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IN THIS ISSUE

NEWS: Get your smart ID cards – Mayor; B253m budget for tourism. **Pages 2 & 3**

INSIDE STORY: Are Phuket hotels ready for another tsunami? **Pages 4 & 5**

AROUND THE ISLAND: Children's Day in pictures. **Page 8**

AROUND THE REGION: Too little, too late? Policing Samui. **Page 10**

PEOPLE: Weddings; Off the Wall. **Pages 12 & 13**

LIFESTYLE: Running out of ideas; Letting fly at the mosquito squadron. **Pages 14 & 15**

SPA MAGIC: A slice of bliss at Blue Canyon. **Page 18**

AFTER DARK: Rock City nights and daze. **Page 19**

FIRST PERSON: A child's thoughts. **Page 27**

BUSINESS & MONEY TALKS **Pages 30 & 31**

SPORT & LEISURE: Phang Nga Bay Regatta; Darts; Top golfer visits Laguna; Cricket. **Pages 32 & 33**

PROPERTY: Gardening; Decor: Bonsai trees; Home of the Week: Surin; Construction: Turtle Cove. **Pages 34-37**

PLUS

QUEER NEWS 6; THE TIME MACHINE, PHUKET DIARY 7; AROUND THE NATION 11; HAPPENINGS 16; NOTABLE DATES 17; THAILAND TRAVELER 20; TAKE A BREAK 21 & 22; OUTSIDE IN, BOOKS 23; MOTORING, HOROSCOPES 24; TOWNINGS, TOON TOWN 25; EDITORIAL, LETTERS 26; ISSUES & ANSWERS 27; COMPUTERS 28; CLASSIFIEDS 38-48.

TAT governor vows to push TG to boost flights

By Alasdair Forbes

LAGUNA PHUKET: Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Juthamas Siriwan on January 19 stepped into the lions' den – a room at the Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket filled with hoteliers and property industry figures.

Many of them have in the past been less than impressed with the TAT's support for the tourism industry in the tsunami-hit provinces, some vocally so.

But K. Juthamas came out of the meeting in one piece and smelling of roses.

A surprise pledge by K. Juthamas to push for Thai Airways International (THAI) to provide more direct international flights to Phuket, in particular to and from Hong Kong, Australia and Japan, all major sources of tourists for Phuket, eased the delegates' concerns.

"It seems to me from what I have heard here that there are tourists who want to come, but there are no flights. If we see the potential from Australia, say, or from Hong Kong, instead of [using the TAT's] budget for advertising, we [will] support THAI and you [will] do the marketing," she suggested.

Laguna Phuket's Joint Managing Director James Batt, who convened the meeting, described this as "a very good idea", and explained to K. Juthamas, "We are all sitting here with the budgets to go out and do tactical advertising in these [markets].

"The difficulty is getting the flights. If we can give financial



TAT Governor Juthamas Siriwan (left) listens as Laguna boss James Batt (center) and others discuss solutions to Phuket's ailing tourism.

support [to THAI], then the rest of it will follow.

"In a way, [the TAT] is not even spending money within 'Thailand Inc' – the money's going from one pocket [the TAT] into another [THAI]. It's a beautiful solution."

He said that if the TAT would cooperate with THAI, and if the hotels would work together with tour agents overseas, then this could break the current deadlock that sees THAI unwilling to make more seats available without having guarantees that it can fill them – and agents unable to book tourists for holidays because seats are not available.

"I will talk with my partner, Thai International," K. Juthamas

said, "to help give you more flights, but you have to tell me which routes you want first or second, and so on... I sit as an adviser to the board of THAI."

Not everyone was as upbeat as K. Juthamas and Mr Batt, however. Maitree Narukatpichai, Owner's Representative of the Hilton Phuket Arcadia, was dubious.

"We have been to a lot of meetings and until now, everything is still the same. I don't see any impact for Phuket," he said.

But the general mood was summed up by Evason General Manager Alasdair Junor, who said, "We're here to move forward. I think that it's a terrific strategy if we formalize it."

Monorail project would cost B20bn – consultant

PHUKET: A consultant to the Phuket Provincial Government said today that his company estimates that a proposed monorail light rail transit (LRT) system linking Phuket International Airport and Phuket City would cost 20 billion baht.

Krai Tungsanga, President of Pyramid Development International Co (PDI), explained that a feasibility study into the LRT proposal began in October last year and will continue until May this year.

In its first report to Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura on November 17 last year, PDI proposed an LRT system that would consist of a loop through the Patong area to Phuket City, and then through Thalang back to the airport.

POWER

However, as K. Krai explained at the Governor's weekly CEO meeting, the part of the route linking with Patong would be extremely difficult to develop because it would require the purchase of large amounts of private land.

A huge amount of power would also be needed to propel the train over hills.

He recommended instead that the LRT route run only between the airport and Phuket City.

He said, "Our study shows that because the 40km distance is already connected by a four-lane road [with median strip], the LRT system could be built down the middle of the road and would

Continued on page 2

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Get your smart card, urges the Mayor

By Nattamon Ratcharak

PHUKET CITY: Phuket City Municipality is now offering "smart card" ID cards, providing citizens with a replacement for old identification cards.

Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana explained at a press conference, "People who have a valid ID card can request a smart card by submitting their

existing ID card and a copy of their house registration.

"A 40-baht fee will cover both a database check and the new card.

"If people don't want a smart card immediately they can keep their old ID card until it expires and then submit it, in which case there will be no fee. Smart cards are valid for six years."

K. Somjai continued, "The

cards can store a lot of personal information. Later, it will also be capable of being used as an ATM card.

The cards have a 13-digit ID number and house registration details from the Department of Local Administration in the Ministry of Interior.

"In the future we plan to have the card linked to other databases with information about



social security and driving license details, but we'll have to wait a bit for that.

"When all the data from other units is ready, we can link

them up and have the ideal smart card. Many people have requested this project and it comes as an answer to a great need," she added.

Blood supplies running low

PHUKET CITY: Stocks of O-type blood – both negative and positive – on the island have dropped to alarming levels, prompting Somchay Chodchaisiri, President of the Phuket Blood Donor Club, based at Vachira Phuket Hospital, to put out an urgent call for more donors.

"We have nearly run out of supplies in Phuket," he told the *Gazette*. "Operations are sometimes canceled if stocks are too low, but we cannot predict what emergencies may occur."

K. Somchay invited everyone – Thais and foreigners, residents and tourists – to donate.

"You could save someone's life," he said.

Tel: 01-4159176 or 076-369188 for more information.

–Nattamon Ratcharak



PILE UP: Police and local people were left scratching their heads over which of the laws of physics came into play in this

accident, outside the Karon home of Bernd Hentschel and his wife Jam Jun Tejamang, late in the evening of January 13. Witnesses said that the driver of the tuk-tuk, who appeared to be racing with another, lost control and smashed into Mr Hentschel's parked Mira car, ramming it sideways by 10 meters. But just how the tuk-tuk managed to climb atop the car is still a mystery. The tuk-tuk driver was injured and was taken to hospital, but no one else was hurt.

Photo: Georg Thiess

TAT predicts 5m visitors, B80b revenue in 2006

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: Occupancy rates at four- and five-star hotels have averaged about 80% since the tsunami anniversary, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is now predicting that five million people will visit Phuket in 2006, generating some 80 billion baht in revenue.

Siripakorn Cheawsamoot, Assistant Director of TAT's Region 4 Office in Phuket, told the *Gazette* that occupancy rates had remained "satisfactory" at around 80% since the first anniversary of the tsunami.

With strong demand expected in the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibition market (the "Mice" market) when the high season begins to wind down after March, the TAT expects an average occupancy rate of 70% in four- and five-star hotels during the coming low season.

K. Siripakorn said the bullish low-season figures could be achieved if hotels and other businesses "add value" to their products.

As an example, he said they could offer "stay two nights, and get one night free" packages.

Currently the largest sources of tourists as determined by the frequency of scheduled and charter flights are in Europe, especially Britain, Germany and Sweden. Other important sources are Russia, South Korea and Australia, he said.

In 2004, 4.7 million tourists visited the island, generating approximately 85 billion baht in revenue.

Although the figures plummeted by about 40% in 2005 in the aftermath of the tsunami, the TAT expects a rebound this year, with figures higher than those of 2004.

QUANTITY

Package tourism is predicted to play an important role.

"We can't focus only on 'quality' tourists. We also need to think about quantity," K. Siripakorn said.

"We expect to get about five million tourists in 2006, generating some 80 million baht in revenue."

Helping to bring this about would be a series of TAT roadshows to Australia, Hong Kong and South Korea, he added.

Monorail project 'would cost B20bn'

From page 1

not require the purchase of additional land.

"This route could provide a service to match the standard of any international city."

K. Krai estimated that building the LRT would cost 1 billion baht per kilometer for sloping areas of land and 500 million baht per kilometer for flat land.

These figures include basic infrastructure, LRT stations, and lighting and control systems.

"The one-way LRT ticket price would probably be 100 baht or more. Public hearings to determine whether or not the Phuket public favors an LRT system on the island are planned for March and April this year," K. Krai said.

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4 arrested over forged credit cards



Shops in Phuket must look at credit cards very carefully: Pol Maj Gen Suchat Muankaew.

PHUKET: Four people were arrested January 12 on charges of possessing forged credit cards.

The four are Tanapol Detpalit, 45, from Ang Thong Province; Ubonrat Pinket, 47, from Ayudhya; Pornpan Poolpakdee, 25, from Phuket; and Wong Mun Bin, 27, from Malaysia.

At a press conference, Deputy Commissioner of the Central Investigation Bureau Pol Maj Gen Suchat Muankaew explained, "They were arrested at a restaurant in Rassada on charges of possessing forged electronic cards."

"They were also found in possession of 40 credit cards, seven mobile phones, four gold necklaces, a gold bracelet, six gold rings, a locket, five small gilded Buddha images, two car stereo systems, two bankbooks and a new Toyota Vios car."

"All of the property was bought from shops in Phuket, using fake credit cards."

All four admitted to the offenses, and were taken into custody to await trial, he said.

Gen Suchat added, "Owners and salespeople of shops in Phuket must look at credit cards very carefully. The fakes these people had look very much like the real thing."

Also at the press conference were the National Commander of the Tourist Police, Pol Maj Gen Panya Maman, and the Commander of the Phuket Provincial Police, Pol Maj Gen Decha Budnampeth.

Gov orders stray roundup postponed

PHUKET CITY: The Phuket Provincial Livestock Office (PPLO) has postponed indefinitely its plan to round up hundreds of stray dogs at island beaches and hold them at the Mid Road Dog Shelter in Thalang.

At a meeting chaired by Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura at Phuket Provincial Hall on January 13, the Governor called again for closer co-operation among government agencies and the island's animal welfare groups.

He said he wants everyone to work together to sterilize stray dogs as a way of ultimately reducing their population on the island.

"We are all working toward the same objective, which is to reduce the number of stray dogs," he reminded the gathering.

The meeting was attended by PPLO chief Sunart Wongchawalit and animal activists including Athena Cant and Dr Waraporn Namket of the Phuket Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), Margot Homburg Park of the Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) and Supharn Last, Regional Manager of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).

The Governor called the meeting at the request of the SDF and WSPA, following a poorly attended meeting of local government

officials last month at which it was announced that strays would be rounded up at popular tourist beaches and taken to the shelter.

The beach round-up plan was later scrapped because the shelter already houses some 430 animals – not far from the 500-dog limit earlier imposed by the Governor.

Whereas the PPLO has the authority to deal with the stray dog problem, its efforts have been hampered by a lack of co-operation from local administrative bodies and by poor funding. The PPLO shelter, which has just a handful of staff, faces a chronic funding problem that makes buying food for the dogs an ongoing worry.

The SDF representatives told the meeting that the foundation had raised "a lot" of money, and presented a proposal that it either take over operations at the Mid Road Dog Shelter or establish a shelter and clinic of its own.

The group currently employs 15 permanent staff and eight part-time staff, some of whom would be relocated to the Mid Road Dog Shelter if the SDF were given permission to take over the facility, the meeting heard.

At the meeting, K. Sunart said that it was difficult for his officials to join the SDF field clinics because his agency was never told when they would take place. He also stressed that the exact financial obligation of animal welfare groups to the Mid Road Dog Shelter needs to be clearly established before they are allowed to set up operations there.

Before closing the meeting, the Governor announced he would set up and head a panel that would include representatives of the PPLO, WSPA, SDF and other animal welfare groups.

Cabinet okays B253m for Phuket tourism

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: The Cabinet has allocated a 253-million-baht budget to Phuket for the development of tourism in 2006, the Governor's Office announced on Thursday, January 12.

Dog digs up dead baby at Saphan Hin

PHUKET CITY: A stray dog dug up the body of a baby boy next to the tsunami warning tower at Saphan Hin on January 11.

Pol Lt Col Yongyuth Kongmalai, Inspector at Phuket City Police Station, told the *Gazette* that he received a phone call from a jogger at Saphan Hin saying that a beach cleaner had stopped her to say that she had discovered the body of baby boy wrapped in a purple soccer shirt.

After the police arrived they ascertained that a stray dog had unearthed the body.

"I took the body for autopsy at Vachira Phuket Hospital and we found that it weighed just 1.5 kilos. It was very small," Lt Col Yongyuth said.

"I'm not sure why the baby was buried there. It could have been the result of an abortion [illegal under normal circumstances in Thailand], or it could have been stillborn, but we will investigate. The shirt we found was from a *tambon* soccer team in Trang Province, so we shall be asking them about it," he added.

– Sangkhae Leelanaporn

Krabi received 284 million baht and Phang Nga 252 million for the same purpose.

Phuket had proposed several projects requiring additional funding that were turned down by the central government, including two major efforts: burying power cables along the beachfront in Patong and building a new Sarasin Bridge.

Patong Deputy Mayor Charat Sukbal explained to the *Gazette* that the municipality's plan to dig up an area alongside the Thawee Wong Rd sidewalk and bury the cables – which would cost 330 million baht – is on hold.

He said, "When you consider how much money Patong rakes in, and how much having the electrical cables underground

would benefit tourists and residents, it's disappointing that this project has once again not been supported by the central government."

Phuket Provincial Highways Office (PPHO) Chief Thanit Sakiya said that the PPHO has decided to demolish the existing Sarasin Bridge and build a new one high enough to allow yachts to sail under it.

He explained that the proposal passed an environmental impact assessment in December last year.

K. Thanit said that the Department of Highways in Bangkok approved in principle a 452-million-baht budget for the new bridge, but has yet to decide when construction will start.

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Could Phuket hotels cope with another tsunami?

Dr Smith Thammasaroj, head of the National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC), appears to court controversy.

He was dismissed as a scaremonger and forced out of his former post as Director-General of the Meteorological Department after he issued tsunami warnings in 1993 and 1998, following strong earthquakes at sea.

In neither case was Thailand affected, although a wave that followed the 1998 'quake killed some 2,000 people in Papua New Guinea.

In March, 2005, he said that Thailand's investigation – were one even to be conducted – into whether the Meteorological Department failed in its duty to warn people about the December 26, 2004, tsunami would never be made public.

"Did Suparek Thantiranawong, [the Director-General of the Met Department] know about [the impending tsunami]? I can't tell you the result, because 60 foreigners are eyeing to sue [the government]".

Dr Smith said that the government was in a "Catch-22" situation. If it claimed that the department did not know the tsunami was heading toward Thailand, that could be grounds for a dereliction-of-duty lawsuit. If it were found that officials did know the tsunami was coming, but did not warn the public, that would also lead to a lawsuit, he said.

"Either way, they can sue us. And these *farang* love to sue," he said.

His statements last December 27 about Phuket hotels' preparedness caused one hotel General Manager, who asked to remain anonymous, to question Dr Smith's motives.

"Just what is his agenda?" the GM asked. "Is he being paid by the Thai government or by the Tourism Office of Malaysia?"

"His most recent comments are a kick in the teeth for the tourism industry [on Phuket], especially the ones who have laid down plans for what to do in the event of a disaster, of which he seems to be ignorant."

Uttapol Wongtaveewithayakun, the Human Resources Manager of the 41-bedroom Salathai Resort & Spa, Patong Beach, told the *Gazette* of his resort's evacuation plans.

"First, our hotel is close to one of the warning sirens on Patong Beach, and we are confident that, should it sound, all of our guests inside the building could hear, as well as, of course, those outside. However, we won't just rely on that; we'll supplement the siren by first telephoning all the guest rooms and then knocking on the doors."

"Some guests might, after all, have had a few drinks," K. Uttapol added.

He said that the resort's swimming pool will be the muster point before guests are evacuated further inland or, if time does not permit in the case of a tsunami, to the hotel's fourth floor. Emergency boxes containing first aid kits, flashlights and water have been prepared.

Newspapers from Azerbaijan to South Africa to Mexico reported Dr Smith Thammasaroj's recent opinions regarding the preparedness of Phuket hotels in the event of another tsunami. Speaking on December 27, 2005, he said, "At the moment, they (hotels) do not even have a map or instructions to tell the guests what to do in a tsunami." The impact of this statement caused concern among tourists and anger among hoteliers on Phuket. The *Gazette's* Andy Johnstone and Nattamon Ratcharak conducted an unscientific qualitative survey and asked a number of hoteliers the simple question: are you ready for another tsunami?

"Our staff have been trained – some have undertaken professional training in disaster preparedness – and, day and night, duty staff are assigned roles and responsibilities for any emergency situation."

Rachin Thongmakkun, GM of the Patong Bay Garden Resort, Committee Member of the Patong Hotels Club (PHC) and Vice-President of the Southern Hotels Association, said that his hotel, too, has a raft of plans to deal with emergency situations, including a tsunami.

"Our hotel, which has information, including maps of evacuation routes for different situations, in all of the guest rooms, conducts routine drills and training in conjunction with other hotels in Patong, but the PHC would like to see more hotels joining in," he said.

Further south along the coast, Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort at Karon Noi Beach and its sister hotel, Le Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club at Nai Harn Beach, have well-laid plans.

Jayne MacDougall, Health & Safety (H&S) Director Thailand Resorts, explained that she has adapted the Meridien emergency procedures to include a tsunami.

"The lower floors of the Beach Resort were devastated



Jayne MacDougall, Health & Safety Director, Le Meridien Thailand Resorts, 'We have a lot of lives to take care of.'

by the tsunami," Ms MacDougall said. "As soon as was practicable after the tsunami, we assessed how to deal with the threat of another tsunami."

"The Beach Resort reopened in August, and one of the issues we knew to be critical to our tsunami preparedness was how we would be advised of an approaching tsunami."

She explained that Karon Noi Beach – also referred to as Relax Bay – is quite isolated and this is part of the resort's attraction.

"But, despite two letters to Kata-Karon Municipality requesting that a disaster warning tower be installed here, we have heard nothing. We have installed two towers with sirens ourselves,

at both ends of the beach here, which will be sounded if we receive a warning.

"This is a large – 470 bedrooms – hotel, and we knew that we had to take the initiative. We have a lot of lives to take care of."

Ms MacDougall said that she put in a request to the then fledgling NDWC in Nonthaburi to be linked to their fax alert system.

"We receive test transmissions via this medium every week, and someone is on hand around the clock, ready to intercept a warning fax as soon as it comes through, and we also have a reciprocal relationship with two hotels – one in Patong and one in Karon – that are close to the warning towers."

"If the sirens sound, these hotels will contact us. If we get the warning first, then we will contact them, and the Yacht Club, naturally."

The Beach Resort has produced a dedicated booklet detailing in English, Thai, French, German, Italian, Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Korean what a tsunami is, what the early indications of one may be, and what to do in the event of a warning being given.

"The booklet is there if people want to familiarize themselves with it, although it seems that some people just put it to one side. Perhaps they don't want to think about it too much – that's one of the reasons why we don't have the tsunami evacuation signs

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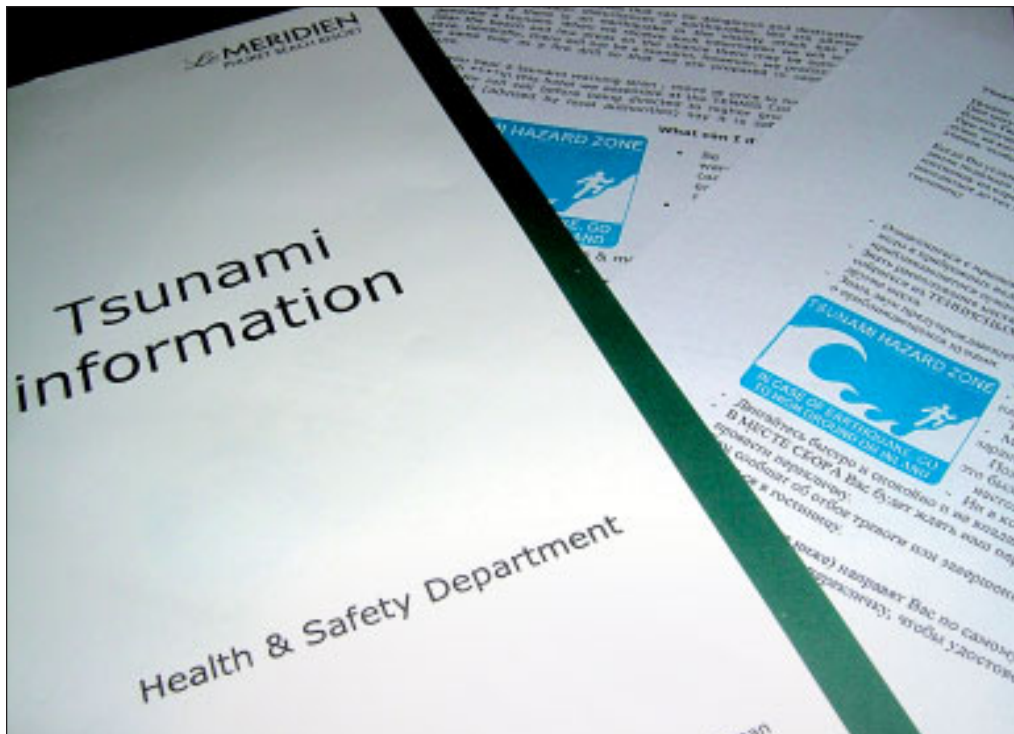
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Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort has produced a dedicated booklet in many languages, and has a detailed evacuation plan.

permanently affixed to the walls.

