't stand it. (Shoots self.)

Woman: What a sad specimen. Good work, genes! You've culled another loser from the herd. Hope the next guy is up to snuff.

Pretty horrible, isn't it? But hey, it gets worse. Consider Scenario B:

Man (after a tepid sexual performance): Boy. That was good. Geez. Gosh. You orgazzed all over the place. I must be one hell of a stud. Your genes have recognized me as a stallion between the sheets, a fantastic provider – super-dependable, hyper-patient, mega-caring, the perfect future progenitor of your spawn. Am I cool, or what? (Crows like a rooster.)

Woman (weeping): No, it's... it's because my genes are indiscriminating. I orgazz all the time, even with pathetic losers like you. I'm doomed to spend the rest of my life stuck with a flop between the sheets, a poor provider: un-dependable, impatient, and uncaring, a lousy future progenitor of my spawn. I wish I were programmed to be more selective, orgasm-wise.

Man: What? Me, a loser? I can't stand it. (Shoots self.)

If this trend continues, the price of bullets will soon escalate, exceeding even the price of oil. The message? Buy bullet stocks.

S. Tsow can be flamed at stow@yahoo.com, except when he's buying bullet stocks. A new collection of his ravings, Thai Lite 2, is now available at indiscriminating bookstores. Get your copy before it's banned.

Air Andaman launches with flights to Krabi

From the Gazette of January 1-14, 2001

PHUKET: The new Phuket-based airline, Air Andaman, took to the air on December 11, with a twice-daily service between Phuket and Krabi.

Montri Rattanapiphop, regional sales manager at Air Andaman's Bangkok office, told the Gazette, "The flights from Phuket to Krabi depart at 10.55 am and 5.20 pm.

"The return flights leave Krabi at 11.45 am and 6.15 pm. We intend to introduce one more flight each way if the demand is good," he added.

The aircraft used for the service is a Jetstream 32, a 19-seat turboprop plane.

Tickets cost 800 baht each way.

The airline is awaiting delivery of its second aircraft, which will allow the three flights a day to Krabi and back, and will also

THE TIME machine

News from the past

allow Air Andaman to launch a twice-daily flight from Phuket to Nakhon Sri Thammarat, and another, also twice a day, to Surat Thani.

Tickets for these routes will be 1,200 baht each way.

Further into the future, the airline plans to add a daily service to Ranong (at 1,200 baht), a daily service between Phuket and Chumphon (2,500 baht each way) and between Chumphon and Bangkok (2,600 baht).

Le Meridien Wins Environment Award

From the Gazette of January 1996

Mr Yingphan Manasikarn, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, recently presented the 1995 environmental honorary award to Le Meridien Phuket. The hotel was recognized for monitoring environmental quality, and for taking action to reduce adverse effects on the environment.

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Rubbishing Phuket

The worsening garbage problem along Sapam-Samkong Road is just the latest example of how greed, inadequate law enforcement and a lack of environmental awareness are continuing to despoil what is left of Phuket's greatest asset – its natural beauty. [see Inside Story, pages 4-5].

While the tambon administration organizations [*OrBorTor*] of Rassada and Koh Kaew dither about who is responsible for cleaning up the mess, the fact remains that the garbage never should have been dumped there in the first place.

The content of the garbage indicates that much of it was initially debris left over from a construction project. Once established as a dumping ground, however, more and more people have been adding to the growing mess. If left unchecked, the area promises to become Phuket's own version of "Smokey Mountain" – now that persons unknown have begun burning it.

The garbage itself constitutes a mountain of evidence that could be used to track down those responsible – were the police interested in conducting an investigation. Apparently they are not.

To dispose of garbage in this manner is reprehensible. The polluter, or polluters, should be tracked down, prosecuted, punished – and most important of all – forced to clean up the garbage and dispose of it properly.

Such illegal dumping also threatens the local groundwater table with contamination from a wide variety of toxins, including heavy metals from used batteries. This is of particular concern on the Sapam-Samkong Road, which runs alongside a klong connecting numerous tin mining ponds in the vicinity that serve as water sources.

It seems that no part of the island remains safe from those who would, for a quick profit, sacrifice the environment that sustains us all. Last month, government officials seized an estimated 1.5 million baht in wooden planks that were cut from hardwood trees felled on protected forest land in Koh Kaew. So brazen were the loggers that they even brought in the necessary equipment to process the wood into salable planks right at the site. As with so many other environmental crimes committed on the island, there have still been no arrests in the case.

Garbage collection is among the most important duties entrusted to the 13 local administrations on Phuket; it is time for both *OrBorTors* to get together and clean up the mess along Sapam-Samkong Rd before it worsens.

It is also time for the police to get serious about bringing to justice those who see fit to use a public road as their own personal garbage dump.

– The Editor

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Letters

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

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

Not so elementary

I read with dismay Richard Watson's Money Talks article of December 31, in which we were told that "India's disadvantage – if compared again to China – is that it is a democracy."

In the next sentence, we were informed that China's economy is at present a command economy. Both statements are woefully inaccurate and require correction.

First, I am not sure where Mr Watson learned his economics, but democratically-free societies are at a distinct economic advantage over command economies.

This is because free peoples are more efficient in allocating scarce resources than economic ministers are.

This efficiency is best reflected in consumer prices which are aligned with consumer demand. In a command economy, such as the former Soviet Union, consumers are forced to pay dearly for defective televisions made in decrepit state-run factories.

Secondly, describing the current Chinese economy as a being of a command variety is entirely misleading.

The Chinese government is indeed run by the Communist Party. However, their economy has long been on a liberal reform path. It is this very reform, giving economic choice back to ordinary people, which is responsible for their exceptional economic growth rate.

What puzzles me most about Mr Watson's comments are that they come from the pen of an investment planner.

Let me remind Mr Watson

that in a command economy there are not any investors other than the state itself.

His comments, as found within the *Phuket Gazette*, would be laughable were it not for the scores of thousands who have died for the sake of freedom and democracy throughout the world.

Jeffrey Galko
Via email

Blessed book brokers

I am writing to comment on the cartoon which appeared in support of your generally excellent editorial about street touts in the Dec 10 *Gazette*. Among the touts lampooned in this cartoon was one shouting "You need book! You buy!"

I'm sure you will agree with me that anybody who encourages people to buy a book – say, a recently published book about Phuket, as a random example – is not a tout but in fact a saint, a public servant who selflessly toils for the betterment of all humankind.

I expect a printed retraction very soon.

Peace,

Steve Rosse
Iowa City, Iowa

Beach bummer

So, Phuket wants to attract a five-star hotel to Bang Tao Beach?

Guests in five-star hotels work hard and wish to relax in peace on their holiday; there is no chance of that on Bang Tao Beach until Phuket's authorities control the local beach traders.

I visited the beach at The Sheraton recently and was harassed all day by traders asking

me to buy their drinks. I also noticed that the hotel had to ring-fence a part of its garden to enable a few of its guests to sit in peace.

I moved to the beach opposite the Allamanda Hotel and was astonished to find that the restaurateurs there had moved their tables and rusty umbrellas almost down to the water's edge.

The panoramic view had gone, and I felt trapped in the small area left.

