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ALIVE! After four days adrift

Australian woman survives ordeal at sea in a dinghy

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: Australian mother-of-four Dominique Courteille, 57, survived an ordeal of four days adrift on the Andaman Sea and the Straits of Malacca in a dinghy.

Speaking to the media at Bangkok Hospital Phuket (BHP), the Belgian-born naturalized Australian said that she and her crew went ashore on Koh Lipe, in Satun Province, on March 2 to eat at a restaurant, leaving her yacht *Sonnet* moored only 150 meters offshore.

Later that night, she returned to the yacht alone as the other crew members, Manfred "Richie" Neustifter, 24, and Conrad Ohler, 43, had decided to stay on the island a while longer.

However, the dinghy's engine ran out of fuel as Ms Courteille was returning to *Sonnet*, and a combination of high winds and abnormally-strong currents swept the now-powerless boat out to sea.

"I went straight past the yacht and tried to row as best as I could, but I'm not the strongest of rowers," said Ms Courteille. "I then tried to signal to other yachts with my oars and I shouted for help, but pretty soon they were too far away and couldn't hear me."

"At first I was very relaxed because I was sure that my friends, who are good sailors, would notice me gone, and come to find me. But it was nighttime, so it was very difficult for them [to do so] and by that time I had already been taken too far out by



REUNITED: Dominique Courteille hugs Manfred 'Richie' Neustifter, one of her two crew members, who feared she was dead.

the current, which was much, much stronger than usual."

She said, "It was terrible because there was shipping passing and it consisted of cargo ships and fishing boats, all of which were much bigger than my dinghy. I was going very slow and the waves were high. I was trying to get them to notice me and I shouted and shouted, but the wind carried my voice away."

Ms Courteille went on to explain that each day of her ordeal she tied a rope around herself and slipped into the sea, so as to avoid direct sunlight.

Contemplating death, Ms Courteille wrote on the dinghy's

sides, "I did not commit suicide! It was an accident with the engine that sent me off into the blue. I am very sad to die because I would have loved to see you live. I'm astonished that no one has come looking for me, because I'm three miles from the island and, after that, nothing. I love you all. Think of me from time to time while dropping a flower in the water."

Help finally arrived on March 6 in the form of an Indonesian fishing boat from the Yee Long Trading Company. The crew members took her on board and fed her biscuits and water, her first food for four days; all

Continued on page 2

Dive operators face tax probe

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET: Following a February 23 meeting to discuss problems in Phuket's recreational dive industry, a new committee will be formed to ensure that all dive operators are accurately reporting their income – and paying taxes on it.

Phuket's Chief Administrative Officer (*Palad*) Nivit Aroonrat told the *Gazette* that the meeting, chaired by himself at the request of Phuket Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura, was attended by officials from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Region 4 office in Phuket and the Phuket Provincial Offices of Revenue, Employment, Marine and Fisheries.

There are 106 dive operators in Phuket, of which about 70% are owned by foreigners, K. Nivit said.

"Many people have [complained] about having so many foreigners coming here to open dive shops that give back little to our country. Although most are registered in the name of a Thai, these are just proxies. The companies are actually administrated by foreigners, which makes it difficult for us to know their real number of customers, staff, boats and income," he said.

"It isn't fair for these companies to take in 50,000 to 100,000 baht from each customer for dive trips and then give nothing back to Phuket in taxes."

"There are many dive companies in Phuket that are evading taxes. This is why we will form a special committee to oversee the industry and check on these dive outfits to see how

Continued on page 2

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Dive operators face tax probe

From page 1

much income they actually make and how many people they really employ," he said.

The committee would also establish zones in provincial waters where tours could be conducted; other areas would be declared off-limits as conservation zones. However, the government agencies involved in environmental protection said at the meeting that they hadn't received any reports of environmental damage being caused during dive tours.

K. Nivit added that there was no reason to have so many foreign dive masters when Thais were capable of doing this job.

"Thais can be the dive teachers, but the foreigners don't give us the chance to do it," he said.

Jeroen Deknatel, Managing Director of Fantasea Divers - Ocean Rover Cruises, said, "Basically it is good that the authorities [will] take a closer look at the dive industry. Dive companies should work harder at being good corporate citizens.