"We have found that many people are taking the brochure home with them as a souvenir. They might do the same with the signs."

Staff on each shift are assigned duties not only for tsunami warnings, but also for any other type of disaster. Emergency boxes have been prepared and a protocol for evacuating guests and staff away from the resort has been established. Staff drill regularly and are encouraged to undergo specialist disaster-preparedness training.

"The plans for the Yacht Club are not the same, because of the different layout of that hotel and the geography of Nai Harn Beach. There will eventually be two disaster-warning sirens down at that beach, but [Le Meridien] will continue with its own systems both there and at the Beach Resort."

JW Marriott Resort & Spa Phuket on Mai Khao Beach – and the group as a whole – also has well-established policies for dealing with all manner of disasters.

Speaking from Singapore, Lee Sutton, Director of Public Relations Asia/Australia, told the *Gazette* that the Phuket resort, which is some five kilometers from the nearest disaster warning siren, is soon to be linked to

the NDWC fax-alert system. In the interim it is in daily contact with the Thai Meteorological Office and other relevant authorities, as well as with other hotels on the island.

"We have border security patrols on the perimeter of the property, which includes the beach, and a full team on property security specialists," said Ms Sutton, "and we conduct quarterly emergency evacuation drills – not specifically for a tsunami, but for any emergency such as fire or flood."

FEEDBACK

"We have always prepared and practiced for disasters, not just since the tsunami."

The resort advises its guests in advance of any drill, and encourages feedback, which Ms Sutton says is positive.

"Marriott's – in this particular case the Phuket resort's – experience of disaster preparedness was put to the test on December 26, 2004," said Ms Sutton. "The then-GM of Marriott Phuket received many compliments from guests afterward as to how calm, professional, efficient and helpful our staff were."

Thanachok Bunthong, GM of Layan Beach Resort & Spa,

echoes the comment from Ms MacDougall of Le Meridien Resorts that reminders of the prospect of a tsunami may be uncomfortable.

"We have an evacuation plan and used to drill our staff, but not for some time; it's too serious for some people and might jog too many bad memories. We want lives to return to normal."

This concern for the feelings of staff and guests is in many ways entirely natural. The tourism industry is picking itself back up, but the idea of a tsunami – rammed into the collective consciousness so terribly 13 months ago – remains relatively new here.

Phuket and other coastal resort regions have not had the years of exposure to the tsunami threat or reality that, for example, Hawaii has – it even boasts a tsunami museum and resource center next to swish hotels.

There, tsunami warning signs and drills are a part of everyday life, but in Phuket, emotions are perhaps still too raw.

Rolf Opitz, GM of the Amora Beach Resort at Bang Tao Beach, said, "I don't like to talk about our [emergency] system and evacuation plans with staff too much because they all want to forget about [the tsunami]."

"Keeping it, or the prospect of another one, in their minds too much and making them worry about it might result in them 'transferring' their fears to our guests," he added.

He said, however, that plans are discussed and practiced with staff "...every three or six months".

"The Amora suffered no loss of life during the tsunami. It is, thankfully, safely above sea level. But one of the problems in the Bang Tao area is that we do not have a disaster warning siren nearby. How can we – and the residents in this area, especially the fishing villages and other re-

sorts – find out that a tsunami warning has been given?

"We have to find the balance between making people aware, but not scared."

This *Gazette* investigation is – because it would be almost impossible to discuss in detail the disaster preparedness of every hotel on the island – a snapshot.

Attitudes among hoteliers in some cases err on the side of caution by not wishing to upset guests and staff, while others are far more open about it and rightly pride themselves on their plans, for which many guests are grateful.

It appears that Dr Smith may have made his controversial remarks on December 27 without discussing the topic with either hoteliers on Phuket or the NDWC, which would have been able to advise him of hotels already linked to its fax-alert system.

Had he done so, Phuket might have been spared yet more negative column inches.

The last word goes to the GM who wished to remain anonymous. "The cliché that 'All publicity is good publicity' is a myth. Dr Smith might very well have set [Phuket's] tourism industry recovery back another year with what he said."

"We – all hotels here – must now work even harder to make up for any damage done by his comments. But if it means that our guests, and prospective guests, feel more secure about coming here, then it's worth it."

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Queer News

When three's not a crowd

TRAT: The guests, it has to be said, were taken aback by the wedding invitation, which announced the nuptials at Koh Chang of bridegroom Yeuifa Meelaap and two brides: Vassana Uysap and Jenny Saibua.

A wedding for a threesome was unusual, and all the more so when one realizes that the groom was also a woman.

Talking to reporters, the trio explained that K. Vassana, a mother of one child, and K. Jenny were very close friends, "sworn sisters", as they put it.

Together they ran Vassana Seafood on the holiday island of Koh Chang in Trat Province.

The groom, Yeuifa, ran the nearby Khunyoong Seafood restaurant.

Each, they said, was in love with the other two.

The groom followed tradition, paying a bride price of a 10-baht-weight gold necklace, 300,000 baht in cash and a car to each bride's family.

People at the ceremony admitted that it was unusual, but in no way objectionable.

The happy trio have now combined their businesses into the Vassana Seafood and Khunyoong Seafood Talay Pao Restaurant, and have moved into a house in nearby Rayong Province.

Source: Thai Rath



'WE LOVE PHUKET'

Catamaran *Chameleon*, a 48-footer, shows her true colors during the recent King's Cup race week, when she sported a 'We Love Phuket' sticker – incidentally, the largest one the *Phuket Gazette* has produced so far. Also displayed is the logo for PGTV, the *Gazette's* new cable television business.

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Patong Motorcycle Taximan Shot At Ao Makham

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of January 1996

PHUKET TOWN: Motorcycle taxi driver Sahat Wandu lay near death at press time after being shot at close range with a sawed-off shotgun and left for dead in a quiet soi across from the entrance to Thai Sarco's tin refinery near the Deep Sea Port at Ao Makham.

On duty on December 17, police officer Pairin Jamjumrat rushed to the scene where he found that emergency medical workers had already taken the victim to Phuket's public facility, Vachira Hospital. There, the 26-year-old Patong resident was waiting to be operated on by doctors after being shot once in the lower rib cage, but he was able to tell Officer Pairin details surrounding the incident before he went into surgery.

Sahat had been at his post outside the Visas Hotel in Patong that afternoon when a Thai man asked to be driven to Ao Makham.

After agreeing to a fare of 300 baht, Sahat took him there and was told to turn into the soi leading to Thai Sarco. They followed the soi to the refinery entrance, then turned into a wooded lane and went another 100 meters.

Waiting for them were two men. Sahat's passenger, still sitting behind him, then brought forth a sawed-off shotgun and leveled it against the taximan's ribs, demanding his gold. Sahat decided to fight for his property and was immediately shot. After relieving him of his four-baht-weight necklace, two-baht-weight bracelet, and wallet containing cash and documents, the trio of thieves vanished.

Across the street at the entrance to Thai Sarco, the security guard heard the shot and called to villagers in the area. They went to see what had happened and found Sahat in agony on the ground. They then called for medical help, and the police.

At press time, there was no word on suspects in the crime.

THE TIME machine

News from the past

Airport director removed after taxi driver's slaying

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of January 15-31, 2001

PHUKET: Suthara Huangsuwan, the boss of Phuket International Airport, was abruptly moved to a new post in Chiang Mai late last month.

Lt Cdr Boonchart Prompool, former director of the Airport Authority of Thailand's cargo division in Bangkok, has now replaced K. Suthara.

An airport official denied that the transfer was the result of his inability to solve the problem of "black" taxis at Phuket airport, which came to a head on December 16 when a limousine driver was beaten to death in a fight with an unlicensed driver.

The killing resulted in a protest by limousine drivers, which dispersed after their representa-

tives met with Phuket Governor Pongpayome Vasaputi. Amongst other demands, protestors pushed for the removal of Suthara.

Pracha Janpathrak, who was named acting director of the AAT in Phuket until K. Suthara's replacement arrived, told the *Gazette* that K. Suthara had been moved to Chiang Mai Airport on the instructions of the AAT Governor in Bangkok.

"He was not removed because of the protest. This was simply the time for him to be reassigned. He was not the only person transferred; about 15 other people from other provinces were also moved," K. Pracha explained.

K. Suthara worked at Phuket International Airport for 10 years. For the past three years, he was Airport Director.

Phuket Diary

January 21: President's Cup golf tournament. The Phuket Golf Association (PGA) annual President's Cup golf tournament at the Phuket Country Club starts at 11:30 am. Entry costs 2,000 baht per PGA member and 3,000 baht per non-member, or 500 baht for the Youth Flight.

For more information, contact K. Sak or K. Sirichai at Tel: 076-244820-2/321039-40.

Until February 11: Abstracts of Industry photo exhibition: The British Curriculum Interna-

tional School is hosting an exhibition of photographs by award-winning photographer Chris Swift, who is also a teacher there.

The exhibition, consists of abstract photos taken in Bangkok and Kanchanaburi of subjects ranging from boats and trains to a sugar mill.

The show, in the school foyer, is open from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, Monday to Friday.

For further information call Tel: 07-1129568, or Email: cswiftl@swift-mail.com or visit www.swift-images.com.



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A special day for the youngsters



Children's day, on January 14, was celebrated in dozens of places across the island. Clockwise, from top left: Painting is serious business; 'We decree every day will be Children's Day' – two girls take over the Governor's desk; 'That's heavy!' – getting to grips with a real gun belonging to the Royal Thai Navy; Dressed to impress; Wheeler-dealers play with an anti-aircraft gun.



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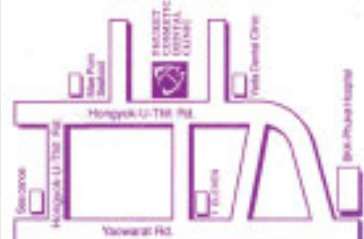
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FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND

By Barry Singleton

Following the tragic and much-publicized murder of 21-year-old Welsh student Katherine Horton on Lamai beach, the Koh Samui authorities are stepping up security and asking for more personnel to protect the island's visitors.

Pol Capt Thirawat Namsitaan, the Head of Samui Tourist Police, says he needs at least 15 more officers to patrol the island's beaches and streets. He recently asked the government in Bangkok to allocate the funds for such recruitment.

In response to his request, Bangkok said that it would transfer five policemen from Haad Yai immediately, with more officers to follow.

Meanwhile, members of the local government recently met with police and immigration officials to discuss strategies to improve safety for tourists around the island.

Suggestions included stepping up marine security, with ID checks for fishermen and daily boat inspections, building special security booths on the beaches, and working together with volunteers and local village security teams to deter crime.

In addition, the Immigration Department has already been granted funds for CCTV units, which will be installed at various crime "hot spots".

Local police are also conducting regular checks at various locations around the island, such as viewpoints, which are popular gathering places for young people.



Monks prepare to float wreaths in the sea near where Katherine Horton's body was found.

Samui beefs up policing after tourist murder

Local government members and many other leading Samui figures have expressed their sympathy for the family of Ms Horton, the tourist who was attacked and killed near her bungalow resort on New Year's Day. On January 12, Samui residents gathered on the beach where the attack happened to pay their respects and to leave offerings.

Waragorn Marakorn, the island's Mayor, said the tragedy had made local people more aware of the importance of security and safety for tourists. He feels confident that the island's police will now be able to work together with local people to build a safer Samui.

Visitors and revenue rise: Tourist numbers, and the annual revenue from tourism, increased significantly in 2005 on Samui, the latter by a healthy three billion baht.

In 2004, Koh Samui generated 15 billion baht in tourism revenue, while in 2005 the figure rose to 18 billion baht. German and British tourists continued to be largest sources of foreign visitors. There was also an increase in the number of Indian and Chinese tourists, the former up by 7%.

Domestic Thai tourism dropped slightly, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) said this was most likely due to rising oil prices as many Thai visitors arrive by car and ferry.

According to figures released by the TAT, around 70,000 visitors arrived on Samui, Koh Pha-ngan and Koh Tao to celebrate the New Year. The figures show that Koh Samui welcomed 40,000 visitors during the four-day period, with hotel occupancy levels around 98% and with a total revenue of 500 million baht.

Koh Pha-ngan also did well, with around 20,000 visitors, 100% occupancy and a revenue of 200 million baht. Koh Tao also boomed with 10-15,000 visitors, hotels fully occupied and revenue of 100 million baht.

Bangkok Airways flights were fully booked throughout the New Year and well into January. The company laid on extra services to cope with demand, and

during peak periods Samui's airport handled 70 flights a day.

Despite unpredictable weather and negative press because of the Horton case, the festive season will no doubt be viewed as an economic success for the southern Gulf of Thailand.

Post-flood projects: Lopburi Yothasiri, of the Samui Harbour Department, recently announced that he intends to launch two new projects to guard against future flooding and pollution.

The first project will involve the renovation of a large drainage canal from the mountains to the sea in north Chaweng. This man-made waterway once provided drainage for the entire area, but lack of maintenance and small dams and barriers erected by local villagers have impeded the canal's flow to the sea. This may have been one of the reasons why the flooding in November was so bad.

The second plan is to build a bridge linking Koh Fan, the island that plays host to the Big Buddha statue, with Samui. K. Lopburi believes that the current causeway creates murky waters and pollution. He has already spoken with local village leaders and will apply for a budget for both projects soon.

Chinese New Year in Nathon: This month sees the beginning of festivities in Nathon to celebrate a special Chinese New Year.

Until February 15, Koh Samui's port and administrative center is playing host to dragon dance processions, Chinese lantern competitions, fireworks and other festive activities.

The local Chinese Temple in Nathon will be 144 years old this year. The Samui Municipality Office, the TAT and the local Nathon Council are sponsoring the celebrations, which began on January 21.

Visitors are welcome to join the festivities, which represent an important part of Samui's culture.

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Baby mix-up revealed 10 years later

Learning that they had been switched at birth following a hospital mix-up, two 10-year-old classmates in Trang Province were afraid to make eye contact with their biological parents when the two families met.

Chamnan and Prathum Janthong live happily with 10-year-old Orawan, the girl they have raised as their own. She is the biological daughter of Somjate and Wandee Bunyoo, who love and care for Jeerawuth, the son of Chamnan and Prathum.

The families are distant relatives living in different villages in Yan Ta Khao District.

The mix-up was confirmed by DNA tests overseen by well-known forensic scientist Khunying Pornthip Rojanasunand. Now all four parents are torn between their love for the child they have raised and their craving to have their biological children back.

State psychiatrists have been assigned to monitor the children's behavior and recommend ways to heal the psychological wounds. Neither of the two children, who come from very different socio-economic backgrounds, said they wanted to live with their biological parents.

The parents will seek a cash settlement from the hospital.

Mama Mia Noi: A government panel chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam has approved legal amendments that would empower wives to demand compensation from women involved in ongoing extramarital affairs with their husbands.

The change redresses an inequality in the current law that allows a man to sue for financial compensation from another man who has sex with his lawfully wedded wife, but not vice versa.

However, men seeking short-term sexual gratification, such as by having sex with prostitutes, would not be held accountable.

Another key amendment approved would expand the definition of rape to include sexual violation of any person by any other, regardless of gender.

The current criminal code defines rape as a crime in which the penis of a man penetrates the vagina of an unwilling woman he is not married to.

Bear bones: Mineral Resources Department (MRD) has announced that fossils unearthed five years ago at the Mae Moh lignite mine in Lampang are unique and belong to a previously unknown species of carnivore that became extinct about 10,000 years ago.

The species was named *Maemohcyon potisati Pigne* to mark its place of discovery – and also to honor Mineral Resources Department Director-General Somsak Potisati for his support of the geology research.

The fossil is that of an animal that had a head like a dog, but a bear-like body, said Senior MRD Geologist Dr Yaowlak Chaimanee.

It took five years of research with a French expert to confirm that there was no previous record of the species, she added.

Love net: Kingkaew Prajantrasen, owner of DK Translation Shop in Udon Thani, said many women in search of foreign boyfriends used her shop's services because their English skills were too poor to find love in cyberspace by themselves.

At 30 to 40 baht per translation, shop customers get help in writing resumés for online match-making services, replying to



HCL Hell: Workers cover their faces after more than 200 of their colleagues were rushed to hospital after inhaling hydrochloric acid fumes that leaked at the Belton Industrial (Thailand) Co plant in Pathum Thani.

The owner said that the company will pay all medical and transport costs for the injured and keep the plant closed until March 1, as ordered by the Industrial Works Department. The leak left 200 workers in need of hospital attention; five were listed in serious condition and put on respirators.

emails, getting information about visa applications as well as advice about love problems, she said.

Most of her customers are

poor women aged over 40, who had previously been married, she said.

"We choose customers who need foreign partners to take care

of them, not those wanting to deduce foreigners," she added.

"There are many whose wishes have been fulfilled – and many who have been disappointed and fooled by foreigners," she said.

Next generation: More and more "troubled" Thai children are coming from the middle class and are being lured into bad behavior by mass marketing and their own spending power, child activist Sompong Jitrakorn told a seminar.

In the past, most troubled children came from underprivileged families who were homeless or forced into child labor or begging.

Nowadays, capitalism targets children in upper- and middle-class families who have buying power.

This has left about half of Thailand's youth at risk of being led into alcohol, tobacco, narcotics, pornography, online games, gambling and other addictive vices, he said.

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

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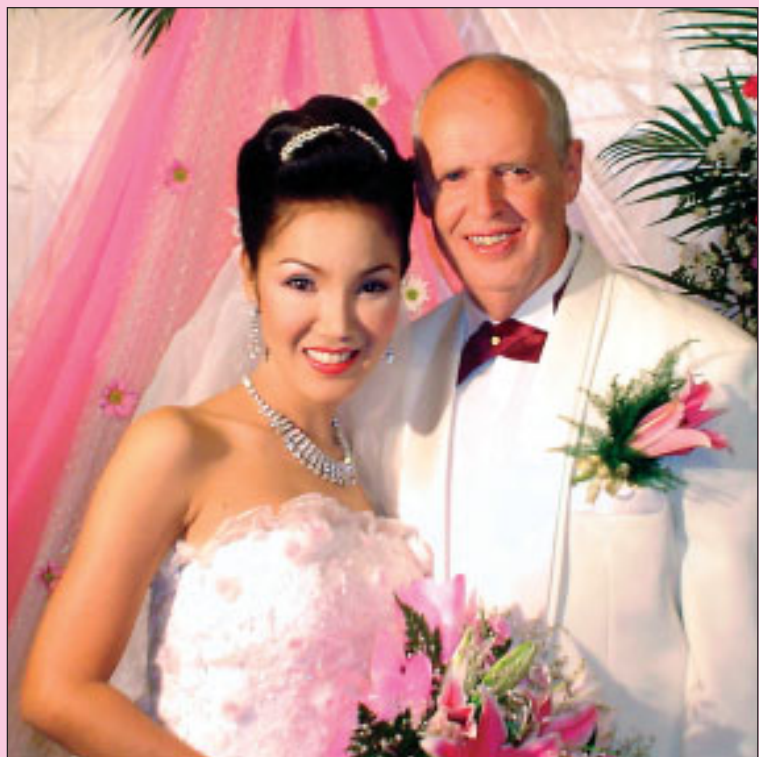
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Happily Ever After

Recent weddings in Phuket



Worada Keawward and John Thethrick were married at the Phuket Ballroom in the Royal Phuket City Hotel on New Year's Day.



Terry Wallace and his wife Apassara 'Yui' Wallace, who run the UK Bar on Soi Dongtal in Patong and who married a few months ago, held a reception and banquet for friends in Phuket at the Sawasdee Village Guest House in Kata on January 3.

High season off to a great start

What a great high season Phuket is having so far. The island is packed with Russians who, I am told, are eating and drinking like no other nationality – and they're driving resort profits upward.

Occupancy levels at resorts such as the Dusit Laguna and Aspasia at Kata Beach are continuing to climb nearly a month after the New Year holidays. It seems that Phuket really is Back.

I've been playing tour guide to a number of friends who accepted my invitation to check out the renovations and improvements to the island during 2005. I must admit that it can be a bit of a challenge to explain why the extravagant fountains in the middle of Karon and Chalong Circles have no water, or why it is so difficult to get into or out of Central Festival or Tesco-Lotus.

While chauffeuring a group of Canadians between Patong Beach and Kathu, we became



Off the WALL

With Bruce Stanley

stranded in a three-hour traffic snarl while police worked to move an overturned tour bus.

The problem, I explained, is that vehicles leak motor oil all over the roads, and when there's a downpour of rain, motorcycles, buses and cars slide sideways because they haven't much tread on their tires. While this may be true, it is not very comforting for

those touring our island. There's really no way to explain the chaos on the bypass road, except to say that the authorities had been considering digging a tunnel underneath the whole mess but that fell by the wayside when permission for such a project was denied – along with the proposal for a road tunnel from Kathu to Patong.

But there are certainly plenty of new attractions to boast about. Both the Holiday Inn and Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort have renovated upscale resorts with a trendy international minimalist themes. And the new Crowne Plaza on Karon Beach is certainly worth a visit.

Tom McNamara, the godfather of the island's restaurant industry, has opened Joe's Downstairs, between his ever-popular Baan Rim Pa and Da Maurizio restaurants. Tom has put together the dream team of food and beverage experts to make Joe's Downstairs one of the major new must-



Joe's Downstairs: (left to right) Baan Rim Pa Marketing Executive Sue Armstrong-Ulmann, mixology wizard Robert Falls, Pensri McNamara and magic chef Aaron Hooper.