I walked back to the shower and passed a mound of more than 100 refuse bags ripening in the hot sun and rain. The smell was disgusting. After the tsunami, the pipes leading from the bars and restaurants down into the sea were revealed – I presume they are still there, disgorging their unknown contents into the sea beside the bathers.

Does anyone ever test the quality of the seawater? We have had Sars, the tsunami, and I can guess what the next disaster will be.

The Mayor of Marbella in Spain solved his problem by simply bulldozing the rat-infested beach bars into the sand. I do not advocate that here as the locals lend color to the beach, but they must be taught how to obey the law.

The Governor of Phuket should form a powerful beach patrol force to help the vendors trade sensibly and support the hotels to conserve this magnificent beach.

The most effective and cheapest form of advertising is word of mouth. Are the departing guests going to recommend visiting Phuket?

Anne Donald
Cherng Talay

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

Why the bypass project has been delayed

The bypass road project was rescheduled for completion by January 26, but, realistically speaking, I believe it needs about another two months [beyond January] to finish it.

The eight-kilometer-long project is separated into two parts: the first section, from the Baan Bang Ku Intersection [near the Royal Phuket Marina] until the Baan Samkong Intersection [at the Tesco-Lotus Superstore] is a five-kilometer stretch followed by a three-kilometer section from Tesco-Lotus to the the Dara Samut School Intersection [known to many people as the Thainaan intersection].

Basically, the delays are due to slow responses from the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) in granting blasting permission.

It works like this: the contractor, in this case Chiang Rai Harn Charoen Enterprise Limited (CRHC) must make a written request to the MoI, for the dynamite necessary to carry out the blasting.

The policy of making a formal request is mainly due to the volatile situation in the Deep South of Thailand. The MoI is known to be strict regarding this – hence the delays.

[In March 2005, K. Boonyakiat told the Gazette that the contractors waited some 265 days for government approval to commence blasting.]

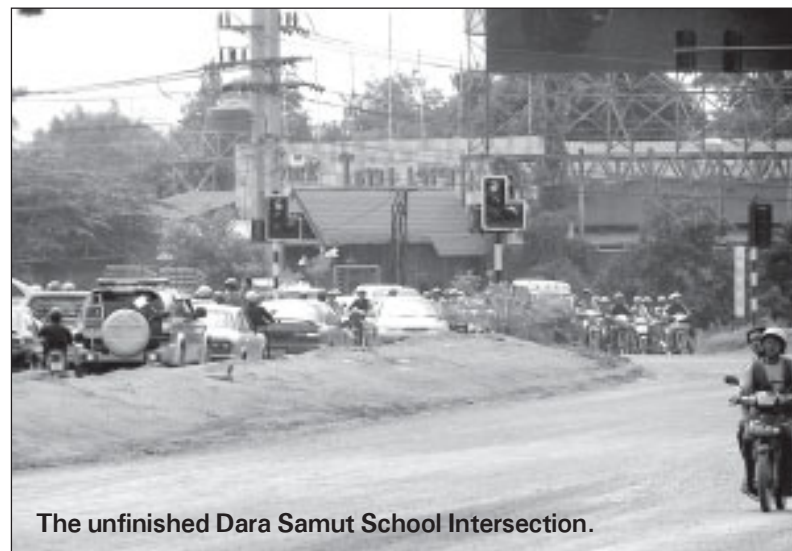
By the time permission came through, CRHC realized that the project was already behind schedule and that the wheels of the Thai governmental processes move slowly.

FIRST PERSON

The bypass road project has become a byword in Phuket for delay and inconvenience. The 111-million-baht widening project was due for completion on September 28 last year, yet it still seems a long way from its conclusion with limited lighting, potholes and either dusty or muddy surfaces, depending on weather conditions.

Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura ordered that the project be completed by December 26 so that dignitaries visiting the tsunami memorial services would have a positive impression of the island, but this was not to be.

Phuket Highways Department Engineer **Boonyakiat Kongketyai** talks to the *Gazette* about the project and its problems.



The unfinished Dara Samut School Intersection.

The contract was due to expire on September 28 but CRHC requested – and was granted – an extra 120 days.

However, I still don't think that it will be finished by January 26 because of delays due to the recent heavy rain.

If the project is not completed by January 26, then CRHC will be fined 33,390 baht for each day over the set date. This will be taken out of funds owed to CRHC by the government for the project.

Aside from delays caused by natural phenomena, the project has been held up by staffing problems and malfunctioning machinery, although the biggest problem has undoubtedly been the delay

caused by waiting for permission to commence blasting.

It was originally scheduled to take place in June 2004 but we couldn't even begin until January 2005, so we were eight months late, effectively, before we even started blasting. [The Gazette first reported that blasting had begun in March 2005.] Thankfully, the blasting process has now been terminated.

Normally, we would buy the rocks to be pulverized to make the hardcore for the construction from Phang Nga but a Highways Department engineer suggested that we use ground rock, a by-product from the blasting process, with which to lay the road.

This method should, at least

theoretically, have saved time and money.

The Governor insisted that we asphalt the surface of the section from Tesco-Lotus to the Dara Samut School Intersection before December 26, but the asphalt mixer broke down.

He was in a hurry to give a good impression to people using the road during the tsunami memorial services, but even if we had asphalted the surface, it wouldn't have necessarily meant that the project was finished.

However, I can say for sure that the surface of the road will be complete by January 26, although we will still have details, such as road markings and the installation of electrical and drain-

age infrastructure, to finish.

There is still quite a lot of rain runoff from the higher parts of the project, especially where blasting has taken place, and we shall be constructing artificial waterfalls to handle this.

This project has been a long time in the works, and it's a given that the heavy machinery has seen a lot of wear and tear, but the cost for repairs is shouldered by the contractor, not the government.

In conclusion, it has to be said that the private and governmental agencies have co-operated wonderfully. People have been using a rough and dirty road for long enough now, and we'd like to apologize for this.

Stray dog strut

As a veterinarian and someone who has worked extensively in stray animal control, both in the US and overseas, I am alarmed when I read of the continuing "efforts" of the Phuket authorities to control stray dogs. Simply picking up dogs and incarcerating or killing them has never worked nor will it ever work. Other dogs will simply fill the void in an amazingly short period of time.

The only effective means of controlling stray dogs is mass sterilization although, certainly, any dangerous dogs should be captured and humanely euthanized.

On a visit to Phuket a few weeks ago, I met a volunteer who was picking up stray dogs on Nai Yang Beach to do this very work. He told me that a local animal welfare organization had already sterilized nearly 7,000 dogs and cats and was also vaccinating them all and treating them for any disease or injury.

According to him, virtually all the beach and temple dogs have now been sterilized.

This approach will work, and the authorities, rather than not inviting these organizations to their

Letters

meetings, should cooperate with them and leave them to do the job, which would free up resources for other more important work.

Janice Hultberg
Seattle, WA

Doc eat doc world

One has to question exactly what kind of doctor the head of the Phuket Provincial Livestock Office, Sunart Wongchawalit, actually is.

Certainly not veterinary medicine, as he clearly has no understanding of how to control stray dogs.