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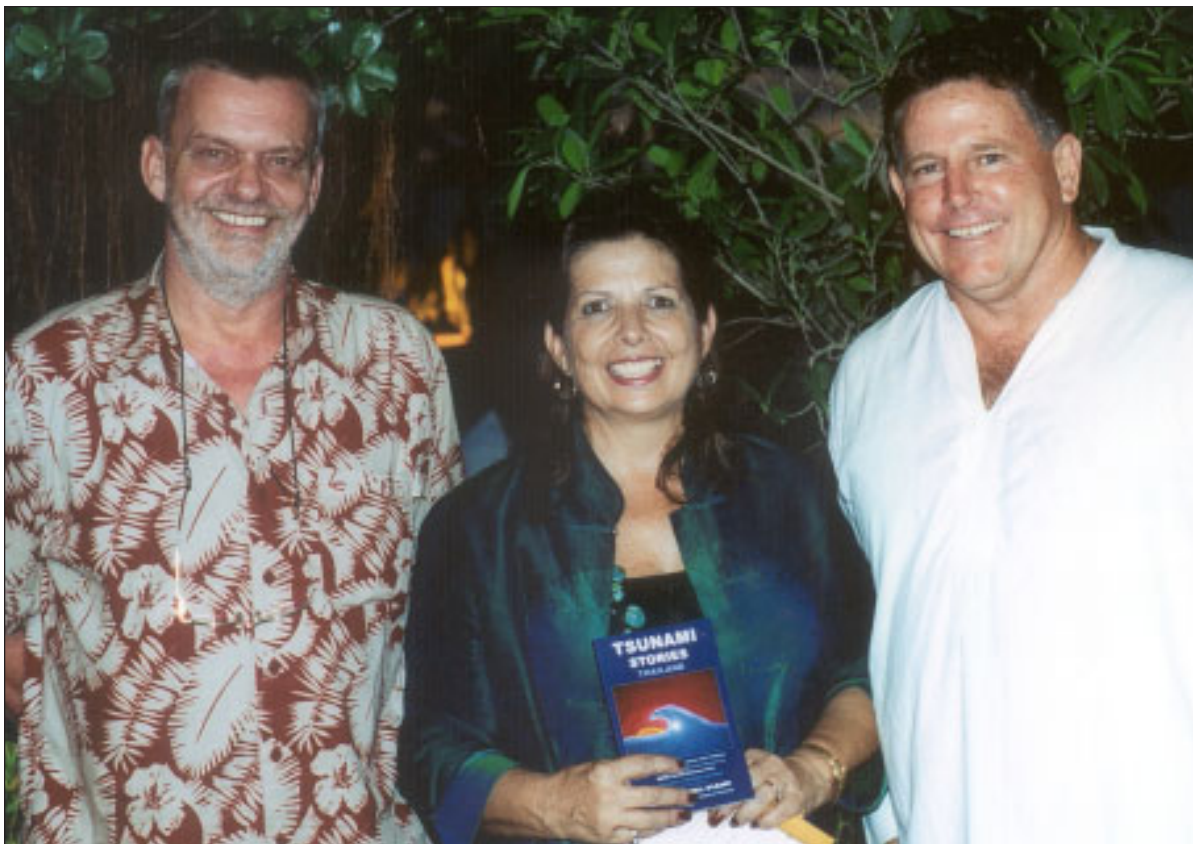
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Tsunami Stories Editor and Publisher Grenville Fordham, Kathy Heinecke and Bill O'Leary.

visit venues on Phuket. **Aaron Hooper**, who revitalized the menus at the Watermark Restaurant, is the new Director of Food at Joe's Downstairs. He has created a brief menu of stunning tastes to be enjoyed with the award-winning wine and cocktail list.

Samples of Aaron's cuisine include grilled prawns with an African garam masala seasoning with cool melon and papaya salad, and jet-fresh Sydney Bay rock oysters with mango/mignonette granite.

Tom also induced **Robert Falls**, the island's most knowledgeable and sophisticated bartender, to manage Joe's Downstairs. Robert has a devoted following of customers from his work at the Red Room and Silk restaurants. They can now find him mixing exotic and eclectic cocktails nightly at Joe's.

Robert used to mix drinks for *Playboy* founder **Hugh Hefner** at the Playboy Mansion

in Los Angeles, in between stints of acting. And what is the world's most famous playboy's favorite drink? Jack Daniels and coke, Robert tells me.

Where does he find the time? **Bill O'Leary** launched his compilation of *Tsunami Stories* at the Marriott Resort and Spa recently with **Kathy Heinecke**, wife of Marriott owner, Bill Heinecke, and friends who assisted in this project.

Bill is the Managing Director of Amancruises, the father of four great children, has written his autobiography, and is also known as an actor in film and television productions shot around the Andaman region. Where does this man find the energy to live so many lives at once? "I have a lot of gratitude for the help I received collecting stories from the tsunami," Bill confides.

Right in the middle of his Phuket International Marine Ex-

hibition, **Grenville Fordham** agreed to edit and publish this book, working non-stop for many days.

Alan Cooke, British Honorary Consul in Phuket, asked to buy the first 1,500 copies, and he was joined by **John Gold** of Bangtao Beach Gardens who bought 3,000 copies. The proceeds will go to help children who were victims of the tsunami.

I ask John what he plans to do with his 3,000 copies of *Tsunami Stories*. "Most I will send to Hong Kong for children in the public schools. Our local children who lost their parents will need ongoing financial support until they finish their education," he says. "The rest I will offer to local residents who want to help these children, in return for a donation." You can call him at Tel: 01-8927082 for more information.

Kathy Heinecke has made a list of the names of children who lost one or both parents in the tsunami. Many of these children live



Wanida 'Momma Duck' Hongyok: helping disadvantaged women.

in the distant Isarn region, and their parents were working in Phuket or Phang Nga when the disaster happened.

This responsible hotelier is determined that these children will at least receive an education. Buying a copy of *Tsunami Stories* will add to the fund for this purpose.

Another woman working to help those affected by the disaster is the *Phuket Gazette's* own **Wanida "Momma Duck" Hongyok**. K. Wanida worked for many years as the Marketing Director and then Government Liaison for Sea Canoe.

But after the tsunami, she decided she wanted to join the International Labour Organization (ILO) project in the Andaman

region to help train women in new job skills.

More than 80% of women working in the tourism industry and related fields lost their jobs because of the tsunami, and many were the sole support for their families, reports K. Wanida.

"With the ILO, supported by the United Nations Development Program, we trained women in community-based tourism and the development of local crafts, provided English-language instruction for sex workers and encouraged the hospitality sector to hire the handicapped."

The ILO project is just winding up, but K. Wanida says she wants to continue to help disadvantaged women who need to support themselves and their families.

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'Future Cat' (above) by Puma costs 3,995 baht; a pair of Nike 'Shox' (below, left) will set you back 4,500 baht, while its 'Air Perseus' brand (below, center) retails for 3,400 baht. Or you might just opt for flip-flops with 'go faster' stripes.



ON THE RUN...

Exercise your health demons and put on a pair of decent jogging shoes

By Nattamon Ratcharak & Sam Wilkinson

According to the 2003 Thailand Human Development Report, Phuket is firmly in the dunce corner when it comes to national health statistics.

The report, which said that 51% of the island's residents exhibited "unhealthy behavior" such as drinking or smoking, or – heaven forbid – both, might lead some to believe that Phuket's party animals constitute a formidable herd.

Yet, believe it or not, there are still *some* people who look after themselves out there.

Still, on an island that features a veritable A-Z of physical challenges, maybe it's time for some of the 51% of local sinners to pull their socks up... and don a pair of running shoes.

Jogging tops the popularity list of activities that get your heart racing and your lungs working overtime, so it stands to reason that a good pair of running shoes is a must for that elite group who prefer to pound Phuket's pavements and parks.

Leading the field at Super Sports at Central Festival Phuket are the Nike Shox 2:40 – a fine pair of running shoes that crosses the finishing line at 4,500 baht.

Speed lovers go for the Shox because they make full use of Nike's "Air systems" – a structure that helps air to flow freely through what is known as

a "waffle design" – guaranteed to provide better traction and tread as you leave others to eat your dust.

Among Super Sports' newer releases are Nike's Air Perseus, costing 3,400 baht. Designed to support and stabilize your center of gravity, you'll soon be challenging cheetahs in these babies. The treads feature what is called "flex groove" in order to give you a smoother run.

Talking of big cats, we shouldn't forget Puma – a company that boasts a huge color range to suit both sexes and a wide range of tastes.

But if you're more than a jogger there's a whole gamut of sports shoes to run, from tennis shoes to golf, aerobic, basketball and just plain casual after-sport loafers.

All the usual suspects are there: Nike, Adidas, Reebok and Puma.

There are even sports sandals with go-faster stripes for those who like to feel active even when they're just lounging around.

So if you're looking for a bit of sole in your life, don't be a heel; have a run in with a good pair of sports shoes and get jogging. You'll soon be on your uppers again.

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The Honeywell MA06 Mosquito Indoor Trap (above) and the more time-honored method of smoking 'em out using a coil.



Managing mozzies: if they won't buzz off, then trap them

By Anongnat Sartpisut & Sam Wilkinson

As anyone who has ever sat on a veranda or out in the garden at night knows, mosquitoes may be small but they're pretty pesky and can carry dangerous diseases to boot.

The ubiquitous mosquito coil is one way of keeping the buzz out of your life, and at 12-16 baht a box they're certainly not going to break anyone's bank.

Still, the resulting odor can be a little overpowering for sensitive types, as coils can sometimes result in stinging eyes and coughing fits because of the esbiothrin pesticide content.

SPRAYS

Only female mosquitoes bite humans, and they're attracted to the carbon dioxide we emit.

We cannot stop breathing in order to escape being bitten, but at least we can conclude that male mosquitoes must be really nice guys.

Seriously, though, if coils are annoying, and sprays or the chemicals in rub-on protection cream are not to our liking, what can we do?

In the old days farmers would burn coconut husks to keep the pesky critters away, but in the million-baht plus granite-and-teak erections that are going up around the island burning husks in the hallway

might seem a little vulgar to some.

Surely there must be a simpler solution?

Thankfully there is, and it comes in the form of what is called a "Korean black hole".

The Black Hole Standard Protection is a machine that lures and then captures mozzies within an area of nine square meters.

Basically, the machine emits carbon dioxide as the result of titanium dioxide being exposed to ultraviolet rays.

The mosquitoes are attracted to it and then sucked into a container where they eventually die.

Titanium dioxide, by the way, has been used as a (harmless) food additive in the

US for the past 39 years, and it's more than likely that you consumed quite a lot of it in all that chocolate you ate over Christmas.

It's also used in air purifiers. By the way, if you have an aquarium, the resulting dead mosquitoes make excellent fish food.

Another option that uses the same method is the Honeywell MA06 Mosquito Indoor Trap.

Like the Black Hole, the machine is silent. All you do is simply plug it in and it'll do the rest for you.

Both models are available at Index Living Mall.

The Black Hole retails at 3,900 baht, and the Honeywell at 3,200 baht.



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This week



ALL ABOARD: Royal Phuket Marina developer Gulu Lalvani (2nd from right) and guests (from right) Phuket Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura; Juthaporn Remgronasa, the Tourist Authority of Thailand's Deputy Governor for Domestic Marketing; and Phuket Tourist Association President Pattanapong Aikwanich enjoy a recent boat trip.



Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra receives flowers from Vithita Chakrabandhu, daughter of Le Meridien Khao Lak Beach & Spa Resort owner ML Vitaya Chakrabandhu, on the PM's arrival to a gala dinner at the resort on December 26.



ART MOVES: Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) President Anchalee Vanich Thapabutr (center) stands beside one of three sculptures created by the Southern Thai Artists Group that will be moved to the Welcome Gateway being built at Mai Khao. (From right) *OrBorJor* Vice-President Sutin Uthaitamrong, Office of Contemporary Art and Culture Director-General Apinan Poshyananda and (from left) Thai artists Yongyuth Ruyon and Amnart Boonsanit look on.



PRO BONO BRIT: British tourist Faye Davidson (left) hands *Phuket Gazette* Chief Reporter Sangkhae Leelanapaporn 4,500 baht to buy a water meter for tsunami victim Buaphan Phumsanid, of Baan Nam Khem, Phang Nga, after reading about K. Buaphan's plight in the *Gazette*.



MANY HAPPY RETURNS: Supawadee Wongjaroen (center) celebrates her birthday with the grand opening of her restaurant Kalim Seafood with husband K. Prasert and friend Chanya Sompreeda.



HEARTFELT ART: Kamala residents Stewart Cliff (right) and his wife Wiraya (2nd from left), and Mr Cliff's mom Susan Day (left) visiting from the UK, present to Chatchada Kruakaew, an art therapist for the Duang Prateep Foundation for 24 years, a pickup truck to continue her work at the Baan Bang Muang tsunami victim camp in Phang Nga. The Cliffs and Ms Day were instrumental in setting up the Hands Around the World charity, based in Hastings, UK, which donated the pickup.

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Public holidays and notable dates in 2006

January 31:
Muharram (Islamic New Year). Islamic holiday.

February 13:
Makha Bucha Day. Makha Bucha Day, which falls on the full moon of the third lunar month, commemorates the Lord Buddha's ordaining of 1,250 monks who had arrived unannounced from afar only seven months after the Buddha began his teachings, and also the date on which the Buddha delivered his Fundamental Teachings just months before his death.

January 29:
Chinese New Year. Under Chinese astrology, this year – Year 4703 by the Chinese calendar – will be the Year of the Dog.

April 6:
Chakri Day. Commemorates the origins of Thailand's reigning Chakri dynasty, founded by Rama I, who established Bangkok as the nation's capital. HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the ninth monarch of the Chakri dynasty.

Events in red are official public holidays for both public and private sectors. Government offices and banks are closed on these days.

April 11:
Mawlid al-Nabi (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday). Islamic holiday.

April 13-15:
Songkran (Thai New Year). Public holiday. Also known as the Water Festival, and held during the driest months in Thailand, Songkran is celebrated by Thais throughout the country by pouring – traditionally only a little, but these days more playfully a lot – of water on other people to wish them good luck for the New Year.

May 1:
Labor Day. Holiday for private sector workers; government offices are open.

May 5:
Coronation Day. Coronation Day commemorates the ascension to the throne of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej on May 5, 1950.

May 11:
Royal Ploughing Ceremony Day. This occasion,

which predates Buddhism, marks the beginning of the rice-planting season. The Ploughing Lord – appointed by HM the King – performs ancient rites and attempts to forecast the rainfall for the coming months, to predict whether there will be a bountiful harvest.

May 12:
Visakha Bucha. Held to commemorate the birth, enlightenment and death of the Lord Buddha.

July 10:
Asarnha Bucha. Marks the anniversary (determined using the lunar calendar) of the Buddha delivering his first sermon to five disciples at the Deer Park in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India, more than 2,500 years ago.

July 11:
Beginning of Buddhist Lent. Beginning of the "Rains Retreat" – known in Thai as *Phansa*, hence the Thai name for the holiday, *Khao Phansa Day* – dur-

ing which many Thais join the Buddhist monkhood for the three-month period or otherwise make sacrifices.

August 12:
HM Queen Sirikit's Birthday. Also marked as Mother's Day in Thailand.

September 24:
Ramadan begins. Islamic holiday.

October 10:
End of Buddhist Lent.

October 22-30:
Vegetarian Festival. This festival is renowned for its colorful, noisy processions during which *Mah Sorng* (mediums) pierce their faces with a variety of sharp objects while possessed by Chinese gods. Purists taking part in the nine-day festival dress in white, and abstain from having sex, drinking alcohol or eating meat.

October 23:
Chulalongkorn Day. Commemorates the reign

of King Rama V, who is best remembered for abolishing slavery in Thailand.

October 24:
Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan fast). Islamic holiday.

November 5:
Loy Krathong. During the annual Loy Krathong ceremony, participants float (*loy*) candle-lit offerings (*krathong*) on water to invite good luck from the water goddess Phra Mae Kongkha.

December 5:
HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Birthday. Also marked as Father's Day.

December 10:
Constitution Day. Commemorates the day in 1932 when Thailand's first Constitution was promulgated.

December 25:
Christmas Day.

December 31:
New Year's Eve. Public holiday.

December 31:
Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice). Islamic holiday.



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I confess that Phuket has become my place in the sun, and if not actually the paradise it is often cracked up to be, the search that we misfits, defectors, heiresses and lonely hearts undertake to get here is still worth it.

Work in the morning, a quick swim and then a decent lunch at a beachside restaurant, followed by a round of golf at Blue Canyon Country Club (BCCC) is almost as much fun as one body – anybody – can take in a day.

Well, my body can take a great deal more. And dash it all, I *deserve* more! Relaxing with a whisky and soda after bashing a small, white dimpled ball from here to eternity, my eyes fall upon enticing photographs of BCCC's spa.

Club – steady ladies – firmly in hand, I stride manfully to the spa, demanding that my weary body be pulled, pressed, pummeled, oiled, stroked, manipulated and caressed back to the state it was in before. Preferably the state it was in about 10 years ago.

TRUSTING

The greeting I receive as I walk into the reception area is as light, refreshing and welcoming as the reception room itself. Scents fill the air as I am ushered to a seat and given a much-needed cup of cool lemongrass infusion and a chilled face towel, as I give the spa menu the once-over.

Being a trusting sort of chap, however, I offer myself up to the delightful Nicole Kochornswasdi, the Assistant Director of Club Operations, and her equally delightful staff.

I sense – correctly – that I am being read. The Gold Room, and a Canyon Royale treatment (3,500 baht) plus facial (1,900 baht), is prescribed. Gold relates to the *manipura* or solar plexus *chakra*, and is associated with mental functioning, power, control, freedom to be oneself and career. Glad to know that I am not in need of orange or *svadhisthana*.

My therapists – yes, plural – K. Priaew and K. Wa, gently guide me to the Gold Room. My

**Spa
MAGIC**

By Andy
Johnstone

spa@BCCC



Bliss at the 19th hole

spa bath, replete with unguents, has already been drawn. I disrobe and am cosseted by the gentle bubbles for 15 minutes.

Scanning the room from my two-seater bath, which has a view to the hills, I am taken by the subtlety of the lighting and the swatch of buttermilk-yellow cotton that loops gracefully from one wall and to the ceiling, before cascading down before the window next to my bath.

I have a quick shower before being greeted again by K. Priaew and K. Wa, who bring me a cup of warm ginger infusion. I am now lying down, and K. Priaew whispers in my ear to ask if the temperature is to my liking and if the music is too loud. Such personal attention is intoxicating.

Both are just right, with the music, which at times sounds not unlike *Le Onde* by Ludovico Einaudi, deeply calming.

Doubling the number of deft hands at work increases the sensation exponentially; many hands do make light work, and their combined touch is lighter than air.

One therapist begins at my shoulders, the other at my feet. Their strokes, which are in perfect synchronization, are weighted identically. Working in unison, they are like a benign Kali. The scent of the Decléor oils used in this mélange of Thai, Balinese and Swedish aroma-therapy massage is heady.

Doubling the number of deft hands at work increases the sensation exponentially; many hands do make light work, and their combined touch is lighter than air...

This is bliss. No, really, I am in a state of spiritual joy. Far from drifting off into the arms of Somnus, I am preternaturally aware of everything. My breathing, the gentle *swish* of the therapists' hands gliding on my body, each stimulated nerve ending ... somehow, even a bird's song from a nearby tree is in harmony with the minimalist piano music.

It is ecstasy, and strangely all rather moving; I want to book myself in for a few astral weeks at this soul asylum.

After an hour or so front and

back, K. Wa retires, leaving K. Priaew to revitalize my tanned face for an hour, her gentle fingers first applying a scented eye mask before delicately scrubbing and toning away the effects of 18 holes of golf in the tropical sun.

A face mask – my first one ever – is followed by another round of exfoliation and toning before final moisturising.

I walk on air to a quick shower, where I am careful not to wash off the emollients, before enjoying another cup of lemongrass tea, grateful to K. Priaew

and K. Wa for their delicate attentions.

BCCC received *SpaAsia* magazine's 2005 Crystal Award for the Best Golf & Spa Destination, and for good reason. By turns tantalizing, stimulating and uplifting, it's a haven when the pleasures of paradise become too much.

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For those about to rock...

By Shiona Mackenzie

The grunge look may still be around, but there is little room for depression and angst in Patong these days. Heading out for a good time with good friends and some musical entertainment for less than the cost of a round-trip taxi ride to the airport, we forgo Soi Bangla in favor of a Gorilla. And I don't mean wading through all three hours of *King Kong* at the movies, either.

The flaming guitar, a huge gorilla clone and Arnie's bug bear, the Predator – all lurking at Rock City on Patong's Thaweewong Rd, prove irresistible.

Opened in November last year, this scaled-down rock 'n' roll concert hall – which used to be home to a Japanese restaurant – now hosts some of the best tribute bands from Europe. For those of us who are into AC/DC, Bon Jovi, the Stones and Linkin Park, this is the place to go.

RIVETING

The atmospheric interior features zebra-striped bar stools, as comfortable as they look, but, having settled into one of the sofas upstairs with a Heineken in hand (130 baht), only the music could lure me onto my feet. And the bands playing before the headline act were absolutely riveting.

Rock City's musical entertainment for men and women, young and old – a real international crowd – starts at 11 pm. It is already busy by then, although, thank goodness, it hasn't quite reached its capacity of 500 people.

"There is space at the outside bar for an additional 60 people, I believe," says George Svensson, Managing Director of Rock City, and one of the three founding partners.

"Rock City attracts people who enjoy genuine rock 'n' roll. Some of our customers are in



George Svensson.



their 40s and they bring along their children to see the show," he says. "Others are in their 20s, here with girlfriends or boyfriends, while still more are in their 50s and 60s, just coming to hang out with friends.

"Our concept is to offer a kind of rock concert four nights a week. That's why we rigged up a big stage right in the center, with a serious lighting system. The food and drink are peripheral."

Peripheral perhaps, and Patong-priced, but when you consider that there's no cover charge for the quality of entertainment, well... dig in. You can't go wrong with the Rock City Snack Plate Combo – tenderloin chunks,

chicken and spring rolls – for 240 baht, and the Metal Heart Entrecôte for 540 baht comes with tomato, coleslaw, creamed mushrooms and a baked potato. The servings are a little larger than average.

The line-up of mighty music is also served with a smile. U-Turn specializes in rock classics and current hits – fantastic drumming, bass and lead vocals. U-Turn even does a turn or two in Thai, which inspires much squealing of delight from the Thai female members of the audience. The AC/DC tribute band that hit the stage at 12:30 was, on occasion, mistaken for the real thing, and next up is the Metallica tribute band, Nostalgica.

Leaving a strong impression, too, is the super-sized rather angry-looking King Kong clone hovering over the stage that George says symbolizes the pure power of rock music. This one was custom-made based on a model in his collection.

MODELS

George is not only a former drummer in a Swedish group of some fame in his homeland, but also a long-time movie buff and a collector of action figures and models from big science-fiction films such as *Alien*.

Movie madness also inspired him to place a larger-than-life-size model of the Predator outside Rock City's front entrance.

The model is now attracting many people just to get their picture taken beside it.

Rock City, located at 188/1 Thaweewong Rd, Patong Beach, is poised to become a Patong landmark.

You can't miss the giant guitar outside proclaiming, "Rock 'n' roll never dies".

For more information, Email: rockcityphuket@yahoo.com or visit the website at www.rockcity.cc



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Thailand TRAVELER

By Bill Owen

The four-wheel-drive lurched suddenly to one side as we forded a deep stream. King, my old friend and an excellent driver, laughed quietly as our American clients in the rear became a little alarmed. "Always good to give them a little shock," he chuckled as we began to climb high into the hills.

We were checking out a 4WD rally route for a special adventure day, and King was certainly giving us all a rough ride. This location, 60 kilometers north of Chiang Mai, is the start of the true hill-tribe areas, and the valleys are riddled with off-road tracks that connect the many outlying villages.

It's an ideal location for soft adventure enthusiasts as there is a wide range of options available. There is whitewater rafting (on the Mae Taeng River) and canoeing. Also possible are half-day to six-day trekking programs, and overnight stays are an attractive option in several of the local hill-tribe villages. Mountain-biking tours are popular, as are off-road 4WD safari-style tours.

Alternatively, for the more sedentary and less adventurous, you can head for the hills and stay



A wonderful base for exploring

at a wonderful little resort we discovered – the Baan Rai Lanna – and simply relax with a book beside their small pool. We found this accommodation purely by accident while scouting earlier in the week for possible new off-road routes.

The resort nestles into the hillside with its gardens bordered by small paddy fields (they grow their own jasmine rice). The six bungalows are simple but very elegant, comfortable and homely. All the typically Lanna-style buildings have been carefully designed to blend in with the natural beauty of the area, and the resort has two small streams running through its gardens. The

small infinity pool offers great views of the surrounding hills.

Opened just a few weeks ago by an adventurous English couple, Scott and Lora, the Baan Rai Lanna really is a wonderful location to use as a base to explore this beautiful region. The resort's manager, Khun Ae, is a wonderful and charming hostess who personally looks after all new arrivals.

The resort also offers a wide range of half-day and full-day tours and activities to explore the area with knowledgeable local guides. Scott also enjoys taking his guests out personally, and he especially enjoys discovering new trekking routes.

This is really one of the most natural resorts I've found in my many years of traveling in the north, and it is a definite must for all true nature lovers.

A double room with breakfast in high season will cost 2,700 baht per night. Accommodation is limited, so it is essential to book in advance.

HOW TO GET THERE

For the budget minded: by bus from Chiang Mai Bus Terminal to Mae Malai town which is located approximately 10km south of the resort. Buses run frequently throughout the day (cost from 80 baht, depending on the type of bus). When at Mae Malai, call the resort and staff there will be pleased to collect you.

Alternatively, you can rent a 4WD: two rental companies that I have often used are: North Wheels, Tel: 053-874478 www.northwheels.com and Pop Rent a Car at Tel: 053-276014. Prices start from 1,600 baht a day plus VAT. Please note that it is worth hiring a 4WD just to have the chance of heading into the hills for a while. When taking a self-drive tour, make sure you take a guide or someone who really knows the area. It's easy to get lost or stuck, so beware!

Baan Rai Lanna Resort, 171 Baan Rai Moo5, Sob Poeng, MaeTaeng, Chiang Mai 50150. For further information, contact Tel: 061916361; Email: info@baanrailanna.com; or visit the website www.baanrailanna.com

Rak Mak! Awards

This week's lucky numbers:

กง 9333
ภูเก็ต

Blue Mitsubishi

กมร 710
ภูเก็ต

Green Honda Wave 110

กвр 155
ภูเก็ต

Red Honda Wave 100

กท 939
ระนอง

Green Honda Wave 110

บฉ 4817
ภูเก็ต

Gold Nissan NV

กจ 5538
ภูเก็ต

Black Honda

The first three of these vehicles' owners to contact us can choose from the following three prizes: a facial treatment with Majestic Cosmetics at the Jungceylon Clinic; or one round of golf (18 holes) at Laguna Phuket Golf Club; or two bottles of Italian sparkling wine Prosecco Pinot Chardonnay and one wine opener.



Please contact the Gazette quickly to ensure you get the prize you want.
First come, first served!

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

Offers expire January 31, 2006.

Love Phuket? Put this sticker on your vehicle:



If we spot it, you could win a one-hour refreshing spa for one at The Aspara Spa, at the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket; or a laser tooth-whitening treatment at Promjai Dental Clinic at either their Patong Beach or bypass road clinic; or a facial treatment with Majestic Cosmetics at the Jungceylon Clinic.



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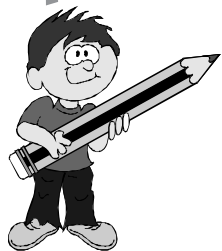
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PUZZLES

Spot the Difference



Can you find the seven differences between the two cartoons below? And can you find them faster than the rest of the family?



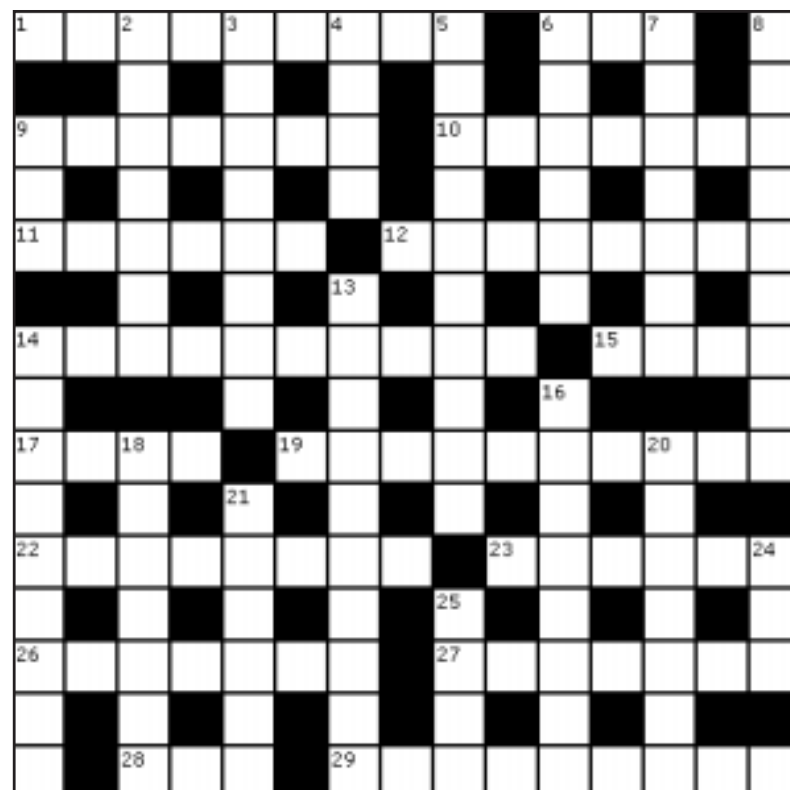
The Cryptic Crossword

ACROSS

1. Do Italians have influence over this malady? (9)
6. Al Khaimah's first, as after right. (3)
9. Hut has atmosphere for 100? It's a snip! (7)
10. Leo holds drunk with hotel in African country (7)
11. Vehicle arrives at junction before Britain, twice. (3-3)
12. Looming over it is little star in note. (8)
14. I learnt Rev is twisted and unnecessary. (10)
15. Sharpen hydrogen in the wet. (4)
17. Gregory's little kiss? (4)
19. Relationship involves pal's freighter. (10)
22. Flattens vegetables. (8)
23. A kind of pig that costs more than a pound. (6)
26. Examine wasp, perhaps, in quiet. (7)
27. Fall back with regard to special delight. (7)
28. Talk nonsense and decay. (3)
29. Underworld trust may damage one's reputation. (9)

Down

2. Movie for a woodpecker?
3. United Nations duo disconnect. (8)



Compiled by Tortuus. © 2005

4. Crazy things to eat! (4)
5. What to make for the new guy on the job. (10)
6. Those who get up stair parts. (6)
7. Hibernian without note is habitually drunk. (7)
8. Mentioned was sick (7,2).
9. Part of ash other may burn. (3)
13. Too hot, he dare vote, maybe. (10)
14. Devoid of emotion, I'm not active. (9)
16. He makes things fit in commercial, and fairer, too. (8)
18. The class of boxer that takes things easy? (7)
20. Death of deer at the back. (4,3)
21. Agree to way it's despatched. (6)
24. Little Arthur's skill. (3)
25. Plant in part of the eye. (4)

Solution on page 22

su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

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



The principle of 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. Guess if you will, but each Sudoku puzzle can be solved using logic alone. Beware: there is only one solution to this puzzle, which is on the next page.

Scribble Space

Brain Buster

What are the three possible responses that correctly fill the blank in the following sentence?

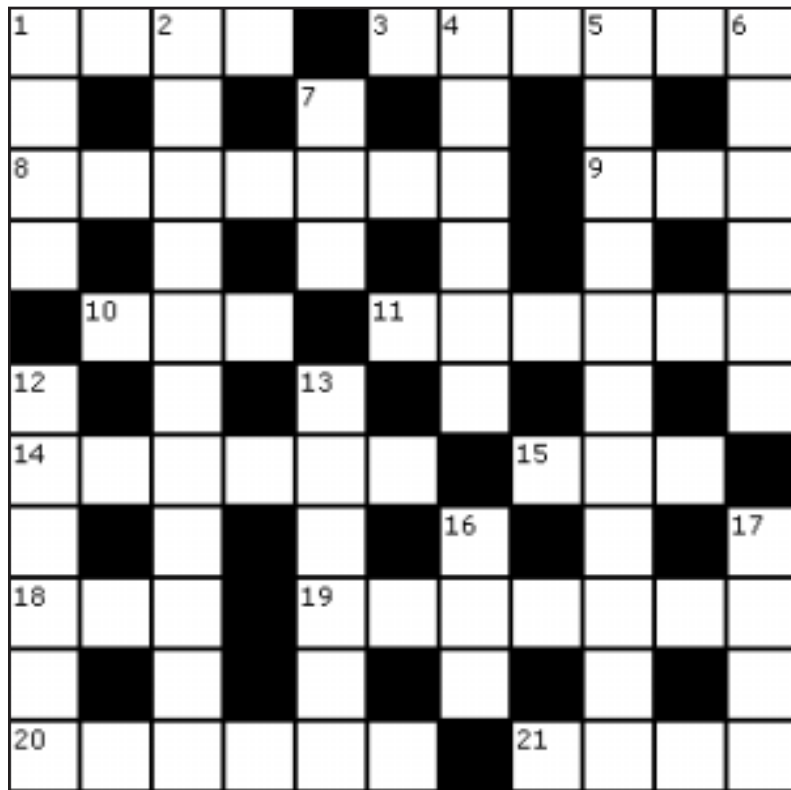
"This sentence has _____ letters."

Answer on page 22

EZ Quiz

1. Who ran away with the pussycat?
2. Name the purple dinosaur who loves kids.
3. Which flower do people usually bring back from Amsterdam?
4. What alphabet letter begins the smallest number of words in the English language?
5. What's the fast land animal?
6. What plant is the emblem of Wales?
7. Which Peanuts character clings to a security blanket?
8. What US state receives the least sunshine?
9. What is the official language of India?
10. What Egyptian writing material gave us the English word "paper"?

Answers on page 22



Quick Crossword

ACROSS

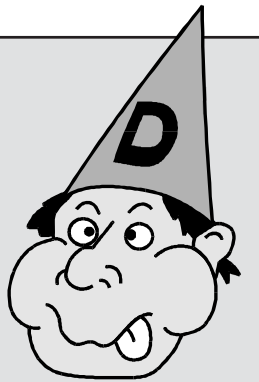
1. Hop along.
3. West-coast Phuket vil-
lage.
8. Palm fruit.
9. Pen essential.
10. Little devil.
11. Hansel's sister.
14. It stops wheels from
squeaking.
15. It beats a king.
18. Opposite WSW.
19. Gun.
20. Large planet.

DOWN

1. Bag.
2. Incapable of doing the job.
4. Large blood vessel.
5. Nobility.
6. Acid opposite.
7. Singular number.
12. Concurs.
13. Request (3,3)
16. Source of metal.
17. In the middle of.

Solution below, right

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. What substance has the formula $C_{17}H_{21}NO_4$?
2. Dildo, South Dildo and Dildo Island can be found in which country?
3. Who wrote the play *The Front Page*?
4. What is the literal meaning of Siam Reap, Cambodia?
5. Benjamin Braddock is the central character in which novel by Charles Webb?
6. Where is Grand Teton mountain?
7. *Eyes Open* will be which band's fourth album?
8. *Eyes Wide Shut* was which director's final film?
9. Where would you find *dabbawallas*, and what do they do?
10. In which year was the International Labour Organization founded?
11. What is banana oil produced from?
12. Why doesn't the British Prime Minister have a set of keys for 10 Downing Street?
13. Who was Minnehaha's husband?
14. What series of letters is named after the first two Greek letters?
15. How is wine served if it's *chambré*?
16. What was the first X-rated full-feature cartoon?
17. What color does the bride wear in China?
18. What non-mechanical sport achieves the highest speeds?
19. What family of trees is the sycamore a member of?
20. What country is the world's largest exporter of frogs' legs?

Answers below, left

Puzzle Solutions

Monster Quiz Answers

1. Cocaine; 2. Canada; 3. Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur; 4. The place of the defeat of Siam; 5. *The Graduate*; 6. Wyoming; 7. Snow Patrol; 8. Stanley Kubrick; 9. Mumbai. They deliver tiffin boxes; 10. 1919; 11. Coal; 12. The door can be opened only from the inside; 13. Hiawatha; 14. The alphabet; 15. At room temperature; 16. *Animal Farm*; 17. Red; 18. Skydiving; 19. The maple family; 20. Japan.

Solution to Cartoon Puzzle



EZ Trivia Answers

1. The owl; 2. Barney; 3. Tulip; 4. X; 5. The cheetah; 6. The leek; 7. Linus; 8. Alaska; 9. Hindi; 10. Papyrus

Brain Buster Answer

The three possible answers are "22," "thirty-one," and "thirty-three." – "22" because there are twenty-two letters in the sentence (numbers don't count); "thirty-one" because 22 letters in the original sentence + 9 letters in "thirty-one" = thirty-one; and "thirty-three" because 22 letters in the original sentence + 11 letters in "thirty-three" = thirty-three.

Cryptic Crossword Solution



Quick Crossword Solution



Sudoku solution

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

Some home (Patong) truths: “The amount of honeymooners who start their lives together with two weeks in Patong are always equal in proportion to the amount of men who arrive after marriage has ended back home.” (1)

West meets East: “Make no bones about it, Phuket is one of the world’s premier beach holiday destinations and ranks right up alongside the French Riviera, the Mediterranean and Hawaii as places where people will happily endure up to 24 hours on an aeroplane for the promise of the quintessential beach holiday. But is Phuket the quintessential Thai beach holiday? With Phuket now firmly ranking up there as one of the world’s premier beach destinations, the secluded beach charm that this island once laid claim to has well and truly gone and we now have a tourism scene centred around the noisy, rowdy and highly touristed Patong Beach. Patong Beach is NOT Thailand – it is a slice of Europe with a few Asian, American, Aussie & Kiwi influences thrown in. Throughout the tourism high season from December right through to the Songkran holidays in April, Patong Beach is over run with Europeans, trying to escape their cold, overly organised and absurdly politically correct homelands. Patong beach provides them with a tropical island paradise, but also with the promise of all of the comforts of home. Indeed, Phuket is so developed now that it rivals the aforementioned Hawaii and French Riviera for facilities and sadly, if one requires a few home comforts, Phuket is no longer much cheaper than a holiday in the West.” (2)

Fleeing the farang? “Phuket hotels have gone crazy with their hotel rates and Phuket is now downright expensive during the high season – fuelled by ever increasing demand. These rogue establishments try to justify their prices increases

The Golden Fleece

OUTSIDE IN

By Lis Kinswoman

Hello again, dearies. Lis has been busy digging out those juicy cyber truffles from under several Internet trees for your delicate tastes. This week we have those icky jet-skis, what seems to be the national pastime of farang-fleeing, and some straight talk about Patong. As our North American cousins would say: “Enjoy!”

by saying that in \$US terms, prices have not increased that much in the last three years but that is beside the point. US visitors make up a very small percentage of the total number of visitors to Phuket and therefore these figures and constant steep price increases are unjustified. Indeed all of the expenses paid in the running, maintenance and general operation of these hotels are paid in Thai baht so this is just another excuse by Thai businesses to fleece the foreign visitor. In Thai baht terms, a lot of the hotels now charge rates that are two and a half times as much as they did just three years ago which without any corresponding increase in quality or service is quite simply daylight robbery.” (3)

Paving paradise: “[An] irony is that the tsunami has created an opportunity for

Phuket to get its house in order. But the window is closing fast as the vicissitudes of local interests and politics dwarf the good intentions of the authorities in Bangkok. One can’t help but ask how long the sand of Patong beach will remain white, or will the umbrellas and beer bars again swamp the beaches, will the scooters drown out the sound of the sea? And the doubts about favoring small-time vendors over big businesses that tend to favor closing off the beaches will have to be answered. Last but not least, the traffic in Phuket is getting bad because of the number of shopping malls that have been built without proper attention being paid to the need to plan for car routing.” (4)

Jumping jets: “Our hotel manager told us never, ever to rent a jetski anywhere in Phuket. He says what will happen is that the jetski owners complain that you ‘broke’ the jetski engine by driving it improperly and then take you to the police who demand a cash payment for the ‘repairs’ – then they both take a cut. This is a total scam.” (5)

Jet-skis #2 – keep your head down: A young Australian was recently badly injured in yet another jet-ski accident, prompting these comments. “Just a question for expats living in Phuket, if you see something like this [dangerous jet-skis] that could be made safer by such a simple thing as a roped off area away from swimmers and if you could be bothered to make a noise to the respective authority suggesting something so simple for safeties sake, would it just fall on deaf ears because you are farang or has anyone tried something similar? Yes I know that health and safety is not high on the Thais list of priorities but

just wondered if anyone had ever tried to bring something to the authorities attention and what result they’d had?... Put it this way, there have been numerous things seen and witnessed in Phuket, which could very simply be corrected. I talked to my missus about these issues, and what could be done. When I suggested that we talk to someone that might be able to do something about it, I was told don’t be silly, that would just get your name listed somewhere and possibility draw attention to yourself.” (6)

Interview with a vampire: “I have travelled extensively, and I have found many ladies, in many countries, willing to please me in all sorts of ways. Only in Patong, Phuket, strangely enough never in Pattaya or Bangkok, have I found ladies wanting to HURT me. I buy them drinks, I chat with them, and then, suddenly, they grab one or both of my nipples and squeeze, so hard that blood comes out of my eyes... Not only that, I have had girls in Patong suddenly bite me, on my arm, or my shoulder or wherever, but always painfully. WTF? Are there international tourist brochures advertising masochistic trips to Phuket? Is Phuket the Transylvania of Asia?” (7)

1. <http://www.thaivisa.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=46402&pid=596515&st=120&entry596515>
2. <http://www.stickmanbangkok.com/travel.html#phuket>
3. <http://www.stickmanbangkok.com/travel.html>
4. http://www.asianewsnet.net/level3_template2.php?l3sec=11&news_id=37983
5. http://www.lonelyplanet.com/letters/sea/tha_pc.htm
6. <http://www.phuket-info.com/forums/news-articles/10701-jet-ski-man-still-unconscious.html>
7. <http://www.stickmanbangkok.com/Weekly/weekly183.htm>

In contrast to the seminal account of early Bangkok reviewed last week, *Pen and Sail* by Nidhi Eoseewong, BJ Terwiel’s *Thailand’s Political History* (River Books, Bangkok, 2005, 328pp) is a more orthodox work, concentrating on the kings of Thailand and their chief advisers and adversaries until they were replaced by military dictators in the 1932 coup. The scope of the history is, as the subtitle indicates, “From the Fall of Ayutthaya to Recent Times”.

The author, Barend Jan Terwiel, is a Dutchman who first came to Thailand in 1962 at the age of 21. He spent a period as a Buddhist monk and taught Thai history at the Australian National University for more than 20 years. He is the author of a dozen books on Thai history.

He opens his account with an unfortunate and boring account of the hierarchical layers of society in the late Ayudhaya period, but then the pace picks up in the second chapter when King Taksin strides onto the scene:

“Between 1759 and 1767 the Siamese lost many battles, much manpower, wealth and resources. However, out of the devastation arose a military genius who built up an efficient, hard-hitting army, accustomed to bloodshed. This man, usually known by the name of Taksin, occupied the centre of the Siamese stage from 1769 until 1782.”



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

Before the rise of the aggressive King Allaungphaya of Burma, the Siamese had generally been at peace with their neighbor. In any case, battles were often a matter of bluff, noise and show.

Things changed with the Burmese invasion of 1765. When the Siamese army assembled in great numbers upon the field of battle in Suphan Buri, the Burmese went straight for the jugular.

“The Burmese demonstrated to the Siamese that the new phase evolved over the last century in mainland Southeast Asian warfare was there to stay,” Terwiel writes.

“This referred to the direct, fast, and efficient attack where troops were pushed to the limit and men killed indiscriminately in order to gain a victory. At that time the Siamese leaders had

A solid political history of Thailand

neither the effective command nor the measure of control over the troops to withstand such all-out attacks.”

They would learn soon enough. Taksin and his military protégés, including the founders of the Chakri dynasty, would lead lightning attacks to wrest back Siamese sovereignty over its heartland.