With all the problems Phuket has faced recently, I find it amazing that this man continues to wage war on the island's stray dogs.

In all the years I have been coming here I have never been threatened by one of these dogs, and indeed have noticed on my recent visits a marked improvement in their health, which no doubt has more to do with local animal welfare organizations than the local government.

I suggest that he devote his

resources to ensuring Phuket stays free of bird 'flu and outbreaks of food poisoning – things that would have a far greater impact on tourism than a few stray dogs.

Perhaps he could also spend some of his time clamping down on the illegal use of wildlife, which turns so many tourists off.

Peter Wood DVM
London

Pause for thought

I noticed in your publication the plan to make a "sweep" of Phuket's wonderful dogs to put them in the already overcrowded dog pound.

I've been a supporter of the Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) ever since I heard about it, because spaying and caring for the dogs is the only plan that is sure to work for everyone, including the dogs, who are an important part of Phuket.

The funds spent in carrying out [the round up of strays] could be better spent supporting the SDF and its program, which could even become a model for the international community.

Patricia Silva
California, USA

Issues & ANSWERS

**Want to know how to get something done?
Want to pitch an idea to Phuket's authorities?
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we'll ask the appropriate people to respond.**

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issue at www.phuketgazette.net**

When will Rawai have more phone lines?

I believe that no new telephone lines are currently available in Rawai, specifically in Soi Suksan 1. Seemingly Rawai's allocation has been used up due to demand. When might new telephone lines become available for this area?

David Kirk, Rawai

Pairoj Somsri, Manager, Customer Service Center, TOT Phuket Office, replies:

We are installing new telephone lines all over the country during the first three months of 2006. A total of more than 5,000 new numbers will be available in Phuket through island's 11 telephone exchanges. All the new numbers will be able to provide ADSL high-speed Internet access.

We have already installed 120 new ADSL-capable lines for the Baan Lipon area in Thalang. In Rawai, an exchange is being installed at the entrance of Wat Sawang-arom. It should be completed within six months. The exchange will provide 360 new lines that can support ADSL Internet access.

ON THE MOVE



Justin Maiklem, from Australia, is the new Executive Chef at the Evason Phuket Resort & Six Senses Spa. He spent the past four years in the Maldives and has developed his own version of "Euro Asian" cuisine. He has the task of opening the resort's new "Into the MED" restaurant. Justin has also worked across Europe, in such famed establishments as The Dorchester in London and The Park Hotel Vitznau in Switzerland.



Lotte Krogh Dietrich, from Denmark, has been appointed the Scandinavian Co-ordinator of Phuket International Hospital. She has a master's degree in communications from Aalborg University in Denmark and has lived full-time in Phuket for the past one and a half years. Previously she was employed in her family business in America, On-Top Roof and Chimney Company Inc.



Janjira Sitthisak, 34, from Phuket, has been appointed Director of Royal Phuket Property Search & Service Co Ltd. She has a bachelor's degree in humanities from the Thai Chamber of Commerce University. Previously, she was with the Thai Wah Group, and was Executive Secretary to the Board of Blue Canyon Country Club. She has also worked at Laguna Property Sales.

KHUN WOODY'S
COMPUTER

If you've been around the computer biz in Phuket for a while, then you have probably heard of Sipa, the Software Industry Promotion Agency.

No doubt you also know that Sipa's primary job revolves around turning Phuket into an IT hub for Southeast Asia; that Sipa regulates most of the computer business on the island; that Sipa is in charge of improving the speed of Internet service in Phuket; that Sipa controls visas and work permits for foreign computer workers; and that Sipa has been granted sweeping authority to ensure that Phuket catches up with Singapore and other computer powerhouses in the next two or three years.

At least, that's what I thought I knew about Sipa. It turns out that the reality is somewhat different.

WRONG!

Dr Rattana Wetprasit, Sipa Phuket's Branch Manager, recently gave a presentation to the Rotary Club of Patong Beach about Sipa's organization, mission and projects. I had a chance to attend that presentation and talk with Dr Rattana afterwards. Here's what I found.

For starters, almost everything that I thought I knew about Sipa is wrong.

Sipa is a government organization, neither more nor less powerful than any other – and is subject to the same kind of political buffeting that any government body in Thailand encounters.

Sipa, as its name indicates, is charged with improving the software business in Phuket. No, Phuket doesn't have very many companies that develop and sell

See what Sipa
can do for you

Sipa offers 'IT Knowledge Worker Certification' that will help qualified software folks get Thai visas and work permits. Best of all, you can apply online...

software, but Sipa is trying valiantly to change that.

At the same time, Sipa also promotes companies that use specialized software to create custom solutions, including groups that work with various Web tools and Internet "middleware" languages (such as Java/J2EE), and with animation software. Sipa's mission also encompasses education – building a pool of talented software people on Phuket with a wide array of software experience: programming, design, animation, service and the like.

If that sounds like a tall order, well, you haven't heard the half of it yet.

Sipa has been charged with developing an all-encompassing Web-based government portal. Dubbed One Stop Service, the idea is straightforward: create one website where any Phuket resident can go to interact with any branch of the government. That includes services as mundane as paying a phone bill. But it also includes complicated services, such as, oh, changing the *tabien baan* (house registration document).

I have worked on some big, tough projects in my day, but this One Stop Service takes the biscuit. It's huge.

Sipa has deep roots in the academic world – in fact, one of the major challenges facing Sipa in Phuket is halting the brain drain, in which recent, local computer science graduates move to Bangkok to get jobs. Bringing more software work to Phuket helps to keep local talent local. Everybody wins.

Of course, Phuket needs better, faster, and more reliable Internet access. Sipa is well aware of that fact, and has been working hard to make things better. But it does not have a magic bullet – or, more to the point, a bandwidth budget.

So if Sipa cannot build us bigger data pipes, what can they do to help you and me? Quite a bit, it turns out.

First, if you have ever dreamed of putting together a 3D walk-through of a development project or an existing home, you must take a look at Dr Rattana's "Sipa Phuket 3D Animation Academy" CD, which includes walk-throughs of several Phuket buildings. Sipa's animation stu-

dents are capable of extraordinary work and this CD will knock your socks off, guaranteed – and many of the students who put it together are available to work on your project, right now.

Second, if you are applying for a work permit and you have a background in software, Sipa can help. There is a new program called "ICT Knowledge

Worker's Certification", administered by Sipa, that establishes your credentials as an experienced software professional. Certification is available in 12 categories: Programmer, CAD/CAM, IT QA, IT Security, Database, Data

Comm, Multimedia, Application Software, Systems Analyst/Designer, System Manager, Project Manager and CIO.

While receiving an ICT Knowledge Worker's Certificate will not necessarily guarantee you a visa or work permit, it will go a long way toward proving that you are worthy. I've heard that the certificate will soon be required for all work permit applicants in the software arena. At the very

least, having a certificate won't hurt.

The best news is that you can apply for an ICT Knowledge Worker's Certificate online, by simply going to www.sipa.or.th/knowledgeworker/apply.php

You will need a recent photograph, an address in Thailand, your passport information, details of your experience and education, and contact information for your employer in Thailand. The whole process should take less than five minutes.

Third, if you work in the computer industry, and you have ever thought of starting a business here in Phuket, Sipa can help.

I know that many foreign techies on the island prefer to remain anonymous. Some even put up with paying exorbitant income taxes in their home countries. If you live in Thailand and make a living off the Internet, there are some big advantages to setting up a company here. For information, drop by the Sipa office in Saphan Hin, or shoot an email to phuket@sipa.or.th

Phuket has come a long way, and Sipa is going to help us go further.

– Woody Leonhard
woody@khunwoody.com



An interesting year ahead

The biggest story for the world economy and financial markets to appear so far in 2006 has been interest rate levels.

The US Federal Reserve will make a decision on interest rates at the end of January. This will be the last for current "Fed" Chairman Alan Greenspan, who is due to retire.

It is almost certain that interest rates will be raised from 4% to 4.5%. The Fed has already indicated that future moves will be "data-dependant". Until very recently they were simply increasing rates from an "accommodative" stance, but now that rates have reached somewhere approaching "neutral", the policy will naturally adjust. The Fed will monitor economic indicators to direct its interest rate policy.

Alan Greenspan has always avoided a fixed inflation rate target, and has instead relied on an assessment of overall economic activity.

His successor, Ben Bernanke, who takes office on February 1, appears to have a different approach – he seems to favor an inflation target of 1%-2%.

Mr Bernanke, however, will not enjoy the same level of influence with his fellow board members, at least initially. It is probably best to describe his situation as being "first among equals".

The next meeting to set interest rates, under Mr Bernanke's chairmanship, will be held in March.

It is likely that interest rates will again rise by ¼%, if only to assure financial markets of the new Fed chief's inflation-fighting credentials. However, this will depend on inflationary pressures and overall economic growth.

What seems likely to happen, when realization finally appears that the interest rate tightening cycle has reached its peak, is a strong possibility of US dollar weakness. The attraction of the US dollar at present is the reality of rising interest rates, and when this changes to a flat or even negative outlook, speculation will tend to move money to other currencies.

The US current account deficit will, again, become the foremost issue.

The US corporate sector generally is showing very healthy balance sheets – with a great deal of cash. Some of this money is virtually certain to fuel mergers and acquisitions (M&A), and this promises to be a very active year in the M&A arena.

Germany, and some of her neighbors, may be seeing the beginnings of an economic recovery. It is unlikely to be dramatic, but perhaps economic growth could reach 1.5%-2% during 2006. The European Central Bank (ECB) increased interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point in late 2005 from 2% to 2.5%, and futures markets reflect the belief that by mid-2006 rates will have risen to 2.75%. The ECB had been widely criticized for moving too quickly on the in-



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

Slow economic growth in the UK weakens Chancellor Gordon Brown's position as successor to PM Tony Blair

terest rate front. Certainly, the major economies of the Euro Zone are all reflecting weak domestic consumer demand.

In the UK, both government and Bank of England assessments of economic growth have been widely optimistic.

The government has been forced to trim its estimates, much to the political embarrassment of Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown. He is also the expected successor to current Prime Minister Tony Blair, even though Mr Blair may not want to

move until 2008.

Slow economic growth in the UK weakens Mr Brown's political position. Despite his hav-

ing being forced to reduce his assessment of UK economic growth, most economists feel that reality will produce a further official downgrade.

This may well force the Bank of England to reduce interest rates again to 4.25% from their current 4.5%, although this is not expected to happen until May.

Already current markets are reflecting a wariness about UK interest rates, and the Pound Sterling has been weaker against the US dollar, euro and yen. The biggest recent loser, however, has been the New Zealand dollar; in that country, despite interest rates of 7.25%, doubts are being cast about the general economic situation.

In Japan a rising economic outlook forecasts a change in strategy by the central bank, the Bank of Japan. There are currently differences of opinion between politicians and the central bank. It appears that the first move by the Bank of Japan will not be on interest rates but will be a gradual tightening of its present "quantitative easing"

policy. In other words, it will start to reduce the amount of liquidity available to the economy.

The Japanese government, no doubt in an attempt to appease the hawkish elements in the Bank of Japan, has already committed itself to reducing expenditure to its lowest level in eight years in 2006.

The politicians are terrified that any radical moves by the Bank of Japan could derail the current economic recovery.

The Japanese economy has spent almost 15 years in an economic hospital; it is unlikely to be running any marathons in 2006, but perhaps it can begin to jog by the end of this year.

The key to a healthy Japanese economy lies with the domestic sector, as it accounts for around 8.5% of overall economic activity.

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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Runners raise money for damaged schools

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: Some 700 runners saw in the new year by taking part in the 10.5-kilometer "Andaman Mini Marathon" on December 31 to raise money for six tsunami damaged schools, three in Phuket and three in Phang Nga.

The race started at Tah Chat Chai School at midnight, the runners crossing over the Sarasin Bridge to Phang Nga beneath a fireworks display. The turnaround point was Wat Pahtahnoon in Phang Nga, the runners returning to Phuket to finish at Tah Chat Chai School by crossing back over the Thao Thepkrasattri-Thao Srisoonthorn Bridge.

The event raised around 100,000 baht for the six schools from the 700 entry fees of 149 baht each.

Promchote Traivate, head of the Phuket Office of Sports and Recreation Development, said the event was a healthy way to start off the New Year.

There was, however, some discontent among the event organizers, journalists from Thai-language daily papers *Thai Rath* and *Siam Sports*.

They were less than impressed at having been charged 20,000 baht by Tah Chat Chai School to pay for the chicken *khao tom* prepared by the school and fed to the runners. They also said that the race raised less money than they had hoped for.

Men's Results: Under 19 years: Olan Leelasilapasat (Phuket); **19-29 yrs:** Suwat Paiboon (Phuket); **30-39 yrs:** Nattapohon Ariyo (Phang Nga); **40-49 yrs:** Somtorn Chierponpichai (Surat Thani); **50-59 yrs:** Suriya Na Bangchang (Phuket); **60+ yrs:** Rungsan Rakbumroong (Phuket). **Women's results: Under 19 years:** Karuna Nadra (Phuket); **19-29 yrs:** Jirawan Kwanchuai (Phuket); **30-39 yrs:** Pitsara Tientawat (Krabi); **40-49 yrs:** Saibua Nilsang (Phuket); **50+ years:** Atchara Pholsiri (Phang Nga).

New darts league under way

PATONG: The new Patong Darts League season, which will run until May 23, started well on December 27 with a lot of close matches.

The only new venue this season is The Boss Bar, which is on Nanai Rd opposite the access road to Banzan market.

December 27 results: Queen Mary* 6 Coyote 3; Dog's Bollocks* 4 Two Black Sheep 5;

Amigos* 3 Shakers 6; Valhalla* 6 The Boss Bar 3; Piccadilly 4 Didi's* 5; Offshore v Winchester N/A.

(*Winners of beer leg; N/A: Result not available)

January 10 matchups: Queen Mary v Two Black Sheep; Dog's Bollocks v The Boss Bar; Amigos v Winchester; Valhalla v Didi's; Piccadilly v Shakers; Offshore v Coyote. (Home teams listed first)



Joy for Japan, disappointment for second-placed Thailand.