In general, Terwiel concurs with the assessment of Prince Damrong, “The Father of Thai History”, that the first five kings of the Chakri dynasty were extraordinary in their intelligence, energy and effectiveness, along with their advisers in the Bunnag family.

In a study of his own sources, he differs in some details from the standard schoolbook version of Thai history. He believes that accounts of Taksin’s insanity were exaggerated – in his last years, he was eccentric and irascible but certainly not mad – and that he was decapitated, not beaten to death in a sack.

His attitude toward Sisuriyawong Bunnag, the prime power in Siam during the early years of King Chulalongkorn’s reign, is also more balanced.

He is often portrayed as a reactionary in the face of the young King’s early reforms, but he was also a progressive and

highly capable administrator. The end of the Bunnag family’s fortunes came with Sisuriyawong’s son, Won, who “turned out a great disappointment. Won has been described as a man who blatantly used his powerful position for his own private advantage, enriching himself at the cost of his subordinates, and as being ‘a man without talent or strength of character’.”

The socially awkward son of King Chulalongkorn also proved a disappointment.

Prince Damrong summed up the situation: “The authority of the sovereign had fallen much in respect and confidence, the treasury was on the verge of bankruptcy, and the government was corrupted and the services more or less in confusion.”

Succeeded by his well-meaning younger brother King

Prajadhipok, the absolute monarchy was soon swept away by the social forces gathering in the Great Depression. The story of the military dictators who took over is not a pretty one.

Terwiel hastens his history forward to the 2005 re-election of Thaksin Shinawatra.

This is a large handsome book replete with illustrations, and I’d recommend it to any student new to Thai history.

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The Porsche Cayman S: sublime or just girlie?

Britain's *Autocar* described it as a "brilliant new Porsche", and the *Financial Times* called the Cayman "the most sublime and capable car Porsche has ever built".

But I don't like it!

While I was strolling past the Porsche stand at last October's Tokyo show with a colleague (also a Phuket resident), he remarked: "It's a girlie car..."

The truth of the matter is that the new Porsche Cayman is basically a Boxster coupé – and it does not work as such. True, it is extremely quick and has the usual Porsche refinement, and because it is mid-engined it handles better – particularly in the wet – than the more twitchy, rear-engined Porsche 911. But it somehow lacks the presence that the 911 has possessed for more than 40 years.

BBC TV's *Top Gear* presenter Jeremy Clarkson remarked, "It has no sense of passion." And that about sums it up: on paper, even on the road, it performs well, handles impeccably and makes all the right noises – but somehow it lacks that indefinable something.

The Porsche people, perhaps understandably, do not refer to the Cayman as a "Boxster Coupé"; they maintain that it is a standalone model. They say its chassis is as much as 150% stiffer than the Boxster, offering improved handling and road-holding, with no loss of comfort.

The engine is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Cayman S: a 3.4-liter, horizontally



By Jeff Heselwood

opposed six, developing 295bhp (217kW), the Cayman can accelerate from a standstill to 100kmh in an amazing 5.4 seconds, and it goes on to a top speed of 275kmh.

The six-cylinder block is based on the 3.2-liter unit from the Boxster S, but is fitted with cylinder heads and the VarioCam system from the 911 Carrera. This variable valve management improves mid-range torque, peaking at 340Nm between 4,000rpm and 6,000rpm.

The suspension is stiffer than the Boxster's, with firmer dampers. In addition, Porsche's highly acclaimed stability management system is fitted, which incorporates traction- and skid-control. Active suspension is optional, allowing the driver to select a variety of damper settings according to the conditions.

Also optional are ceramic composite brakes, although the regular discs are cross-drilled and internally vented. The ceramic brakes are a massive 350 millimeters in diameter but are considerably lighter than the normal steel ones.

Six airbags offer maximum passive safety, including head and thorax bags, while there are the

usual seatbelt pre-tensioners and belt force limiters.

Although the Cayman S is larger than the Boxster, it is still strictly a two-seater with the space behind the seats filled with engine; the trunk is behind that. There is also another, smaller, luggage compartment at the front.

Porsche maintains that the styling of the Cayman is reminiscent of the famed Porsche 550 Coupé Le Mans racer of 1953. Ironically, the iconic status of the 550 was confirmed by James Dean's tragic death in one in 1955.

The front end is unmistakably Boxster-inspired, although its separate fog lamps set into the air intakes add a touch of distinction, but the rear treatment is unique to the Cayman despite the use of Boxster lights. Inside the car it is 99% Boxster, as is the windshield, although this is set lower.

The performance of the Cayman S is certainly impressive: Porsche claims it can lap the Nordschleif, the northern circuit of the Nurburgring, in just eight minutes 20 seconds – faster than a Boxster and only marginally slower than a 911 Carrera.

It is still the styling that in this critic's view lets the new car down. But whether you love it or hate it, the Cayman is undoubtedly going to be a huge success for Porsche, reinforcing its position as the most profitable automaker in the world.

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

In The Stars

by Isla Star

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): If you're coming of age this week, then don't let it pass without a last-minute party plan. Cancer has some suggestions if you want to make this an unforgettable event. On Sunday, an encounter with someone new sets your heart beating faster. The color aquamarine can help you to recognize the truth.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): A fishy business deal should be easily identifiable. Ignore the signs at your peril. New ways to make money will be revealed, and these should lead to financial stability later. Being more flexible is the key to improving family relationships – those close to you are tired of your unwillingness to see their point of view.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): Pleasure is firmly on the agenda for you this weekend. Pack your cares away and make the most of social invitations. Next month promises to bring a series of deadlines, necessitating that you keep your nose to the grindstone. If you've been waiting for the go-ahead to make travel plans, expect to receive news on Monday or Tuesday.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): The answer to a burning question will be revealed, although it will not be entirely satisfying; expect clarification before the end of this month. Vacation plans start to look more exciting when you learn that a romantic interest could be in the same place at the same time. The number 6 is promising on Thursday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): You don't usually allow others to dictate the pace, but someone appears determined to have things all his or her way. Be tactful when pointing out that this isn't going to happen. A recent absence has caused romance to be shaky, but imminent reunion should rekindle the flames. Keep expenses to a minimum for the rest of this month.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): You are a dreamer, but there is method in your madness. Astound friends by coming up with a foolproof money-making scheme, but be careful who you invite to come on board. Capricorn has the right qualities, but Sagittarius will not honor promises. A wilting personal relationship needs a shower of affection. The number 9 is lucky on Tuesday.

LEO (July 24-August 22): You will be firing on all cylinders this week. Others will feel intimidated by your energy, so don't expect them to keep up with you. On Sunday, a family get-together goes more smoothly than you had expected; your diplomacy prevents a rift from growing. One business matter remains a gray area; wait until the end of February for clarification.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Keeping your feet on the ground will give a strong advantage over your business competitors. Set your sights on the target for success within a few months. A heart-to-heart talk clears the romantic air this weekend. On Tuesday, Taurus has an important message to pass on so listen carefully. The color sunshine yellow gives optimism.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): A friend's criticism upsets you this weekend. Take some time out to find the balance missing since the start of the year. Unnecessary worries are causing unhealthy stress. Expect to be pleasantly surprised mid-week when an overdue cash bonus lands in your lap. The number 3 brings luck on Thursday.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Expect excitement in unlikely places this week. If you are ready for change, prepare to pack your bags at the last moment. At work your reputation counts more than anything; expect an offer shortly. A romantic infatuation will lead to heartbreak; true love will grow soon. Leo disputes your financial calculations on Monday.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Put any plans to relocate on hold until mid-February. Any rash moves will be in the wrong direction. Cancer can provide the answers to unresolved arguments concerning cash. Look forward to a healthier bank balance soon, but don't push the boat out in the meantime. The color dark plum encourages practical thinking.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Even if you think that any savings will only be a drop in the ocean, it's worth making the effort. If you have started the year in the red, the stars are on your side – if you can cut corners. Certain family members will have a hard time understanding the need for this economy drive, but do not give in to pressure.



By S. TSOW

Presenting the *Tsow Te Ching*

There is a whole bunch of books out nowadays riding on the coat-tails of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*: *The Tao of Healing*, *The Tao of Leadership*, *The Tao of Money*, *The Tao of Pooh* – even *The Tao of Elvis*.

I've always been a big fan of Lao Tzu. So, I thought, why not jump on the bandwagon, write a book encapsulating my jocose philosophy, and call it the *Tsow Te Ching*?

Upon sober reflection (an activity normally alien to my temperament), I realized very well why not.

Nobody would read it, that's why. Nobody would publish it, either.

But perhaps I could craft a micro-version that might slip past the gimlet eyes of my editor on some late night while he was napping.

I call my philosophy Raffish Curmudgeonism, for I am a Raffish Curmudgeon.

The unabridged version of this philosophy has been compared to the complete works of Immanuel Kant in terms of volume, prolixity, and sheer incomprehensibility.

It has been analyzed and evaluated by Herr Dr Professor Ernst-Helmut von Wiesenheimer of Heidelberg University,

who waxes lyrical over its profundity and extolls it as "*ein grosser Scheissefarten*". This translates roughly as "a big load of bull poop".

Here, then, is the condensed version, the *Tsow Te Ching*, written in a subtle and intricate verse form known as dodgy doggerel:

The Tao that can be expressed in words
Is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named
Is not the eternal Name.

If this is true,
Why talk about them at all?
You might as well shut up.

Is there a God?
You bet your sweet patootie.
Our minds are too small to comprehend him,
But he must have a great sense of humor.
How do I know this?
Because he made *us*.

Why is the world imperfect?
I'll tell you why.
The world is imperfect
Because God is still working on it.
You expect him to get things right
The first time around?
It takes a little time to create a perfect world,
Especially with people like us in it.

Why does God permit evil?
Evil exists despite God,
Not because of him.
God is doing the best he can
With what he's got to work with.
He must get annoyed
At the armchair deities,
The Monday-morning quarterbacks,
Who are always pointing out his limitations
And criticizing his work.
You think you can get rid of evil?
You think you can create a better world?
Go ahead, be my guest.
Give it your best shot.

People ask about the meaning of life.
Why does life have to have a meaning?
If life has a meaning,
Then we have to conform to it.
If life has no meaning,
Only then are we free.
If you must have a meaning,
Create it yourself.
But don't let it fool you,
And don't cry when they take it away.

Should we return good for evil,
And turn the other cheek?
Or should we meet evil with justice,
And resist it with all our might?
I always favor the middle path;
Or, when faced with extremes,
Embrace both.
When someone strikes me on one cheek,

I first turn the other,
Just to put him off guard.
And then I knock his block off.

Laugh at the world,
Because it's always changing.
If it were unchanging,
We might take it seriously.
Why should we take seriously
Something that changes?
You can laugh at anything
If you know it won't last.
If you can't laugh at the world,
It's already beaten you.
Anyone who can't laugh at the world
Doesn't understand the situation.

Is the world one or many?
Both!
There's a oneness at the heart of things,
But you have to dig deep to find it.
Those who see it, say it shines.
They say it embraces everything,
And reveals itself to those it likes.
To make it like you,
You have to like it.

Seen from up close,
The Earth is imperfect,
Scarred with mountains and valleys,
Marred by the atrocities committed by men.
Seen from afar,
It is utterly lovely,
A perfect gemstone
Hanging in the darkness of space.
As is the Earth, so is mankind,
And all life, and God.
To put them in perspective,
We need to step back.

S Tsow can be flamed at stsow@yahoo.com, except when he's writing dodgy doggerel.

Is the tsunami definitely behind us now? I'm not sure – I see the ripples in people's lives every day, and how animated people become when the subject is raised shows me that we all have a lot more thinking to do about it.

Several people I know have made drastic changes in their lives; I know I have, too. Trying to get a settled set of priorities again is going to take a long time for many.

It was great to see those who played a significant role with the British Embassy receive official recognition in the New Year Honours List, and how generous of Martin Carpenter to acknowledge the teamwork behind the exemplary work of the British Embassy and its volunteers.

British Ambassador David Fall was not recognized. He has had a right going-over in the press in the UK, specifically at the hands of a high-profile family who did not have a good experience with the embassy.

In my experience, this was not typical. As someone at the heart of the action, I can tell you that this man displayed compassion and a humanity, and when I watched him dealing with the bereaved and injured he was outstanding. He shared their pain, their tears and their hopes, and did his best to make the best of an impossible job.

Best practise in such an epic catastrophe was not possible, but when it did occur, it was the British Embassy that led the way



By Konrad Stalin
(Konradstalin@hotmail.com)

every time. The British were the first to set up so many of the resources that the bereaved and injured needed, and most of the other embassies followed their lead.

It is not fashionable to be complimentary about one's own country's foreign service, and I can almost hear the groans as I write, but those who step back and take time to find out the facts will be both impressed and proud of the British achievements, regardless of their own nationality.

Lay off Bert: There are two things that made my heart a little warmer about this paper recently. The first was someone giving poor old Bloomin' Bert some sh... er, compost, in a letter to the editor. For peat's sake, it's a bloody gardening column – leaf him alone; haven't you got a life to live without having a pop at the gentle folk of the flowers?

The second thing was the Stool Pigeon begging for emails. That columnist is now learning something I have known for six years – if you write about Patong, everyone who owns a bar will hate you for not mentioning their premises, and will accuse you of

FLYING THE FLAG

taking bribes and only mentioning those bars that belong to your mates.

And they will never send you an email either, no matter how much you beg, about what events they have planned. They see no contradiction in this stance. Telepathy is the only way to get any info out of 'em, mate, and I am still trying to master the art.

There is a principle behind both Bert's and Stoolie's problems, of course, and it is this. When I worked in the National Health Service in the UK everyone hated their local hospital, regardless of how good or bad it was. It is just one of those local customs that we Brits are famous for.

When I went into nursing, one aunty said to me, "If I ever get run over, make sure they take me to Manchester Royal and not that Crumpsall – bunch of butchers, they are." Weeks later, an-

other aunt from the Crumpsall catchment area said, "If I ever get run over make sure they take me to Manchester Royal and not that Crumpsall – bunch of butchers they are."

You get the picture: the truth is that they were not really thinking, they were just trotting out the local script. I have been attacked with such vitriol in the past for things I have written in this column, and it has left me wondering whether the people attacking me were mentally stable. But then I realized that it's just the same as the local hospital syndrome – it's your local newspaper, so you cannot be seen to be a fan.

Poor old Bert; welcome to a whole new world of controversy. But don't take it to heart, it's not you they hate, it's the paper. And, actually, they don't really hate the paper deep down, they just feel that they should.

What a cracker: I had reason to stay in the Kata-Karon area recently, so I checked into the luxury apartment atop Angus O'Tool's, and it's a cracker. Everything for the single man about town, including a whirlpool bath and one of those all-round power showers. Add to that UBC and a DVD player, a great location, friendly atmosphere and their brilliant food. It was difficult to leave.



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Hotels must prepare now for another tsunami

As our Inside Story this week (pages 4 and 5) reports, some hoteliers in Phuket are ambivalent about how to prepare for the possibility of another tsunami.

While they say they recognize the need to be prepared, these hoteliers are also reluctant to scare guests and depress staff who were affected by the tsunami, by reminding them of the 2004 disaster through regular emergency drills, through literature and through signage for tsunami escape routes.

This reluctance is understandable, but misplaced. The world has changed. As much as one may wish to return to pre-tsunami normality, the earth's crust took a severe beating from the earthquake that gave birth to the tsunami. The quake moved Phuket Island 34 centimeters; sink holes appeared in Satun; and there have been earthquakes – possibly connected, possibly not – as far north as Chiang Mai.

The people of Phuket must learn to live with this changed geology and with the threat of another major quake and tsunami.

Reluctant hoteliers must do the same. They have a moral duty to look after those in their premises – both guests and staff. If this is not enough of an incentive, then they need to consider the potentially serious financial penalties to be paid by hotels that do not prepare thoroughly.

They must consider the possibility that failure to prepare and practice for another tsunami could – if there is another giant wave – lead to them being buried in lawsuits by those who lose family members or who are injured.

As the head of the National Disaster Warning Center, Dr Smith Thammasaroj, noted somewhat unsightly soon after the tsunami, "...these farang love to sue". People from other parts of the world, even Thailand, might also do likewise.

The reluctant hoteliers should also consider whether insurance companies will pay out again in the event of another disaster if the hotels' management cannot prove that they did everything possible to mitigate injury and loss of life.

Insurance companies took a huge hit last time, and are unlikely to feel too generous toward hotels that are not prepared for next time. Hoteliers who have not yet put their disaster plans in place – and rigorously practiced them – should examine how things are done in Hawaii or Japan.

Sensitivity to people's emotions comes naturally in Thailand, and particularly in the hotel community, but in this case it is misplaced.

– 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.

Piercing comment

What a fascinating article [*Gazette*, issue of January 14] from Stephen Fein about his local barber shop's "ear cleaning" service.

I go to a local hospital about once per year to have excess wax removed for 700 baht, so I was very interested to learn how a barber can use bamboo skewers to do it for 30 baht, especially as I have the same bamboo skewers – made by Leader Price – in my kitchen. Perhaps Leader Price could be notified of this new marketing opportunity.

I do hope Mr Fein writes more articles in the same vein, and I look forward to the next in the series: "Open heart surgery by the somtam lady" or "Brain tumor removal by your tuk-tuk driver".

Roger Neill
Chalong

Plucky pedophiles also in Phuket

Well done to the *Gazette* for the First Person article of January 14, where plucky Brit Steve Finn rose to defend equally plucky Phuket from allegations in the dastardly British media that pedophilia occurs on Phuket.

Or was Mr Finn complaining about the British media itself?

It was hard to tell from the story what his motivation was. If he intended to poke one in the eye of BritMedia and to get them to be more responsible, he failed.

If, however, he had an agenda to debunk the content of the original story – which I did not read – by saying, in defense of the island's tourism industry, that pedophiles are not attracted to Phuket, then he succeeded.

"Pious reporters may well

be offended at the sight of a young Thai girl with an older Western man, but that does not give them the right to paint every man in town as a pedophile waiting to pounce," wrote Mr Finn.

True; nor does it mean that pedophilia does not take place, although it is hardly likely to occur so blatantly. Further, to dismiss claims of pedophilia in Phuket by arguing that it stems from bored journos claiming that every bargirl is underage is dangerous.

If, as Mr Finn carefully avoids saying directly, pedophilia is not present in Phuket, then why is the network of organizations and police bureaus ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) campaigning so hard in Thailand and elsewhere in the region?

No smoke without fire, Mr Finn, and your opinions may just make a few of the region's pedophiles – such as the Swiss man whose arrest for pedophilia was reported in the same edition of the *Gazette* – sleep more soundly.

Francis Urquhart
Surin

Heads in the sand at Nai Harn Beach

First we had over a year of mess and labor as workmen "improved" the lakeside at astronomical cost.

Now, the Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) has shot itself in the foot yet again by destroying the car park, lowering it and filling it with sand, making it possible only for 4WDs to park there. I have small children and a hyperactive dog, so it is imperative for safety's sake to

park my regular ol' pickup truck as close as possible to the beach.

And why oh why did the *OrBorJor* wait until high season to do this?

H Higgins
Rawai

Two-wheeled discrimination

I pass through the police vehicle control point by the Caltex gas station at the foot of Patong Hill on an almost daily basis and witness hundreds of motorcycles being pulled over (except when it is raining, of course).

Cars, trucks and pickups are allowed through without harassment. On at least one occasion, I saw a car without its lights on being waved through – and this was at seven o' clock at night!

Does driving four wheels in Phuket automatically place one above the law?

Giovanni Boscolo
Phuket City

Law – Texas style

I have noticed many instances in which foreigners have complained about Thai laws and rules.

The Thai rules are very wise, and all foreigners should stop complaining about them or stay at home.

In an earlier issue of the *Gazette*, a foreigner was complaining about motorbikes not following the rules at junctions. An official said that these drivers are just trying to get from point A to point B, and aren't thinking about the rules. The police there at the time during rush hour are just trying to keep the traffic flowing properly.

I agree totally.

Steven Thurman
Amarillo, Texas, US

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

Letters

Bypass operation

The Phuket Highways Chief, Thanit Sakiya, should not have to apologize to the Governor for not being able to finish the bypass road by December 26 so that visitors would not be inconvenienced.

What visitors? They come and go all the time. That we who live here have long been inconvenienced by the road works is no small matter, but, in my opinion, a grand "thank you" should go to the Highways Chief and his hard-working band for what they have been able to complete.

Considering that they have been working under very difficult circumstances, they have not caused too much disruption for the motorists who use it every day, and I can well imagine there are still a few months work left to do. I think that the Governor should look at the roadwork done, and realize what a good job has been carried out up to now.

Derek S. Priest
Kathu

Leaving Phuket's jetset behind

I have been closely observing the jet-ski situation in Phuket over the years and wish to make an observation or two.

One day recently, while swimming 100 meters from the shoreline across the bay at Surin Beach, a jet-ski came within 10 meters of me before stopping and turning.

Ten minutes later an owner/operator appeared beside me on his jet-ski and informed me that I should move closer into the shoreline, as I was in danger where I was.

I normally swim at a distance of 50-100 meters from the shoreline, where waves and non-swimmers are not an issue for me.

I pointed to the vast ocean beyond, reasoning that the jet-skis should buzz around there, where other beach-goers can't smell the fumes or hear the engines. He reiterated that I should move closer to the shoreline.

I repeatedly asked him his name but he would not tell me, so I swam rapidly towards his machine to continue our conversation. He repeated that this was jet-ski territory and rode off into the sunset.

In 1992 "This is Thailand" [the oft-used illogical excuse for inane behavior] was amusing. It is now 2006, and "This is Thailand" no longer cuts it for me as a blanket excuse for a country trying to compete with so many others for our so-called "good hearts".

Phuket, you know where your income comes from. If you can't deal with these issues then you'd better start planting more rubber trees.

Travelbum
Kamala

I just wish I could have my mother back again

FIRST PERSON

My father does not live in the house with us, but every day he comes by to visit. He rents a house in Phuket City because it's too far for him to return to Kamala every day after his work.