Japan's beach volleyball girls rise to the challenge

PHUKET: Japan defeated Thailand 2-0 in the Phuket Thailand Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Beach Volleyball Challenge 2005, held from December 28 to 30.

Southeast Asian Games gold medalists Jarunee Sannok and Kamoltip Kulna, comprising one of Thailand's three teams, entered the finals after beating Bulgaria's Yanchulova sisters 2-0 in the semi-finals. Petia Yanchulova and Lina Yanchulova, at #16 in the world, were the highest-ranking players who came to compete in Phuket.

K. Jarunee and K. Kamoltip went on to meet Japan's Shinako Tanaka and Eiko



Koizumi in the finals. The first set closed in Japan's favor, with a score of 16-21. In the second set, Japan beat the Thai duo 21-17.

Thailand achieved second place overall, and Bulgaria's Petia and Tzvetelina Yanchulova beat

Thailand's Yupa Phokongploy and Usa Tenpaksee to gain third place.

The top three teams won trophies and US\$7,200, US\$5,800 and US\$4,600 respectively.

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BLOWN AWAY

By Chris Husted

ANDAMAN COAST: On December 26, Marco Reinard, from Luxembourg, headed off to see Thailand's Andaman Coast in a manner unlike others before him – he set off from near the Thai-Burmese border in Ranong and will windsurf some 600 kilometers to the Thai-Malaysian border in Satun Province.

His journey, which Marco expects will take about three weeks, is being made to highlight the plight of the villages along the Andaman coast that are still suffering from the tsunami.

"Although the devastation was most severe in the region north of Phuket, people along the entire western coast of Thailand were affected.

"This included many Thai and Sea Gypsy coastal fishing villages, in addition to the resort areas that received so much publicity," he said.

"The survivors from the coastal fishing villages still need assistance, especially in the area north of Phuket. There were so



Marco Reinard inspects the windsurf board that will carry him some 600 kilometers, from Thailand's border with Burma in Ranong Province to her border with Malaysia in Satun Province.

many of them that lost their homes, their boats and all their possessions, in addition to family members and neighbors.

"Many of the smaller relief organizations that are doing so much good, working in direct contact with the people, still depend on direct sources of funding. They have websites that regularly report their progress online and they give an accounting of their expenditure," he added.

Marco will put ashore at the end of each day, though he might land a little before sunset after his first day's adventure.

"The wind has been light and

dropped to nothing just as I found myself between two islands," he told the *Gazette*. "I folded my sail and started to paddle toward land. The current was running against me as soon as the sun started to set.

"I pointed toward a green light in the distance, which turned out to be a fisherman. I had no choice then to follow that only light in the distance, which I reached after about a four-hour paddle.

"I was happy to hold onto the side of his longtail boat. The friendly fisherman cooked me a nice meal and allowed me to spend the night," he said.

At the time of going to press Marco had reached Koh Kor Tao off Phang Nga Province, and he expected to pass the Phuket coast by January 4.

Latvia wins 36th King's Cup Football Tournament

PHUKET CITY: Teams from Thailand, Latvia, North Korea and Oman competed in the 36th King's Cup International Football Tournament, held from December 24-30 at Surakul Stadium.

Latvia went head-to-head against the Democratic Republic of Korea in the final on December 30, beating North Korea 2-1.

Girts Karlsons scored for

Latvia in the 38th minute, and two minutes later, his team-mate Andrejs Prohorenkovs put the ball in the back of the net again.

Despite Hong Yong Jo scoring for North Korea in the second half, at the final whistle the score was 2-1 to the Latvians.

The Cup was presented to the winners by Privy Councilor, General Pichit Kullawanich.

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The first three of these vehicles' owners to contact us can choose from the following three prizes: a Fusion Thai Set Dinner for two at Baan Yin Dee Boutique Resort Phuket; or a one-hour refreshing spa for one at The Aspara Spa, at the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket; or a souvenir from Land Rover.

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Home of the Week

Laguna



AN IMMACULATE TOWNHOME

Peace and quiet is what you first notice when walking the spacious grounds of this magnificent townhouse – except, maybe, for the distant aggravated call of a golfer who has just had an appalling tee off the 8th box. With a home overlooking the fairway

and with views of the water hazards, owners can be assured of cool breezes all day long, flowing into each room of the property.

This magnificent home is a rare find.

Laguna home resales are indeed scarce, as owners typically buy such properties for

lifestyle or as a solid investment, given that short-term and long-term rentals are in very high demand.

The present owners have kept this home in immaculate condition, with attention to detail paid to the internal finishings and furniture that is well-suited to the

style and character of the property.

Consisting of three bedrooms, this home has a total living area of 205 square meters – and a massive area for dining and entertaining downstairs.

The modern kitchen is fully equipped with Western appliances carefully selected by the present owners who combine taste with practicality. The sturdy wooden internal staircase is typical of the solid structure of the entire townhouse, as you would expect from developer Laguna.

Upstairs, each bedroom is spacious and allows for lots of natural light. The master bedroom has a walk-in wardrobe and separate en-suite bathroom with “his and hers” wash basins, a glass-enclosed shower, a bath and toilet.

The outdoor deck offers one of the best views of the golf course. This 450-sqm plot includes a pool, sala and garden. The present owners have maxi-

mized this space with colorful landscaping and good use of outdoor entertainment areas. The sala is ideal for relaxing in and perfect for watching dusk fall across the fairways of Laguna Golf Course.

Secure car parking for two vehicles is provided, as well as a maid’s quarters at the entrance to the property.

The 25sqm swimming pool is integral to the property, as is the pool terrace area which is perfect for alfresco dining, barbecues or early-evening cocktails.

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ROYAL PHUKET MARINA

Construction

by Anongnat Sartpisut

PATONG: This 18-rai property, on a Kalim Bay hillside two kilometers north of Patong Beach, represents a total investment of 800 million baht. The concept of Villa Santi is of a holiday home with the services of a top-flight hotel, including among its facilities tennis courts and a restaurant.

Bart Duykers, Villa Santi's Executive Director, told the *Gazette* that he has been managing hotels for 20 years since graduating with a degree in hotel management. "What I want to do with Villa Santi is to create a resort community that functions like a five-star resort," he said. "It will be a small, upscale estate."

Construction began in September 2003 and will be completed by September this year.

Fifty-one of the 56 residential units – available in four types, all enjoying total privacy and an uninterrupted sea view – have already been sold.

Spa Villas: 20 units of 216 square meters to 320sqm. The floor plan features three connected pavilions in a private courtyard setting, with an outdoor garden and plunge pool facing the ocean. Prices range from 12 million baht to 23 million baht.

Residences: six units of 570sqm to 700sqm on two levels. The design includes spacious living areas, a separate dining room and kitchen, two master bedrooms, two guest bedrooms, a family terrace, a maid's room and laundry room, a 36sqm infinity-edge swimming pool on a large deck and a private garage. Priced from 25 million baht to 30 million baht.