I got a scholarship from my school that came from donations made by *farang*, and some from the government. I am not sure how much it is, but most of it was put in the bank. My father gives it to my older sister, and she gives me 20 baht each day for spending money.

The government rebuilt the school and now it has four floors, not two like it did before. We also get special training, such as at a camp they sent us to at the Satree Phuket School. They taught us about the sea, the coral and how to keep an eye on the ocean to tell if another tsunami might be coming. I don't know who organized it, though. The teachers just told us we were going, so we went. That was in December, be-

Nine-year-old Kanokporn Klaew-thanong of Kamala lost her mother, two younger sisters and her home in the tsunami disaster. A new house was built at the same location by a kind-hearted foreigner.

The badly damaged Baan Kamala school she attends was rebuilt by the Royal Thai Navy and renamed the Ratchaprachanukro 36 School, now under Royal Patronage.

Kanokporn now lives with her grandmother, older sister and younger brother. The *Gazette's* Ananya Hongsa-ngiam asked her what assistance her family had received from the government after the disaster, and how she feels about the tsunami more than a year after it took place



fore the tsunami anniversary.

I just wish I could have *khun mae* (mother) back again.

I went to work with my dad on the day of the tsunami. He was going to take the whole fam-

ily up to Chiang Mai for New Year's. But when we got back [home] we found our mother was dead and so were my two younger sisters.

My brother, the youngest of

all the children, survived. He is a student at the *OrBorTor* Kamala nursery school. My older sister survived too. She is a student at the Cherng Talay Wittayakom School.

A burning issue at Saphan Hin

My daughter recently went on a school field trip to the garbage incinerator at Saphan Hin.

She reported to me that she saw no procedures there for removing batteries from the garbage before it is burnt.

Burning batteries will result in heavy metal particles being emitted from the plant to rain down on the surrounding area.

Is it really true that the municipal incinerator has no procedures for disposing of such hazardous materials, or was she just not listening again?

Ken Sowton
Phuket

The Manager of the Solid Waste Incinerator Plant Phu-

ket, Bandit Jantawut, replies:

At the incinerator we do have procedures to separate garbage.

For example, building materials, fuel tanks and televisions, as well as batteries, cannot be burnt. Food scraps, plastics, wood and paper, however, are. Ash from this waste is then used as material to construct roads.

Metal items are buried in a landfill site, which is lined with PVC sheeting to contain the waste. This waste is then covered by soil, and vented to allow gases to be released. Levels of gas emissions are routinely monitored, as are levels of mercury, to ensure that they remain within safe limits.

Illegally dumping waste

In Soi Nanai 2 in Patong is an area of waste ground that used to lead to the OTOP market. For the past six months the area has been used as an ad hoc garbage dump.

There are signs warning people against illegal dumping but people seem to ignore them. What can be done?

Name & Address Supplied

The Director of Public Health and Environmental Science of Patong Municipality, Virat Jinda, replies:

It is our duty to remove any waste dumped in Patong. If someone calls us about illegal dumping, we will come and remove the waste. We will also try to find out who did this and tell them to stop.

If they ignore our request we will fine them although we prefer cooperation and for people to use their conscience as their guide. This is an increasing problem.

To report illegal dumping in the Patong area, please call Tel: 01-8968963 or 076-344106.

Issues & ANSWERS

Want to know how to get something done? Can't understand some of the dafter things that seem to go on in Phuket? Want to pitch an idea to Phuket's authorities or institutions? Then this is the forum for you.

Submit your queries or suggestions to us and we'll ask the appropriate people to respond to them.

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

Buying a secondhand car

How can I ensure a secondhand car is what it seems? How can I check that there is no outstanding loan or any financing on the vehicle? Is there a professional organization that can help?

Kevin Leary
Nai Harn

Theerayuth Prasertphol, Chief Technical Officer, Phuket Province Transportation Office (PPTO), replies:

Prospective buyers can verify a car's condition at a garage.

As for financial status, you can find out whether or not a secondhand car has any outstanding payments with any private credit company by checking with the PPTO's Registration Department, because if a person buys a car on finance and uses the car

as collateral for the loan, then the car will remain in the finance company's name until the final payment is made.

As far as I know, there are no professional organizations that check on the financial or mechanical status of a used car.

The Gazette notes:

If the current owner has taken out a private loan with a friend or a local loan shark, using the car as collateral, it is most likely that the lender will hold the log book until the loan is repaid.

Paying for the car will necessitate a three-cornered meeting between buyer, seller and lender.

As to choosing a garage, it's wise to check with friends first, to see which one they would recommend – or not.

ON THE MOVE



Briton **Alan Wade** has been promoted to Executive Vice President of Kata Group Resorts Thailand, which owns Kata Beach Resort, Karon Beach Resort and Phuket Orchid Resort. He was previously the group's General Manager. Mr Wade began his hotel career with the Trust House Forte Group and has since gathered more than 35 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has been with the Kata Group for the past eight years.



Volkert Geertsens, from the Netherlands, has been appointed Director of Sales for the JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa and the Renaissance Koh Samui Resort & Spa. After working in the US for Crown Plaza Grand Rapids in Detroit, Michigan, he became Acting Director of Sales & Marketing for the Amsterdam Marriott Hotel before moving to Phuket.



The new Public Relations Manager of The Metropole hotel in Phuket City is **Patitta Hongsakul**, 28, from Yala. She has a degree in mass communication from Phuket Rajabhat University. Before moving to The Metropole, she worked as PR Manager at the Thavorn Grand Hotel for almost two years.

KHUN WOODY'S
COMPUTER

Q&A: How to hook up

Q I read your column every week in the *Phuket Gazette* and always learn something new. I wanted to ask your advice on which Internet solution you recommend on Phuket. I live near Surin Beach. Ideally I would like to have a fairly fast connection that's affordable. Reliability is key. I currently have two TOT phone lines and use dial-up with Loxinfo at the moment ... painful.

It is also possible, I understand, to link into the fiber-optic cable running around the island. I read that Pacific Internet now has a direct link into Singapore: any recommendations?

KB, Surin

A Thanks, KB. John Seebach and I now trade off writing the computer column in the *Gazette* on alternate weeks, so he deserves (at least) half of your praise!

My schedule this past year has been horrendous, and with the arrival of Windows Vista later this year, I have four books that need to be rewritten. So life is going to get more hectic, if that's physically possible.

Most people find dial-up frustrating: at 30Kbps (30,000 bits per second), you can download small amounts of mail or surf in slow motion, but heaven help you if you need to update Windows or look at a large graphic image like a map or house drawing.

The bad news is that ADSL (broadband) in Phuket sometimes rivals dial-up speeds. It's not unusual to see 30Kbps to 40Kbps in the afternoon and evening on the government-sponsored 1,000-baht-a-month lines.

The good news is, at least

in my experience, ADSL speeds are not getting any worse, and may slowly be getting better. That's remarkable, considering that we are well into high season and demand should be growing quickly.

Some people swear by GPRS, using a mobile phone, at 30-40Kbps. Most pricing schemes leave you paying by the bit, which is always a bad idea, but you can check out the details at the DTAC shop in the basement of Big C.

By far the majority of fast lines in Phuket use the ADSL service from TOT or TT&T (both of which work with CAT for outbound connections).

ADSL-SAVVY

Check with your phone company to see if you can put ADSL on your existing phone line: the TOT office near Power Buy in Central Festival mall and TT&T's office near the banks in Central Festival both have ADSL-savvy service people who speak good English.

The main concern is whether your house sits close enough to the phone company's switch, as ADSL has severe distance constraints. Don't worry. You can put ADSL on an existing phone line – the ADSL-enabled line will continue to work for regular telephone connections, faxes and the like.

My experiences with the TOT and TT&T ADSL services have been the subject of many diatribes in this column. As for speed, in the mornings I frequently get 1,200Kbps at my home office in Andaman Hills (TT&T), and 800Kbps at the Sandwich Shoppe in Patong (TOT).

Generally those numbers fall by half around noontime, and usually go into the 100-200 range by late afternoon, with dips down to 30Kbps or 40Kbps not unusual at all.

Given a choice, I would choose TT&T over TOT, both because of the speed difference, and because TOT still has not figured out how to configure its servers automatically, so you have to manually override the TOT settings – a constant irritant.

At one point, we were all hoping that Phuket would be able to connect to the Internet backbone, which runs fairly close to the island.

I've been told that an economic analysis of the situation proved that it just wasn't worth the expense; it makes far more sense to improve the connection to Bangkok.

It remains to be seen how much effort will be devoted to that worthy cause.

As for Pacific Internet, I have great hopes. John Seebach has written about this and the direct link to Singapore in his col-

umn and promises more details as the service becomes available.

My initial experiences have not been positive: I checked their website, and could find no information about Phuket connections. I sent an email to the address listed on the website, and got no response.

I, for one, would welcome an affordable, reliable, reasonably fast connection.

Q I have just bought a new computer. I cannot say I am impressed with XP. Windows 98 was easier. One thing that annoys me is that XP assumes that one is always connected to the Internet. I have a dial-up connection, and sometimes I need to connect to the Internet manually, so that certain programs (like anti-virus updates) will work. How can I connect to the Internet in XP? It was easy in 98.

MS, Kata

A If you want to connect to the Internet directly, click Start | Control Panel | Network and Internet Connections | Network Connections. There should be an icon for your dial-up connection (say, one that says Loxinfo or something similar).

Right-click on the icon and choose Create Shortcut. When Windows offers to put it on the desktop, click Yes.

Go back out to your desktop. You should see a new icon

there that says "Shortcut To" and the name of your dial-up connection. Double-click on that icon any time you want to start the connection manually.

Q I have the latest version of Windows Media Player. When I try to play a VCD on my computer, I get a message, "Windows Media Player cannot play the file. One or more codecs required to play the file could not be found." Why won't WMP play my VCDs?

RS, Phuket City

A WMP needs codecs (coder/decoder programs) in order to translate the data that's on CDs into a form that your computer can handle.

Originally WMP shipped without any codecs except those for Microsoft's proprietary WMA and WMV files – if you have the old WMP, you can't even play (or rip or burn) MP3 music files.

NOT ENOUGH CASH

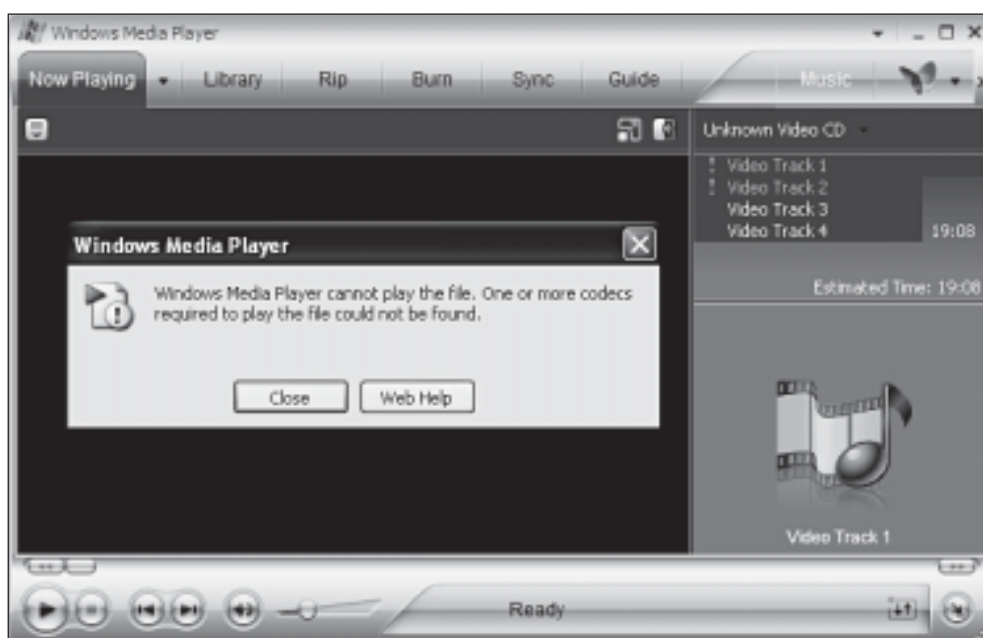
Fortunately, Microsoft saw the error of its ways and decided to stop trying to sell you an MP3 codec. (The fact that Apple shipped MP3 codecs free in its iTunes media player may have had some influence on Microsoft's decision.) Recent versions of Windows Media Player all have free MP3 codecs.

But Microsoft continues to try to sell you codecs for DVD and VCD files. I guess it doesn't have enough money.

The simplest solution: download and install the free trial version of WinDVD (www.intervideo.com/jsp/WinDVD_Download.jsp). When you install WinDVD, the codecs come free and they stay around even if you decide not to buy WinDVD.

Windows Media Player will find the codecs and use them. Or at least try to use them. The simple fact is that WinDVD runs rings around WMP when it comes to playing VCDs and DVDs. You may just find yourself shelling out the 1,600 baht for a registered copy.

Woody Leonhard
woody@khunwoody.com



Windows Media Player doesn't have built-in codecs to allow you to play VCDs and DVDs. Microsoft tries to sell them to you, but there are better alternatives, and they are free.

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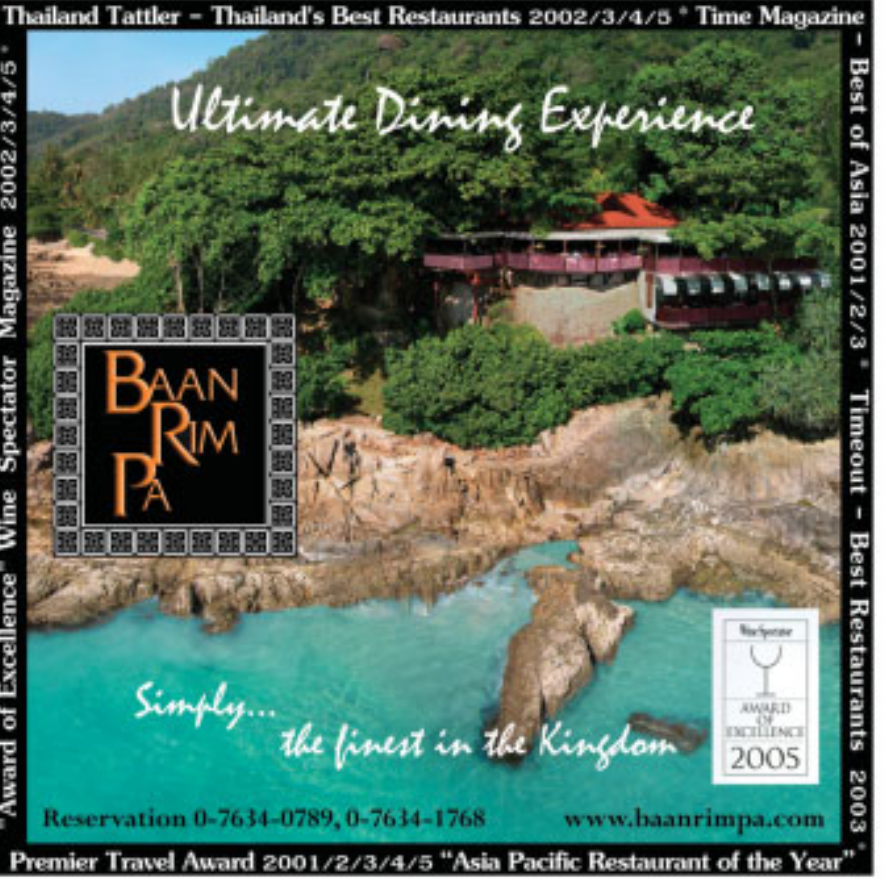


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Open-air food court targets the hungry

By Nattamon Ratcharak

PHUKET CITY: Although many Phuket businesses are still, it seems, languishing in the post-tsunami doldrums, shopping and dining will bring in the punters, according to Sujittra Kanokvanichakul, Marketing Manager of the Jatujak-Phuket Co, which opened its Tor Roong open-air food court at JJ Market earlier this month.

Open from 4 pm to midnight daily, the 3,200-square-meter area – part of JJ Market's 16-rai parcel on Phang Nga Rd – of-

fers shoppers the chance to snack on local classics such as *pad Thai* or noodle soup for between 25 and 35 baht a dish, as well as a selection of beers, at any of the 40-odd food stalls currently occupied.

"Tor Roong will also have a play zone for children and an 'activity zone' for daily live music and promotional events," K. Sujittra told the *Gazette*. "We are focusing on food and shopping first, however," she added.

K. Sujittra said that she expects the remaining 30 or so food stalls to be occupied soon, each

paying 6,000 baht a month for a 9-sqm plot or 5,000 baht per month for an 8-sqm site, with electricity included in the rent.

She claimed that JJ Market expects to recoup its 400,000-baht investment in developing the food stall site within six months.

"Tor Roong is attracting an 80:20 split between Thais and foreigners at the moment," she claimed. "Although with our marketing strategy of Thai and English-language advertising on several radio stations, billboards and flyers, we expect this to become 50:50 eventually."



Forty food stalls operate currently, with room for a further 30.

Phuket tops in the south for foreign investors

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

PHUKET: Despite the tsunami on December 26, 2004, the year 2005 saw an increase of 119 in the number of businesses registered in Phuket, compared with 2004.

Veerachai Tantiwathana-vallop, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Business Development Office (BDO), told the *Gazette* that Phuket ranks as the top province in Southern Thailand in company registrations.

Between January 1 and December 30 last year, 1,666 new limited partnerships and limited companies were registered – 119 more than in 2004. Some 321 businesses were deregistered compared with 546 in 2004.

K. Veerachai added that about 70-80% of the newly registered businesses have foreign investors or partners.

He said, "I always ask foreign investors why they are interested in investing in Phuket and they answer that the return on investment is healthy and relatively speedy, that there is good service [from the government] and the paperwork for setting up a business is relatively easy.

"Nowadays in Phuket we have business investors of every nationality because Phuket is so popular with tourists. The situation is different from before; in the past most of the investors came from Germany, Britain, Denmark and the US. Most of last year's investors were involved in the tourist industry, though not so many in service busi-

nesses such as resorts or hotels," he added.

He said that, in his view, too many people were opening restaurants and that if a new venture was not outstanding in this field, and was not in a good location, it would almost certainly fail.

Leading registrations last year were spa and fitness centers, followed by luxury property and land developments. Also vibrant was the diving sector, along with swimming pool installation and maintenance.

As for the property market, he said, it is moving inland and upwards. Buyers are showing preferences for hillside residences, perhaps as an after-effect of the tsunami, but also perhaps because land

nearer the coast has become so expensive.

"Even though tourists were slow in returning to Phuket after the tsunami the investors were not – they were back in force just two months after the wave hit," K. Veerachai said.

"I feel that 2006 will be another good year for Phuket. In only the first few days of the year we have had 10 new companies registering. People who own a lot of land can make big profits this year because foreigners like to stay here," he concluded.

As of December 30 last year, there were 10,925 companies registered in Phuket. Registration fees collected by the BDO rose slightly in 2005, from 33.1 million baht the previous year to 33.3 million.



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The rise in the price of gold has grabbed the attention of the media and, if the volume of email I receive from readers of this column is any indication, private investors as well. Many fund managers also share this view.

Gold is a commodity that somehow grips the human imagination. Outside of oil – and to a lesser extent natural gas – minimal attention is given by the public to other commodities. It may come as a surprise to many people that some grades of coal almost quadrupled in price during 2005. Many other commodities such as silver also recorded significant gains.

It seems likely that the price of gold will continue on an upward trend in 2006 – and there are many reasons for this assessment.

They include a rapidly rising number of people in Asia and other regions of the world who have achieved at least a modicum of wealth for the first time in their lives.

RESERVES

The vast majority of these people are not sophisticated investors; their newly acquired wealth, even if it is modest amounts, will be placed in three major areas: property, cash in bank deposits and/or gold.

Asian central banks are holding gigantic sums of money in foreign exchange reserves. They have only to invest – collectively – a tiny percentage of these assets in gold to make a significant impact on global demand.

The head of one foreign exchange trading company recently stated that the average daily turnover in the world gold market equates roughly to the daily trading volumes of the Polish zloty.

Additionally, private and institutional investors are seeking alternatives to real estate, stock-

ALL THAT GLISTERS



From the first trading day in 2006, most currencies started rising against the US dollar

markets and bonds. The introduction of exchange traded funds (ETFs), which trade in an identical manner to shares on stockmarkets, now include, in some countries, gold ETFs, which are actually backed by physical gold.

Why buy the actual metal when you can buy it in paper format at the click of a switch? This makes it simple for pension funds, mutual funds and hedge funds to hold, and is an alternative to buying gold shares.

There is also an increased aversion to risk in the global investment community. This has been spurred by various factors; fears of natural disasters, terrorism, pandemics and substantial global current account imbalances.

There are fears of inflation, but this is almost exclusively confined to the general public. The reason for this dichotomy in thinking between the public and expe-

rienced investors is simple. The public note that commodity prices, in general, are rising; the investment community takes a broader view.

Experienced investors note that, in addition to public perception, there are other non-inflationary and deflationary forces at work. Outsourcing to cheaper manufacturing bases such as China and India has a strong deflationary effect. In many first-world economies, productivity growth exceeds wage increases.

There are two different types of inflation: The first is known as “headline inflation”, which includes changes in energy and food prices. The second is “core inflation” which excludes energy and food prices. It is when the former spreads its effects to the latter that problems arise.

Substantial numbers of people have also criticized certain governments for excluding

real estate prices from inflation indicators as they suspect the governments are being deceitful. In fact, what these governments are trying to achieve is a more accurate overall picture.

If we could imagine a scenario in which everything was included in the definition of core inflation – one where real estate prices fell even slightly and commodity and energy prices also fell by coincidence – the impact could well lead to the overall economy showing a deflationary picture.

In this event, central banks would reduce interest rates sharply, increase money supply and the result would end up in a economic boom that would lead to overall inflationary pressures that would derail the whole system. If governments included real estate prices as a component they might as well throw in stock-market prices too.



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

After all they are merely different asset classes.

At the time of writing, most currencies are rising against the US dollar. This started from the first trading day in 2006. The catalyst that provoked this reaction was the release of US non-farm payroll numbers on Friday, 6 January for December 2005.