Apartment Suites: 19 units in three styles – a two-bedroom unit of 178sqm; a three-bedroom unit with 206sqm or 215sqm; and a four-bedroom unit of 370sqm. The two-bedroom units are split level and just 50 meters from the ocean. Prices range from 10 million baht to 30 million baht.

Gaya Studios: 11 units of one-bedroom apartments with 89sqm to 160sqm of living area,



The projected completion date is September this year.

Villa Santi, north of Patong

plus an outdoor whirlpool bath and various options for additional water features and swimming pools. Priced from 8 million baht to 14 million baht.

The hotel comprises an additional 24 units on the estate.

Mr Duykers said, "The villas are traditionally tropical in design; you'll find a typical Asian roof, a lot of wood and a contemporary interior. The apartments, hotel and restaurant are definitely 'Asian contemporary'."

In addition to the Phuket Provincial Water Supply, there will also be a reserve rainwater tank. All electrical wiring and water piping will be underground. The estate will have a computerized power management system and its own 16,000Kw transformer.

Because of its hillside location, Mr Duykers said that the project combines solid foundations with a number of extremely strong retaining walls. "There is no reason for a landslide if you manage your water system well. You need to have a lot of drainage so water coming down the slope can drain properly."

Facilities and services at Villa Santi will include a swimming pool; gym; Gaya Restaurant, Bar and Cantinetta; Ylang

Spa; a library offering complimentary DVD and music CD rentals; a Day Care Center for children; and yacht chartering.

"We have invested one million Euros [about 50 million baht] in Gaya alone," he said.

"We target people who are looking to buy an investment home which is used as a holiday home, and when it is not used, the owners rent it out. Our buyers are mainly American and Australian."

There are also plans to add "Tree-Top Suites" comprising eight single-bedroom apartments of 125sqm each.

Villa Santi's architects are Alfred Wong Partnership Pte Ltd, Singapore, and Design by Design, Phuket. The interior design is by TID Associates, Singapore. The construction company is Powerline Engineering, Bangkok & Phuket. The branding consultant is Creative Inhouse, Bangkok. The management company is the Santi-beyond hotels Co Ltd.

For more information, call Tel: 076-290324, 076-344847, 01-3703666 or Fax: 076-344847. Sales office: 328 Prabaraami Rd, Patong, Kathu, Phuket 83150. Website: www.phuket-villa-santi.com

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A tropical modern-style home with local weather. The overall design emphasizes simplicity. An L-shaped unit allows more space for family activities as a party. Glass walls make it possible to view all areas of the house. A private swimming pool with salt water has therapeutic benefits. It is located in an enclosed area adjoining the unit and can be viewed from two master bedrooms on the second floor. To increase privacy, the garage is specially designed to stand in a spot that partly covers the pool.

All this combines to make The Beach Pool Villa one of the best-designed two-story homes with a pool in the Kata area.

The unit is 13.25 x 23.50m on an area of 34 x 23m. Usage area is 415sqm with swimming pool included.

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

How often do we overlook the obvious? How many times have you gone shopping in Phuket City, or even to Bangkok for an essential purchase, then discovered that you could have found exactly what you wanted down the road? Maybe it's just me.

I've even found myself deciding to take holidays outside my adopted home country of Thailand, and spending a week or two elsewhere. The result is that I'm always rather glad to be home. There are the odd frustrations here, but look at what we get in return. Sometimes that's overlooked.

I know I don't have much to say about anything serious, but I do feel that I, like many others, take a lot of what we enjoy here on Phuket for granted; we overlook things that new visitors gawp at.

Case in point: I was coming home fairly late from an evening of imbibing, and as I was walking up my driveway, I happened to look up into the sky before I turned on the light.

It was like a scene from a hackneyed '30s black-and-white film – the sort of thing they put up at the end of the film with the



words "The End" emblazoned across the middle, in case you weren't sure.

The coconut palm next door looked as it had never before. Before, I had walked past this particular tree daily without giving it a second thought. It was stunning. Even in my somewhat inebriated state, I went into the house and fetched my camera.

Given the limitations of my point-and-press camera, I had no idea how the pictures would come out, but come out they did. The photograph here isn't exactly the typical result of a lad's night out. The other, somewhat brighter picture is exactly the same tree

Stating the bleedin' obvious

the following morning, after I'd sobered up.

Everyone reading this is presumably either a current or past visitor to Phuket, or is resident here now. Everywhere you go on the island, there is one common feature, something so common that sometimes we don't see it – the palm tree. If you were asked to name something which represents the island, this could well be it. Somehow, we seem to ignore them though – there are just so many.

There are certainly plenty of varieties – from the inevitable coconut palms which gracefully arch over our numerous beaches,



to the majestic Royal Palm, which prevails alongside the roads of Phuket.

The coconut palm shouldn't be thought of as just another beach bum, though. These things will grow wherever you tell them to on this island. If you find a coconut lying around that has a green shoot poking out of it, stick it in the ground with the shoot pointing up, water it and wait a few weeks. A coconut tree will rise up before your eyes. That's it. Can gardening get any easier than that?

The Royal Palm is also one of the easier palms to grow, either in the ground or in pots. If you do decide on the potted version, make sure that it's the biggest pot you can possibly find. I once had a palm that I had to re-pot three times, due to the number of pots that were destroyed by the tree, bursting the pot from the inside.

The last pot was so big it had to be ordered from Bangkok, and took three people to put it in

place. Several strong lads were required to lift the tree itself from its shattered former home, into its new spot. It actually took a crane to transfer it to its final home, as I gave up on the pot idea and went for terra firma. It's still there to this day.

There are dozens of other palm species that thrive here. A favorite with the older generation of Thais is the betel nut palm, the fruit of which has a mildly narcotic effect. If you've ever seen an older Thai lady with a huge, red-toothed grin, this could well be the reason. Nowadays, betel-nut chewing isn't as popular as it used to be, but the tree is still often planted because it grows so quickly.

Many owners of larger gardens favor the oil palm, which is grown commercially in huge plantations for the oil that comes from its fruit. This tree is massive, and not exactly the ideal candidate for the average balcony. A more suitable addition to a small terrace or similar spot would be the Golden Cane Palm.

This is the one that is usually seen in pots, two to three meters tall, multi-tufted in appearance with yellow-green leaves. It's an ideal big tree for a less-than-motivated gardener, as it's very forgiving and requires little work, just a little water every now and then.

Palms are pretty obvious on the island, but we do seem to overlook them.

They're not the most difficult things in the world to cultivate – let's just hope that not everyone needs to be in a drunken haze to appreciate them.

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Sphinx- and elephant-style burners, both available from Choke Kong Kum Earthenware.

Burning the aromatic midnight oil

It is common knowledge that aerosol air fresheners are not always environmentally friendly and that their fragrance is not very long-lived. But not everyone likes incense sticks or cones because they give off smoke and leave a trail of ash to clean up.

Nowadays heating "essential" oils is a popular way to perfume a room. The trick is to put some water with just a few drops of scented oil in the bowl above the tea candle and never let the water completely evaporate.

Katawaa store offers several kinds of incense oil burners,

most of which are ceramic. The largest one, with a wooden base, costs 990 baht. The medium-sized burner costs 790 baht and the small-sized one, priced at 690 baht, features a tea-candle holder with a handle to make it easy to insert below the bowl.