The market was expecting 200,000 new jobs to be created, but just 108,000 were. However, the markets ignored the fact that, included in the same statement, was an upward revision. In November non-farm payroll number rose from 215,000 to 305,000. The actual unemployment rate fell from 5% to 4.9%. This, again, was ignored.

The market felt that this would help pressure the “Fed” to pause earlier in its interest rate increase cycle.

Were I managing foreign currency positions, I would have taken the same route, that of easy profit. For investors taking a slightly longer term view, it is worth remembering that currency markets probably have an attention span less than that of the average five-year-old.

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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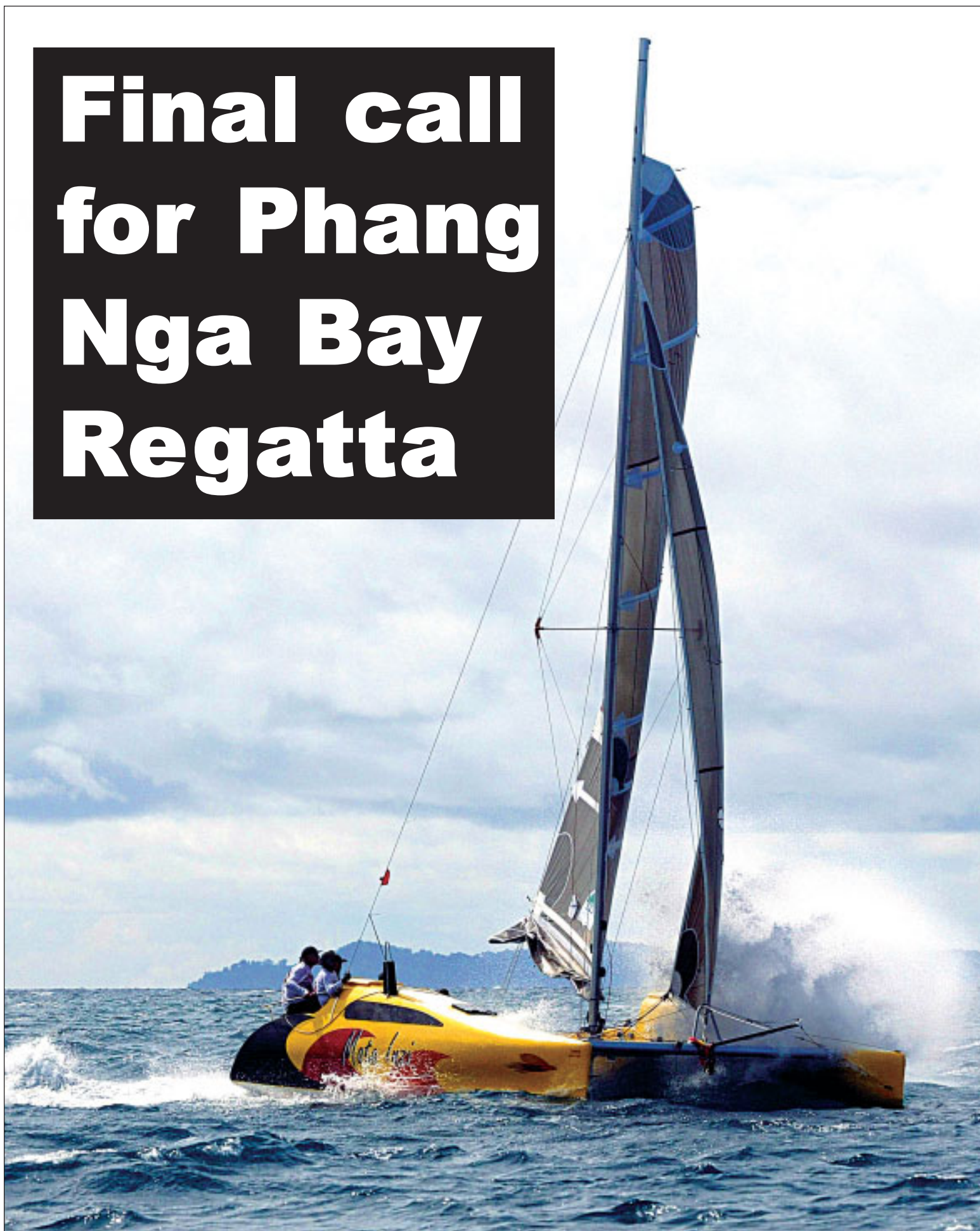
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PATONG BEACH

Final call for Phang Nga Bay Regatta



By Chris Husted

PHUKET: The organizing committee of the 9th QBE Phang Nga Bay Regatta, which will be held from January 27-31, has put out a final call for entrants to register in an event that has gained a reputation as probably the "most fun regatta on the Phuket yachting calendar".

At the time of going to press, 33 yachts had been entered, comprising 10 catamarans, Dr Ian Nicholson's new 80-foot *Intrigue*, which will be the largest yacht in the fleet, and Steve Lawrence's brand-new Jeanneau *Babadudu* in its regatta debut.

The battle for top honors is expected to be between David Lindhal's *La Samudra*, winner of last year's regatta, and John Vause's *Ruby Tuesday*, which came second in IRC 1 in the King's Cup.

Regatta President Andrew Craig said that he expects the final number of yachts to reach nearly 40, considered to be the maximum number of entrants.

"Our normal experience for this regatta is that at least 20% of the entrants turn up on the day. We hope that, this year, the prospective participants have read and understood that the first 40 yachts to register are the lucky ones," he said.

LATECOMERS

"We are chasing the habitual latecomers to ensure that, whatever happens, no one will miss out," he added.

The last chance to enter the event will be from 5 pm on January 27 at the registration desk at the Royal Phuket Marina, which is the venue for the opening party.

The following morning the fleet will race to Koh Yao Noi, where the Paradise Resort is offering discounted room rates for the night to yachties who book in advance.

Day 2 will take the fleet to the Sheraton Krabi for the Chinese New Year Party. Again, special room rates are available for entrants who book ahead.

On Day 3 is the "downhill" run to the Phi Phi Islands for the traditional party at the Hippy Bar, which this year is being organized by Raimon Land.

The final run to Ao Chalong should, current winds persisting, allow the faster yachts to show their true pace.

For more information contact Tom Howard (Tel: 076-381716, 01-7971120; Email: tom@sea-phuket.com) or visit the official regatta website at www.bayregatta.com

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King's Cup Multihull Class winner *Moto Inzi*, seen here under full power, is one of 10 catamarans signed up to take part in this year's Phang Nga Bay Regatta, from January 27-31.

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CHILDREN'S DAY SOCCER

PHUKET: The Phuket Sports Authority organized an indoor soccer competition for children aged between eight and 12 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm on Children's Day (January 14) at Phuket Municipality's Gymnasium 1, in Saphan Hin. Twelve local teams – a total of 136 children – took part.

The Dragon Junior Team beat the Suan Mae Jo B team, 3-

1 and Suan Mae Jo A team beat Bangneaw Municipality School with a score of 2-0.

The Dragon Junior team, the champions, received a trophy and 1,000 baht. The first, second and third runners up – Suan Mae Jo B team, Suan Mae Jo A team and Bangneaw Municipality School – won trophies and 500 baht, 300 baht and 200 baht, respectively.



Battle for places in sepak takraw league

PHUKET: Those wanting to catch some of Thailand's best sepak takraw players in action will want to attend the Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) "Thailand League Division 2" competition at the Saphan Hin Sports Complex Gymnasium from January 29 to February 2.

Teams from Krabi, Chumphon, Trang, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Phattalung, Yala, Ranong, Satun, Surat Thani and Phuket will vie for the right to play in the newly established Thailand League Division 1 in Bangkok. The league was set up by the SAT to establish the sport as an international standard event, for possible inclusion in future Olympic Games and other international sports competitions.

Sepak takraw, native to Southeast Asia, is similar to volleyball in that each of the two three-man sides hits a small rattan ball over a high net. Playing on a modified badminton court, each team gets three chances to kick, knee, shoulder or head the ball back to the opposing team.

As in volleyball there are passes, sets and spikes. Unlike volleyball, however, the arms and hands may not come into contact with the ball. This results in some highly difficult and acrobatic moves, such as spiking the ball with the feet.

Play will start at 8:30 am on each day of competition, and admission is free.



Well-known pro golfer Alex Pejka, 35, (blue T-shirt), born in Marienbad, Czech Republic, but who moved to Germany as a child, took time out recently from playing in the US PGA to visit Laguna Phuket Golf Club (LPGC).

Alex is pictured with Bruce Whitehead (rear, left), one of LGPC's golf pros, and seven potential pro golfers of the future who practice and play as part of Laguna Tiger Cubs Club.

Alex turned pro in 1989 and enjoyed one of his biggest tournament wins at the 1995 Volvo Masters at Valderrama, the year he also came 6th on the European Tour's Order of Merit.

Island Furniture Cricket League

PHUKET: After a shaky start due to inclement weather, the Island Furniture Cricket League (IFCL) has scheduled its Round 1 matches, all of which will be played at British Curriculum International School (BCIS).

Match 1 Saturday Jan 21: KBGCC (Kamala Beer Garden Cricket Club) v Patong Cricket Club (PCC). First ball at noon.

Match 2 Sunday Jan 22: Island Cricket Club (ICC) v BCIS. First ball 10 am.

Match 3 Sun Jan 29: ICC v KBGCC. Time to be confirmed.

Match 4 Sun Feb 5: KBGCC v BCIS. Time to be confirmed.

Match 5 Sat Feb 11: BCIS v PCC. Time to be confirmed.

Match 6 Sun Feb 12: PCC v ICC. Time to be confirmed.

Spectators are welcome.

For more information, contact Rich Brown at Tel: 01-7193414 or Email richardwkbrown@hotmail.com

Patong Darts League

January 10 results: Queen Mary* 5 Two Black Sheep 4; Dog's Bollocks 8 Boss Bar* 1; Amigos* 7 Winchester 2; Valhalla 3 Didi's* 6; Piccadilly* 4 Shakers 5; Offshore* 4 Coyote Bar 5. (* = Winner of beer leg)

January 24 matchups: Queen Mary v Boss bar; Dog's Bollocks v Shakers; Amigos v Coyote;

Valhalla v Winchester; Piccadilly v Two Black Sheep; Offshore v Didi's. (Home teams first)

Standings: 1. Queen Mary (8pts); 2. Amigos (7); 3. = Valhalla, Shakers, Didi's (6); 6. Dog's Bollocks, Coyote, Offshore (4); 9. Piccadilly, Two Black Sheep (3); 11. The Boss Bar (2); 12. Winchester (1).

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Let's face it – most of us are muppets at heart. I don't mean that we all look like Kermit the Frog, play the drums like Animal (definitely my favorite muppet) or throw hissing fits like Miss Piggy. We're all basically a bit thick in certain areas; we're all numpties in a way.

So what is a numpty? It certainly doesn't appear in any dictionary I'm aware of. I'm not even sure that I know how to spell it – I kind of made this version of the spelling up. A numpty isn't necessarily dumb, but just does daft things on occasion. Several friends of mine can definitely be numpties.

How about those who perch their glasses on top of their heads, then spend large amounts of time whingeing about how they've lost them and can't find them anywhere?

LIMITATIONS

Then there's a young lady who springs to mind who, on admiring the complexities of a huge imported motorcycle we saw parked in the street, wondered if the vents among the array of dials and switches were for the air conditioning. True numptyism. Another new word for the dictionary.

I'm well on the way, myself, to reaching these dizzy heights. I know that I have my own limitations. Who can honestly say that they haven't done a few really dumb things in their time?

Fortunately for me, even wannabe numpties – or even full-blown numpties – can tend a garden in this corner of the globe. The bottom line is that absolutely



The man who worries about the touch-me-nots dotted all over the lawn needs to get out more.

Gardening for muppets and numpties

anyone can be a gardener on Phuket. Wherever there is a patch of soil around, plants will grow willingly, and produce more of their kind with very little effort

on the part of the person who's supposed to be in charge.

When any person makes a choice as to what kind of plants to grow in a particular place, that person automatically becomes a gardener.

Plant a few fruit trees, and being a farmer is an option too, I suppose.

Having said that, if the conditions are such that it is hard to make a choice, why shouldn't one just adopt the plants that grow there naturally?

By making the most of them, one may still become a gardener or a farmer to some degree. And given the plethora of garden centers on the island, it is not as if much effort is required.

The most independent work we generally have to do is to pinch a cutting from a neighbor,

or visit K. Somchai at the local nursery. And the plants that choose to make their homes here are pretty interesting and almost universally impressive.

There's really no reason why every Phuket household shouldn't have a garden – if there isn't a square foot of land, there is probably a balcony or a porch, and there are definitely windows. Wherever sunlight falls, plants can be encouraged to grow.

If I can get somewhat soppy for a minute, one plant in a tin can can be a more inspiring garden to some than an entire acre of grass and flowers to another.

The satisfaction of a garden doesn't depend on where it happens to be, or even on the cost or rarity of the plants. It's all down to the individual.

In most cases, I think that a potential gardener will be happier if he or she has no rigid ideas. Gardens are fickle, not just with a novice or numpty, but with everyone. They have minds of their own, so if you just let them quietly get on with business of growing in their own way, it gives you that extra time to sit back and enjoy a beer. Let the gardens think they're in charge – it works every time.

Basically, if the plants in your garden grow and thrive, you can be content that you've done a great job. If the plants that thrive the best happen not to be the ones that you planted, they are still plants, so what the hell. You've got to be doing something right, after all.

A patch of enthusiastic, slightly weedy lantana, growing and crowding in luxuriant abandon, may actually be a more worthy object of affection than a hedge of colorful ixora, in which every spark of life and spirit and individuality has been sheared out and suppressed. These sterile types of garden just aren't my cup of tea, somehow.

The man who worries morning and night about the touch-me-nots dotted all over the lawn firstly needs to get out more. Next, he'll probably relax a bit if he realizes that they're actually quite cool plants. The kids certainly love those little plants that shrink down their leaves immediately on touching them, so why can't we?

If I were sad enough to write a motto over the gate of a garden, I would probably choose the remark that Socrates, a dead Greek bloke, is said to have made on examining the range of goods on sale at a market – "How many things I can do without!"

Numpties of the world unite. Anyone can become a gardener here, as the garden itself does all the hard work.

Quoting Socrates in the process is probably not advisable, but having a beer in hand while you decide what to do next seems to work very well. Cheers.

Want to know more
about a plant
in your garden?

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Decor

by Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

The serious business of bonsai



A very funny cartoon appeared several years ago in Britain's weekly satirical magazine, *Private Eye*. It showed a man in traditional Japanese dress, a look of abject horror on his face. At the bottom right of the picture was a tiny wisp of smoke. The caption read, "Run, run! It's a bonsai forest fire!"

The cartoon was, of course, making a mockery of the serious business of bonsai – the art of "dwarfing and shaping trees and shrubs in shallow pots by pruning, controlled fertilization," as Webster puts it.

It's an ancient oriental horticultural art form, meaning literally "tree in a pot". These days, the art of bonsai is enjoyed worldwide. As a talking point for inside the home, it has few equals.

Today, bonsai are available from some department stores and from garden centers, although most of these are young cuttings or "starts", and not true bonsai. They are a starting point for the real thing, not the real thing itself.

A tree planted in a small pot is not a bonsai until it has been pruned, shaped and trained into the desired shape. You need to learn as much as you can about bonsai, since information is the key to making a true work of art.

As your knowledge and confidence increase, so will your enjoyment of what you can create by shaping nature – and having trees inside your home, as well as outside.

Suan Mai Thai has three sizes of bonsai available; small (80 baht), medium (120 baht), and large (180 baht). For more information contact Suan Mai Thai at 187/7 Phang Nga Rd, Talad Yai, Phuket City, or call Pawinee Kulawanich at Tel: 09-8731707.

Suttichon Karnkasate on Yaowarat Rd (on the road to Phuket Rajabhat University) stocks only small bonsai, at 35 baht. Contact Duangruthai Chumpornpun at Tel: 09-8745416.



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The Beach Boulevard. A smart move in Paradise

These luxury boutique hotel-style guesthouses are designed specifically for sale to discerning investors looking for a property with potential in the Kata Beach area. The project is being developed and managed by a professional team with more than 10 years' experience.

The Beach Boulevard is located just 300 meters from the Club Med, a few minutes away from the popular Kata Beach, and is a short drive from Phuket City (30 minutes) and Phuket International Airport (50 minutes).

Each three-story hotel compound has 12 bedrooms and 13 bathrooms. Facilities include air conditioning and water heaters.

The suites in each boutique hotel all come fully equipped with a kitchen, dining room, living room and luxurious office area. High-quality materials have been used throughout.

Mobile : +66 (0)1-8927406

The Beach Pool Villa
KATA PHUKET THAILAND

Every day is a holiday at The Beach Pool Villa.

4 units of detached two-story homes on 11 rai of land. Only 400m from Kata Beach. Feel the warm ocean breeze and enjoy the uniqueness of being in a tropical paradise.

A tropical modern-style home villa suits local weather. The overall design emphasizes simplicity. An L-shaped pool allows more space for family activities and sports. Glass walls make it possible to view all areas of the house. A private swimming pool filled with salt water has therapeutic benefits. It is located in an enclosed area adjoining the sea 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 14 x 25m. Usage area is 415sqm with swimming pool included.

Each unit comprises :
3 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, living room, reception room, dining room, kitchen, maid's room, storage room, 2 parking spaces with storage facilities. 4 x 10m swimming pool includes pump room.

www.phuket-goldenplace.com

Financed by Siam Commercial Bank (PCL) Co., Ltd.

Home of the Week

Surin

21st CENTURY LIVING

On the hillside in the exclusive Ayara Surin estate, Villa 21 commands beautiful panoramic views across Surin Beach and the Andaman Sea.

Combining traditional Thai architecture, high standards of finish and more than 625 square meters of living space, Villa 21 offers both the opportunity for a wonderful home and an attractive investment opportunity.

The home is laid out across a sloping 1,044sqm plot of land, with the living space arranged on two levels. The upper level contains the lounge, dining room, kitchen, two master bedroom en suites, rear garden and patio.

All these rooms benefit from wood-finished ceilings; in the lounge, the ceiling rises to some six meters at its apex.

Teak flooring is laid throughout the villa, which has been kept in immaculate condition.

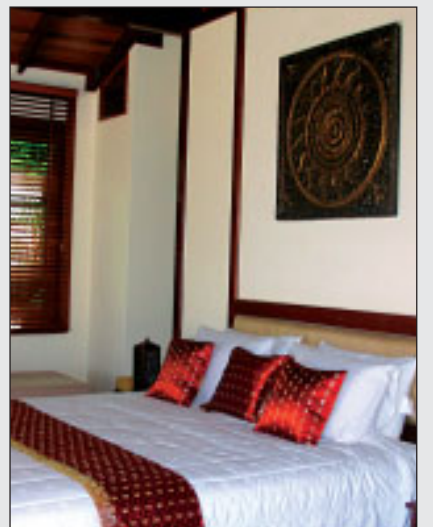
GRANITE

The kitchen is functional and appointed with Teka appliances, and black granite is used for work surfaces with slate tiles for the floor.

The double master en suites have both beds and day beds. Each bathroom is well-designed, with "his and hers" vanity areas and sunken granite whirlpool baths with glass surrounds that overlook exterior water features and a rock garden.

In all rooms an abundance of glass wooden-framed sliding doors affords the whole upper floor area a bright and airy feel. The dining area is also flanked by glass sliding doors on two sides, providing both access to and views of the rear garden.

The lounge and master bedroom en suites themselves open out onto 160sqm of sand-washed deck area, which is complete with



a 60sqm black-tiled infinity pool, outdoor shower, and dining and living salas. The dining sala seats eight comfortably; beside it there is a barbecue. The sea views from this area are stunning.

On the lower level of the

property are two more bedrooms, a laundry, maid's room and secure storage area.

One of the downstairs bedrooms has been designed as a guest bedroom, and has both a bath and shower. The other is

currently used as a multi-purpose room, but it could easily accommodate a further two guests.

The lower bedrooms have direct access to the front garden which runs the length of the villa. Both front and rear gardens are beautifully landscaped and have been maintained by Knight Frank.

The gated entrance and car parking are to the side, with room for two vehicles.

Surin Beach and local res-

taurants are just minutes away.

The property is for sale, with offers starting at 39 million baht, on a 90-year leasehold arrangement, with the buyer owning the villa in his or her own name.

For further information, please contact Stephen O'Brien at Knight Frank Phuket on Tel: 01-8255126; Email: stephen@knightfrankthailand.com



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Construction Update

by Anongnat Sartpisut

MAI KHAO: Turtle Cove, comprising 104 apartments in four blocks on four rai, is located on Mai Khao Beach and features sea views off Phuket's west coast. It is about a 10-minute drive to Phuket International Airport and a 10-minute drive to the Blue Canyon Golf Club.

Jo Swain, Sales & Marketing Manager of Lersuang Group Holdings Ltd – a project management company – told the *Gazette* that construction started in December and will be completed in 18 to 24 months.

The two-bedroom apartments of 142 square meters each include two bathrooms, a living and dining room, and a kitchen. Ground floor apartments have the option of a whirlpool bath with beach views. Prices start at 11.95 million baht.

TERRACE

The apartments will be furnished with high-quality local materials. They will have floor-to-ceiling marble-clad bathrooms, polished hardwood and ceramic-tiled floors, and granite worktops in the kitchens. Each apartment will also have its own large, private terrace.

Turtle Cove will also include such facilities as a restaurant, café and bar, a 25-meter swimming pool and a spa. A wide range of beach equipment will be available.

Ms Swain said, "We are currently working on three different projects, including the Turtle Cove beachfront condominium project in Mai Khao."

"Turtle Cove has been designed primarily as an investment



A panoramic view of the site for the new project, with Phuket International Airport clearly visible in the far right of the picture.

Tempting Turtle Cove

property to maximize capital gains and rental income returns for the investor. The owners and occupiers will benefit from high-quality, all-encompassing management and services.

"It offers a size and number of apartments designed to appeal to Phuket's burgeoning European travel market."

She added, "People looking to diversify their investments are attracted by Turtle Cove's strong rental returns and prospects of high capital gains."

"Our target market is investors who would like the option of extended holidays in Thailand uti-

lizing the property as a second home, rather than owner-occupiers."

Pre-launch sales have been good, Ms Swain said. "Eight of

the 104 units have already been sold."

For more information, contact Lersuang Group Holdings Ltd

at 293/7-9 Moo 1, Srisoonthorn Rd, Cherng Talay, Thalang, Phuket 83110. Tel: 076-270656 or Fax: 076-270138. www.turtlecovephuket.com

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Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

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2-STORY, RAWAI

house. 130 & 200 sqm house with Chanote title, 400m from the beach. Asking 900,000 baht. Please contact for more details. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

HILLSIDE HOUSE



Air-conditioned, 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom house by Loch Palms Golf Course, 10 minutes to British Curriculum Int'l School (formerly Dulwich). Has living room, dining room, modern Thai and European amenities, wood floors, solar-heated hot water, satellite TV and 2 phones. Huge covered open area can add extra bedrooms, bathroom. Price: 7 million baht. Please call for more info. Tel: 06-2839806 (Leons), 01-5385018 (Toi).

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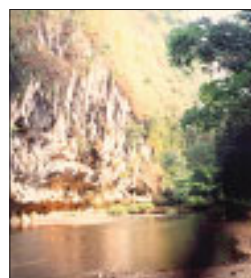
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Property Gazette

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in Land & Houses Park. 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms. Asking 6.2 million baht. Please contact for full details. Tel: 07-8852969. Email: junekata@hotmail.com

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you'll ever make! Very nice house for sale in Land & Houses Park, Chalong. First floor: large living room with doors to the garden, toilet, kitchen and storeroom. Second floor: large open area with balcony, 3 bedrooms with toilet and shower. 2 bedrooms have balconies and the master bedroom includes a bath. All rooms have telephone (ADSL) and cable TV. Outside: Carport, nice garden with pond, grass and palm trees. The house is situated in a park with many facilities, such as swimming pool, sauna, Jacuzzi, sports hall and security. For only 9.5 million baht (fixed) you'll get not only the house, but also a Toyota Hilux 4WD, Honda Phantom motorbike, JRD Storm scooter, Plasma TV, home theater and furniture. The only thing you have to bring is your clothes. This is a one-time opportunity! This is a private sale. Only serious inquiries, please. Contact for more details. Tel: 076-378255, 07-8822597 (English), 05-8832583 (Thai). Email: euro-art-gallery@planet.nl

2-, 3-, 4-RAI PLOTS

near the sea and Rawai Beach, within walking distance to the beach, restaurants and bars, in a secluded location – a cul-de-sac – with a nice view, electricity, water supply, Chanote title. Price: 3.4 million baht per rai. Please contact for more information. Tel: 07-2747470. Email: nsupin@yahoo.com

BEACH LAND PLOTS



Half a rai with 15 meters of white sandy beach frontage located on Naka Island. Only 3 minutes by boat from Phuket's east coast. Excellent investment opportunity. Asking 3.5 million baht. Tel: 01-3430777.

THE BEST, NO JOKE, THE BEST



The old song goes: "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot." (Sound familiar? This is what Phuket is becoming.) I refuse to do this; our land is by a National Park with the best sea view of Phang Nga Bay I have ever seen (considered by many to be one of the 7 wonders of the world). I am going to keep the park-like atmosphere, so no street lights, minimal paved roads, underground electricity. So, if you like giant original-growth trees behind you and Phang Nga Bay in all its wonder in front of you, call me. Chanote title, sea views. Starting at 3.8 million baht per rai; also, flat land with some sea views for 2.4 million baht per rai. Tel: 07-2747470. Email: nsupin@yahoo.com

OF A RAI

Located on Yamu Rd – a development area. Plot has a new gravel driveway, Chanote title. Price: 1.3 million baht. Contact Chris. Tel: 06-2786574.

LAND NEAR LAGUNA

1.2 rai, including 1 Thai-style house, with Chanote title. Price: 5.2 million baht. 15 meters to main road at front. Email: swisstreff@gmx.net

BEST OF WAT CHALONG

area. 1-rai lots in a secluded, beautiful location with a park-like atmosphere, and a cul-de-sac, selling for 3 million baht per rai and up. Tel: 07-274-7470. Email: nsupin@yahoo.com

4 RAI IN PARLAI AREA

4 rai near Chalong Bay in Parlai area, for 2.7 million baht per rai. Within walking distance to the beach – a good area, not over-built. Please contact for more information. Tel: 07-2747470. Email: nsupin@yahoo.com

Properties For Rent

HOUSE + BIG GARDEN

Includes 2 air conditioners and a bedroom, hot shower. Location: a quiet area at Palai Green, Chalong. Tel: 01-8924311.

NEW 2-BEDROOM HOUSE

Unfurnished house with a garage, located in a quiet area 3km from Phuket City, 2km to the beach. Asking 5,000 baht per month. Tel: 05-8855415.

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I have many house rentals here on my island. Tel: 01-9680309. Email: info@houseinphuket.com For further details, see our website at: www.houseinphuket.com

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in Phuket City. Fully furnished, telephone, aircon, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 103sq wah. 15,000-25,000 baht per month. Tel: 09-9724158.

KAMALA

apartment. Furnished, includes ADSL, wireless network. Long term: 8,000 baht per month. Tel: 01-5385285. Email: bbq@loxinfo.co.th

FOR RENT OR SALE

A walled-in house at Kamala Beach with 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, air conditioning, UBC, telephone, a garage and a garden with pool and mountain view. For 6-month rental at 35,000 baht per month, or for sale at 5.8 million baht. Please call for info. Tel: 01-8259243.

NEW HOUSE

for rent. Fully furnished 3-bedroom house in Chalong near Palai Beach. Has 2 bathrooms, air conditioning and a telephone. Available for long-term rent. Tel: 09-7288311.

4-BEDROOM HOUSE

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



NEW 2-STORY HOME

for rent. Very convenient location in Phuket City. Just 5 mins to Tesco-Lotus, Central, Bangkok Hospital Phuket. Unfurnished, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, front and back yards. 18,000 baht per month. Please contact Ann-Gazette at 01 868 7676

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Clean and comfortable, with air conditioner, a TV, a big fridge, double bed, pool and parking. Please contact. Tel: 01-0825707. Email: ask@phuket-accommodation.info

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CHALONG

An exciting new 2-bedroom townhouse with 2 bathrooms, a living room, Western kitchen, air conditioning, telephone and covered parking, for a long-term tenant. Tel: 076-280466.

HOUSE FOR RENT

Soi Palai, Chalong. A 2-bedroom, furnished house, with 1 bathroom, a kitchen, a living room with air conditioning, a phone line, car park and garden. Tel: 01-5379878, 01-7971709. Email: suwittrai@hotmail.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. Tel: 01-2712825.

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 1 bedroom. For long-term rental only. 29,000 baht per month. Please call for info. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447.

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Just renovated, furnished, 400m from the beach, 5,000 baht per month. Tel: 04-189-9868.

2 BEDROOM

lakeview. 3-story apartment/loft with 2 bathrooms near Lotus. Has air conditioning, UBC, and phone. Asking 20,000 baht per month. Tel: 01-8928208.

HOUSE FOR RENT

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

2 RAI OF LAND + HOUSE

A Thai-style, 2-bedroom house located at Ao Makhom, the most beautiful place on Phuket, for rent at 9,000 baht a month. Please contact for more info. Tel: 06-9488139. Email: jefdejong@hotmail.com

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Properties Wanted

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Land wanted: 800-1,600sqm, flat, near main road, Chanote or Nor Sor 3 title, +/- 20m from street, +/- 60m deep, +/- 10km max from the city. Max price: 2,000 baht/sqm. Tel: 06-7741691. Email details with pictures or questions to av58phuket@yahoo.com

SWAP PHUKET LAND

or house for BKK condo. I want to swap a modern Bangkok riverfront loft condo (area: 300sqm) on Rama 3 Rd with ocean-view land or house in Phuket with minimum value of 20 million baht. (We can pay cash for any difference in values). Please contact for more info. Tel: 05-8189429. Email: tduangpo@hotmail.com

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Housekeeping Service
Hair Spa Therapist
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Spa Receptionist

The positions are based in Phuket and require candidates who possess the following:

Minimum experience in related field
Experience in the hospitality industry is a plus
BA degree or higher
Proficiency in written and spoken English
Service and results driven attitude
Computer skills required

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Please send in your resumé with at least three references and a recent photo by **05 February 2006** to:

Director of Finance & Admin

P.O. Box 18, Thalang Post Office, Phuket, 83110.
Email: hr@bluecanyonclub.com
Tel: 076-328088 Fax: 076-328087

URGENTLY

required. Accounting Officer (2 positions)

- BA in Accounting field;
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Island Job Mart



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- High vocational education, up to bachelor's degree in a related field
- Male, between 26-35 years of age
- Skill in investigation, theft prevention and traffic planning
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- Effective problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Fair command of English
- Salary range from 20,000 to 23,000 baht a month

Please send an application letter stating expected salary together with resumé and one recent photo to Human Resources Department LS Pavilion Development Co., Ltd 31/1 Moo 6, T. Chengtalay, A. Talang, Phuket 83110
Tel: 076-317600 Fax: 076-317601
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- Personal Assistant to Area Director of Finance and Business Support
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- Minimum 1 year of experience in sales/marketing in real estate projects
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2. Guest Relation 2 Positions

- Female, age between 23 - 29 years
- Good command of both spoken and written English

3. Secretary - Engineering Dep. 1 Position

- Female, age between 23 - 29 years
- Minimum 1 year of experience

4. Draftsman 1 Position

- Minimum 1 year of experience
- Knowledge of AutoCAD

All positions require

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Island Job Mart



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• Carpenter	2 positions
• Hostess	2 positions
• Bartender	3 positions
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• H/K Clerk	2 positions
• Room Boy/Maid	2 positions
• Cook Helper Thai/Bakery	4 positions
• Steward	4 positions
• Gardener	4 positions

Interested candidates are invited to send their resumé with a recent photograph to:

Swiss-Belhotel Thara Resort & Spa

170,170/1 Thaweewong Rd, Patong Beach, Kathu, Phuket 83150

Tel: 076-340135 Fax: 076-340446

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- Booking and Sales (at our main office in Patong) – 2 full-time positions
- Assistant Accountant (at our main office in Patong) 1 full-time position
- Scandinavian speaking PADI Divemaster and Instructors
- Driver – 1 part-time position

Good communication skills in speaking Thai and English are required for all positions. Skills in writing Thai and English are required for the Booking and Sales positions and the Assistant Accountant.

Immediate employment possible!

Interested candidates, please call Khun Dao at

Tel: 076-294225/6 Send resumé ASAP

Email: info@scandinavian-divers.com

SALES TEAM

Thai- & English-speaking, sales experience a plus. Commission-based, a good income for the right people. Samui and Phuket based. Please call for more information. Tel: 09-9724002, 01-1700201.

BAR STAFF, CASHIER

wanted for a European bar in Rawai. Good package. Please contact for more information. Tel: 09-1961773. Email: cindyjcochrane@hotmail.com

SECRETARY/

Executive Administrator. We seek a female with good English, administration skills and a good personality. Salary: 15,000-22,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-264442, 01-5354108. Fax: 076-264443.

DIVE GUIDE/

Divemaster for dive center on Koh Phi Phi Don. Thai nationals only. Must speak English. Food, accommodation, salary plus commission. Email: tony@diveh2osportz.com

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For interview send resumé to info@watermarkphuket.com
tel: 076.239078

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Phuket Receptif (a travel agency in Phuket) is seeking qualified persons for the following positions: 1 PR & Marketing Secretary; and 1 Operations Office staff member. Qualifications:

1. Minimum of 2 years' experience in the hotel or travel & tour industry is an advantage;
2. Good attitude, willing to learn and work in a team;
3. Computer knowledge;
4. Good command of spoken & written English.

Salary depends on experience. Please send your CV and photo. For details, call Tel: 076-261195-6. Email: info@phuket-receptif.com

MANAGER & SECRETARY WANTED

We are looking for a Thai or foreigner to take care of staff and customers and act as a secretary. Spoken English, Thai and Spanish required. Tel: 04-8478352.

Employment Wanted

UK-AUSTRALIAN CHEF

with 20 years' experience seeks work in hotel or restaurant. Will consider anywhere in Thailand. Tel: 09-7885725. Email: alexander_newitt@yahoo.com

Tout, Trader & Trumpet

Articles For Sale

PLAYSTATION 2, X BOX

PS2 for sale 5,500 baht with games. X Box with mod, 7,500 baht. For console and electronic repairs. Tel: 06-2905067. Email: ps2_phuket@hotmail.com

POOL TABLE

Coin-operated, many extras. Only 35,000 baht. Tel: 06-9724805.

BIG REFRIGERATOR

15 cubic feet, 2-door Mitsubishi Tiara, 6 months "new". Last week of sale: 2 couches, kitchen furniture, plants and other items. Please call for more information. Tel: 06-5960966.

DIVE GEAR

Suunto, Scubapro, Problue, US divers, AquaTech. All priced to sell. Please call for more information. Tel: 07-8875301.

AIR CONDITIONER

Mitsubishi 12000 BTU, in very good condition. Price: 7,000 baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 07-2929967.

I HAVE TO MOVE

Professional dual-temp refrigerator, gas BBQ, gas fryer. New: 78,000 baht; save 31,000. Tel: 04-1847250. Email: fepigada@yahoo.it

ZEAGLE TECH BCD

As new, used on only 2 scuba dives. Size large, excellent condition. First to see will buy. 15,000 baht. Tel: 04-185-8306. Email: s_lithgow@yahoo.com

MUST SELL NOW

Steel storage lockers, ideal for somebody who would like to open a storage business. The lockers are easily cut apart and re-welded together. The steel may also be useful for fences and gates. No reasonable offer refused. Tel: 076-286542, 06-7428743. Email: scareface112@hotmail.com

Articles Wanted

CHEST FREEZER

Wanted: chest freezer in good condition for around 3,000-4,000 baht. Tel: 09-0346734. Email: johnholderness@yahoo.com

CHILD CAR SEAT

wanted for 1- or 2-year-old. If you have or know of one for sale, call Tel: 06-9447721 or Email: maxandgodders@csloxinfo.com

Bulletins

Alcoholics Anonymous

is holding meetings in English at the following places:

Phuket City

Mission Hospital

on Wed and Sun at 7 pm

Bangkok Phuket Hospital

on Fri at 7 pm

Patong

Patong Hospital

on Mon, Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun

at 7 pm and on Fri at 8 pm

For more info, please call

012732053 (Scandinavian),

018954763 (English) or

018912895 (Frank)

Business Opportunities

KATA BAR FOR SALE

Good location, rent paid until March 2007, great fittings. Genuine reason for sale. Asking 500,000 baht. Tel: 07-9312916.

INTERNET CAFE

for sale. Located on busy Nanai Rd, in Patong. 2½-year lease; rent: 15,000 baht per month. Will sell the business for 650,000 baht. Please contact for more info. Tel: 04-7231269. Email: bmudablu@aol.com

TOP BAR & BISTRO

Simply the finest in Rawai, for rent. A long lease with land-lord for the next year. In the best location, equipped with 50 seats, fully furnished and running from 8 am to 1 pm. Satisfying turnover. Tel: 01-8940570. Keywords: Simply the finest!

BAR FOR SALE

Located in Karon, fully furnished with pool table, hi-fi, tables, chairs, etc. Tel: 09-5879551.

CHILI BAR AND

restaurant for sale. Comes fully equipped and with license. Located nearly opposite Boat Lagoon entrance. Owner moving overseas. Asking 600,000 baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 01-9796707.

BAR AND KARAOKE

Large air-conditioned room for karaoke and outside bar in Rawai for sale. Excellent monthly turnover. 800,000 baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 05-8094153.

LOAN WANTED

4 million baht required. Will pay 6% interest quarterly in advance, good security. Please call for more information. Tel: 01-8924804.

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MASSAGE SALON



Established 3-story massage salon for sale in the heart of Patong. Excellent furnishings, fully equipped; has long-term staff. For more information, call Khun Arunee. Tel: 07-8947985.

FREE \$10 AMAZING CONCEPT

I will show you how to earn money from the Net, and even pay you \$10 (ten dollars) so you can see it work! Email your name, and I will send you information. Happy New Year. Email: midaz66@yahoo.dk

BUSINESSES FOR SALE

Great businesses in one of the best locations in Patong are for sale, including:

- a 15-room guesthouse
- a tour agency
- a 60-seat restaurant
- a rental business
- an Internet shop

Asking 6 million baht.

Please contact for more details. Tel: 01-0820039, 01-0911662. Email: ilan_75@hotmail.com

PARTNERSHIP OFFER

European businessman offers partnership in new establishment Ltd. in Europe and Phuket. Years of experience from Europe and Thailand, I have good connections in Thailand. Work permit no problem! Business beginning directly, all prepared! Participation: 27,000 Euros. Email: miamibeachn@netscape.net

NEW HOTEL LEASE

4-year hotel lease for 2.5 million baht. 22 rooms, Air conditioning, cable TV, bar, elevator, maid service, refrigerator, telephone, hot & cold water, sun-set viewpoint. Easy to run, good staff. Please contact for more information. Tel: 06-9427318. Email: michael@bayproject.com For more details, visit: www.vikingresidence.com

KOH LANTA

Restaurant for sale in busy area. 28 years left on lease. Brand new construction and fittings. Very rare offer. Price: 3 million baht ono. Please contact for more information. Tel: 09-8398255. Email: post@krabi-lanta.dk

INVESTOR LOOKING

English farang with 20 years' experience in landscape design, construction and irrigation industry, in both Australia and England, is looking to invest in established or new landscape company. Please email or phone with proposals or ideas. Tel: 01-081-7163. Email: gsmith8508@aol.com

BUSINESS FOR SALE

Well-run visa run business including tour office at Rawai Beach. Please contact K. Jaochim. Tel: 04-8512378 for more information.

PERSONAL TRAINING CENTER

Rare opportunity to acquire a successful and prestigious health and fitness center in Chalong. The only dedicated PT center in Phuket, it has established a reputation for quality and professionalism. Superbly equipped, used exclusively by premier expat clients. Please contact for more info. Tel: 01-0880422. Email: alun@vitagroup.net

SURE WIN!

Sure Win Soccer is the premium football prediction service established in 22 in UK. The company is looking to expand into Thailand through partners. SureWinSoccer offers the whole range of football prediction information, last-minute tips, classified selection from underground sources, and much more through the Internet, SMS and WAP. Interested parties please contact me for details of the business partnership on offer. Tel: 65-91073327. Email: david@surewinsoccer.net For further details, please visit: www.surewinsoccer.net

TIME IS MONEY!

Partnership offer for Europe and Thailand. No competition, no wasting time, already have enough clients! Start-up money: 27,500 Euros. Work permit no problem! Email: sanjosee6@netscape.net

BAR FOR SALE

In Patong, just 20 meters from the beach, includes all fixtures and fittings, such as pool table, UBC, kitchen, 40 seats. A 3-year contract + 3-year renewal. No key money. Rent: 52,000 baht per month. Price: Asking 750,000 baht + 6 months' rent as deposit. Tel: 06-7430978.

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LEADERSHIP COACHING

An Australian professional Leadership & Business Coach will visit Phuket January 23-25. Leaders who utilize coaching skills have more effective teams, higher morale, and better bottom-line results than those who don't. Kool Results provides quality coaching and training to individuals and small groups, either on-site or via teleconference. Email or phone to make an appointment to discuss our services further when we visit Phuket. Please contact for more information. Tel: 61-883-763492, 04-38017873. Email: info@koolresults.com.au For further details, please see our website at www.koolresults.com.au

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for boats & homes. We specialize in woodwork, home furniture (built-in or moveable), kitchens, bars, counters, work desks – anything that has to do with carpentry. We also repair and rebuild houses and boats. Call or email Pro Carpentering. We never leave a job half-done. Tel: 01-968-3118. Fax: 076-243089. Email: pro_carpentering@yahoo.com

Miscellaneous for Sale

INTERNATIONAL DRIVERS LICENSE
 < 5,000 baht, valid up to 10 years
 < 6,000 baht, valid up to 20 years
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 Address: Baan Suan Place, 38/3 Moo 5, Soi Bang Yai, Phuket.
 Tel: 04-0068736 or 04-6906612.
 Email: iaa@intllicense.com
 www.intllicense.com

Miscellaneous Wanted

LOAN WANTED

4 million baht required. Will pay 6% interest quarterly in advance, good security. Tel: 01-8924804.

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Nursing care offered at your residence or hospital. Fluent in English, available during day or nighttime. Tel: 01-8912112. Email: wadee@csloxinfo.com

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DRAGON ENGLISH

Learn English for 2,000 baht for 20 hours. Enrol now. Thai Lessons given. A registered company. Tel: 04-6618530 (English) or 076-319066, 06-381-7138 (Thai).

Personals

BACKGAMMON

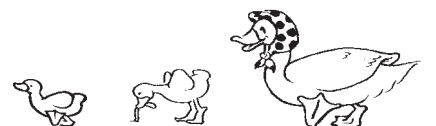
Retired businessman looking for backgammon players on Phuket Island. Please call. Tel: 076-386-113, 01-5778443.

WITNESS

An accident on the night of December 28, 2 am. By Safari, about 100m to Patong, a car hit a bike. Call me. Will be rewarded. Tel: 06-0926021. Email: newwolves@hotmail.com

ASK KHUN WANIDA! MOMMA DUCK

Problems with an extra-marital affair?
 Questions about Thai culture?
 Having communications problems?



Read her advice in the *Phuket Gazette*.

Fax: 076-213971 or email: momma@phuketgazette.net




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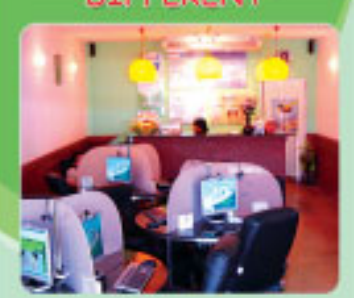

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