Conveniently, the store also sells a variety of essential oils for 120 baht to 390 baht each. The tea candles come in packs of 10 for 50 baht and packs of 50 for 240 baht.

Choke Kong Kum Earthenware sells ceramic, earthenware and cement incense oil burners in the shapes of elephants, pha-

rahs, pyramids and mosques. It also offers hanging incense oil burners. Prices range from 250 baht to 350 baht.

Katawaa is located on the 2nd floor of the Sea Breeze Zone at Central Festival Phuket. For more information, contact Krongkarn Chaikit at Tel: 01-8485224 or visit the website www.katawaa.com

Choke Kong Kum Earthenware is located on Tilok-Uthit 2 Rd, T. Talad Yai, A. Muang, Phuket. For more information, contact Thanyanan Chaiyasuk at Tel: 06-6483585.



A 690-baht model (left) from Katawaa, and (right) a burner costing 790 baht.

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Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

6-BEDROOM HOUSE



Owner is selling an exclusive, top-quality 6-bedroom house located near Phuket FantaSea in Kamala, 1.5km from the beach and next to a beautiful, natural lake. The house has all the facilities you need – a European-Thai kitchen, large living-dining room with pantry-bar; 2 bedrooms on the ground floor and 4 bedrooms on the 1st floor with en-suite bathroom; a large attic, hot water supplied by solar heating system, own well and drinking water, etc. Large, mature garden with outdoor Jacuzzi. Chanote title. The total land area: 1,180sqm. 90,000 baht net rental income until August 2006. Price: 18 million baht. Please contact Franz Brun in Chalong at Tel: 076-282737, 01-4761415 or Email: fbrun@loxinfo.co.th

BEST SEA VIEW

200 square wah plot with Nor Sor 3 Gor title. A really good sea view and road; building permitted. Nice neighborhood with good people, plus waterfall and jungle. Price: 3.5 million baht. For sale by owner. Seriously interested persons only, please contact for info. Tel: 01-8025420. Email: thureewan@hotmail.com

PRIME BEACH FRONT

For sale, located near the end of Karon Beach. This 7-rai plot with Chanote title deed is separated from the beach by only the road. Ideal for hotel, bungalow resort, condominium or housing project. No agents please. Please contact Tel: 01-8942733 or Email: jasminconsulting@gmx.net

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KATA SEAVIEW HOUSE



A large, 250sqm house with a pool, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a Western-style teak kitchen, teak doors and ceilings, on a quiet hillside. Asking 10 million baht or offers. Contact for details. Tel: 09-5926890. Email: north8west98@yahoo.com

BEACH APARTMENTS

Spacious, modern, 2-bedroom apartments, some with a sea view, a 2-minute walk to the beach, gardens, pools, clubhouse, gym, sauna. Prices start from 8.5 million baht. On-site sales office. Tel: 06-2806624. See our website at: www.bangtaobeachgardens.com

NEW VILLA WITH POOL

Thai style, 395sqm. Superb, quiet location with best view atop a hill. One-rai plot overlooking Loch Palm Golf Course and Kathu Valley. Within minutes of major shopping centers, boat/yacht clubs and hospitals, yet just 15 minutes to the beach and 3km to international school. Asking 20 million baht. Please call Noi. Tel: 07-2698492.

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Superbly-built family house for sale in a nice location. For more details and pictures, please see our website at: www.phukethouse.info

KATA LAND PLOTS

900m to the beach. Prices from 1.3 million baht. Please contact Tel: 01-0918908. Email: katabeachestate@hotmail.com

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The Estate Beachfront "intelligent investment"

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Crowne Plaza Residences "affordable beachside luxury"

- all apartments have ocean views, just 1 minute walk to the beach
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Nice 2-story house, approximately 140sqm, fully decorated + 5 air conditioners. Located in safe area in Kata. Company and financing available. Asking 4.5 million baht (90,000 Euros). Please contact for more details. Tel: 01-7888280. Email: mauram7@hotmail.com

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A 5-bedroom, 4-bathroom, house with pool and quality finishes, at Phuket Country Club, with beautiful fairway and lake views. Includes membership. Asking 18 million. Please contact for details. Tel: 06-2772691.

NICE POOL VILLAS FOR SALE



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Property Gazette

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Brand-new, deluxe house with a swimming pool on a Patong hillside, Soi Manee. 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

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FOR SALE

New, furnished villa with 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a lounge, dining room, air conditioner, UBC, hot showers and a tropical garden, in a fantastic location in quiet private estate, 2 minutes to sea, 5 minutes to Phuket City. Genuine valuation 3.9 million baht. For quick sale, asking 2.6 million baht. No time wasters. Please contact owner, Paul. Tel: 06-2833227.

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RAWAI SEA VIEW

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10 minutes from Phuket City, this fully furnished house has 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, family room, spacious living room, Western-style kitchen, Thai kitchen, dining room. Overlooking a golf course, it comes with a swimming pool and spa. Price: 27 million baht. Tel: 06-2726508.

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Property Gazette

Properties For Rent

PATONG BLUE POINT



A green oasis in Baan Suan Kumnan, just outside lovely, but hectic, central Patong. Go for wine and dinner in the party town, but sleep relaxed in the green area. 1- & 2-bedroom apartments with air conditioning, UBC, TV. Long-term rent only, includes electricity. Please call Edwin for more information. Tel: 06-7866350.

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40 square meters. Air conditioning, 2 phone lines, ADSL, security and fire alarm. Asking 21,500 baht per month including service maintenance. A 3-year lease is available. Please contact. Tel: 01-9586805. Email: phuketsecurity@csloxinfo.com

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in Kathu. New, fully furnished house with 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, living room, kitchen, hot water, air conditioning, phone line and car park; has its own water well. Asking 15,000 baht per month. Tel: 06-9427022, 01-6630665. Email: diabloet@hotmail.com

DETACHED BUNGALOW

in Rawai. A beautifully furnished, brand-new home with 3 bedrooms, a full kitchen and lovely gardens with a swimming pool. Long-term rental only for 50,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-345-081, 01-9241447.

OCEAN VIEW APT

Located in Patong. Fully furnished and fitted out; has 2 bedrooms. For long-term rental only. 25,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447.

PATONG PENTHOUSE

A lovely 80sqm fully furnished unit with a sea view plus a 20sqm pool. Includes 1 bedroom, a lounge and kitchen. Asking 25,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447.

DETACHED HOUSES



Four new detached houses for rent at Pa Khlok, just 5km from an international school. Each has 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, in a quiet area with clubhouse and 24-hour security. Asking 13,000 baht per month. Tel: 04-8516115. Email: suksavat@hotmail.com

PROPERTY FOR RENT

Beautiful, new 2-bedroom villa, 2 minutes to Rawai Beach. Meets European standards, fully furnished, fully air-conditioned. Includes swimming pool, tropical garden, covered parking, UBC, TV and telephone. Minimum 6 months at 28,000 baht per month. Tel: 07-8845677.

KARON H₂O FRONT

Condo. 103sqm, 1 bedroom, all brand-new western appliances and 2 balconies with 180 degree sea view. Long-term rent only. Email: wawrx999@yahoo.com

HOUSE FOR RENT

A fully furnished, 3-bedroom house with a small garden in Land & Houses Park, Chalong, for long-term rent. Only 15,000 baht per month. Please call for further info. Tel: 01-2712825.

HOUSE FOR RENT

in Chalong. 36sqm, 1 bedroom, 1 bathroom, quiet, car parking, unfurnished. 3,000 baht per month with 1 month's deposit. Tel: 09-7264498.

4-BEDROOM HOUSE

for rent. Land & Houses Park, green outlook, mature garden, phone, fully air conditioned, etc. Furnished or unfurnished. Long term preferred. Tel: 01-7192458. Email: marks@phuket.ksc.co.th

THAI-STYLE HOUSE

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Property Wanted

Land Wanted

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Accommodation Available

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Lake-view apartments in Kathu. Fully furnished with aircon, fridge, cable TV, hot water and car park. Rent 200 baht a day. Tel: 076-202585, 09-1968449. Email: ketmaneeclayton61@hotmail.com

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Apartments. Central Patong 1- and 2-bedroom apartments. Please contact for more information. Email: suites247@yahoo.com

MODERN APARTMENT with Internet. 2-bedroom apartment off Nanai Rd, fully furnished incl. TV, large fridge, hot water, fans, aircon and kitchenette; from 8,500 baht/month for long term; ADSL Internet available. Tel: 07-2650652. Email: gisbert1@gmx.net

Accommodation Wanted

NOT MORE THAN

20,000 baht/month. Unfurnished or partially furnished detached house wanted in Chalong/ Rawai/ Phuket City area, for a quiet family of 3. At least 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. Privacy in the neighborhood preferred. Must have phone line for ADSL. Email selection with photos for viewing. Email: pantomine_horse@yahoo.com

VILLA/APARTMENT

I am looking for a villa or an apartment with 2 bedrooms and a kitchen. It is for a stay of minimum 3 months. The accommodation needs to have a WI-FI-connection or at least a regular ADSL connection. Location could be anywhere in Phuket. Tel: 46-462883846. Email: ekim9999@hotmail.com

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Wine Connection Chalong needs a musical act, preferably a jazz/rock/dance act for Saturdays starting in January. Please send your CV by email or contact for more information. Tel: 076-282411. Email: gmphuket@wineconnection.co.th

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Online travel/golf magazine based in Costa Rica seeks a copy editor with experience on a US newspaper or magazine and solid AP-style knowledge. Work from anywhere. Expats welcome. www.golfpublisher.com/jobs/forms/re-writer-researcher.htm

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Good pay for the right person! A Western family with 3 girls is looking for a nice full-time helper (live out) in Chalong/Land & Houses area. English ability and love for kids essential. Contact for details. Tel: 076-378-002, 07-8927664, or Email: alexandramenzel1968@yahoo.de

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Due to expansion, we now have two permanent positions available, both with excellent opportunities for advancement. Applicants must have good written and spoken English and basic computer skills. A love of the outdoors and a driving license are advantages. Starting salary is between 7,000 baht and 10,000 baht a month. Please contact for details. Tel: 076-232960, or 01-4544058. Fax: 076-232961. Email: info@sailing-thailand.com

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

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ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT WANTED

Group 4 Securicor requires an Administrative Assistant with computer experience, especially using Microsoft Excel. For details, please contact Chris Benn. Tel: 076-354761, 09-8144-584. Fax: 076-354726. Email: chris.benn@th.g4s.com

SECRETARY

wanted. Real estate agent needs a Thai lady to run the office. Perfect English and computer skills required. Good salary for motivated person. Please send CV by email or contact for more information. Tel: 04-8423992. Email: info@tropical-homes.net

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Needed immediately! Rapidly expanding online clothing company needs a dependable person to work full-time. Must be fluent in English, type 45 words per minute, be Internet/computer literate and detail-oriented. Good salary. Please contact K. Robert for more info. Tel: 04-7230575.

DIVESHOP STAFF

Diving license and high school qualification not necessary, but must speak English. Tel: 09-8749147.

INTERNET STAFF IN RAWAI

Looking for Thai women, 18-35 years of age, with fair English skills & computer knowledge: 1 full-time, 1 part-time. Tel: 076-288-808, 01-8924282. Email: rudi542001@yahoo.de

MANY POSITIONS

Buildersmart will open on Phuket soon. Many positions are available: drivers/loaders, warehouse staff/storekeepers/sales/administration. Female candidates welcome. Qualifications: diploma/certificate or higher, able to use Internet, knowledge of construction materials. Tel: 02-6831703-5. Fax: 02-294-1191. Email: yosawadee@buildersmart.com

THAI STAFF NEEDED

Muay Thai & MMA Training camp is looking for Thai staff. 1) Assistant Manager: able to speak English. 2) Bookkeeper: must know QuickBooks. 3) Housekeeper. Tel: 09-163-8166. Email: vjnon04@yahoo.com

STAFF WANTED

2 staff members for a sandwich and baguette restaurant in Karon and 1 staff member for driving motorbike with sidecar. Tel: 04-8459510. Email: alexanderkbh@mail.com

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Moby Dick Adventures requires a full-time Swedish-speaking Cruise Director/Snorkel Guide for daily excursions. Email: patrick@liveaboard-thailand.com For further details, please see our website at: www.liveaboard-thailand.com/cruise.htm

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Seeking a Thai-speaking nanny/housekeeper for a full-time position. You do not need to speak English. Must be good with young children and reliable/honest. Please contact. Tel: 09-6452576. Email: jaynema@loxinfo.co.th

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Tout, Trader & Trumpet

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Big, full-size upright piano. Looks new. Comes with foot pedals, pressure keys, hydraulic closer, nice chair and full options, including built-in heater and hygrometer. Checked every year. For quick sale at only 130,000 baht (from 250,000 baht.) Please contact Mrs Linly, Tel: 076-292670, 06-6897113. Email: psonthikun@yahoo.com

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A child's car seat is required for 1-2 year old. Pls contact me if you have or know of one for sale. Tel: 06-9447721. Email: maxandgodders@csloxinfo.com

Bulletins

Alcoholics Anonymous

is holding meetings in English at the following places:

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Mission Hospital
on Wed and Sun at 7 pm

Bangkok Phuket Hospital
on Fri at 7 pm

Patong
Patong Hospital
on Mon, Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun
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regatta. Jan 27 to 31. Anybody who wants to come sailing please contact me. Tel: 076-383080, 06-9401860. Fax: 076-381934. Email: bigasail@samart.co.th

Business Opportunities

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Located in Karon, close to Crown Plaza and Phutthi Resort, 2 rooms, 2 kitchens, wooden chairs and tables. Asking 350,000 baht + rent. Please contact for more info. Tel: 07-8874626. Email: goldai@freenet.de

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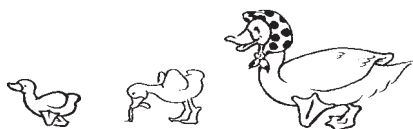
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DELL P3 + MONITOR
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