"There are still some dive shops that employ foreigners without work permits and there are many dive boats that are not up to Western safety standards.

"However, most government officials do not have detailed knowledge of how the dive industry works, and this can lead to misunderstandings and false accusations."

Australian woman alive and well after four-day ordeal

From page 1.

that she had consumed in the four days of her ordeal were her own urine and six anti-acid tablets.

Pol Sgt Yaomarn Chumchen of the Tourist Police told the *Gazette* that she was rescued around 5 pm. He explained that the Indonesian boat arrived in Phuket on March

7 at 5 am and that Ms Courteille was first taken to the fishermen's accommodation in Pae Diok on Koh Sireh. Tourist Police officers later drove her to BHP for treatment for exposure and dehydration.

A former air hostess of Sabena Airlines and occasional professional translator, Ms Courteille is "a very lucky lady" said Mr

Neustifter of Australia's Gold Coast. "We're looking at a living miracle," he said. "It's unbelievable."

Ms Courteille managed to find something positive from her ordeal, telling friends that at night she had seen beautiful constellations. "You know, I was never afraid; I was sure that something was going to happen."

Dr Santi Lertnukkhid of BHP said, "She was in surprisingly good condition and was quite strong when she came in, considering that she has a history of congenital liver disease. This experience has been tough for her, but she survived."

Call for action against child-sex tourists

By Anongnat Sartpisut

KATA: The leader of a workshop on countering child-sex tourism on March 3 called for hotel and tourism industry workers, and even tourists themselves, to report any behavior they suspect might be leading up to sexual abuse of a child.

The workshop, at the Kata Beach Resort, was aimed at teaching those present - 64 government officers, hotel staff, souvenir vendors, tour company and restaurant staff, and karaoke workers - to identify types of behavior that might lead to abuse of children.

It was led by Anita Dodds of the Australian anti-child-abuse organization Child Wise, who explained, "Child Wise recognizes Thailand as a hot-spot challenge area which already has child-sex tourism, so training courses are



Fliers issued by Child Wise carry tough messages.

being conducted to prevent this kind of problem."

The workshop introduced attendees to strong slogans, including "Don't turn away. Turn

them in" and "Turn a child-sex tourist into an ex-tourist."

The campaign urges people to report suspicious behavior to Tel: 1300, a number being reserved in all Association of South-east Asian countries as a 24-hour hotline to receive such reports.

UNCOMFORTABLE

"The message is clear," said Ms Dodds. "If the behavior of other tourists makes you feel uncomfortable, don't turn away; turn them into the authorities."

Urajchata Chaochalakorn, Director of the Office of Tourism Development (OTD), which helped coordinate the workshop, said that the number of reported cases of child trafficking and child sex abuse in Thailand has been decreasing.

Although she had no figures to back up her assertion, she noted, "Most cases have involved foreigners who had been staying in the country for two or three months, or longer."

Phuket Tourist Police Inspector Pol Maj Bundit Khaosutham said that his officers had yet to arrest anyone for pedophilia.

However, he said, "Since October, we have been investigating five foreigners who entered the country on tourist visas, but they have yet to break the law."

All quiet on airport limo front - for now

PHUKET: The ongoing quest by Phuket's meter taxi drivers to have a service counter inside the arrivals hall at Phuket International Airport is in limbo as they wait for a decision from Airport Authority of Thailand (AAT) headquarters in Bangkok.

On October 31 Phuket Governor Udomsak Usarangkura issued a CEO order instructing the airport to allow a service counter. But Phuket Airport Director Sq/Ldr Pornchai Eua-aree told the *Gazette* that he sent the order to the AAT only last month because of continuing disagreement between the taxi drivers and the limousine cooperatives over the contents of the order.

The high season has resulted in the matter being given a low priority by all sides, said Theerayuth Prasertphol of the Phuket Provincial Transportation Office; both taxi and limousine drivers have been too busy carrying tourists to worry about the taxi desk.

But, he said, the problem will gain prominence again when the low season arrives and business slows.

- Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

Worker electrocuted in Patong

PATONG: A young man who electrocuted himself while welding a sign outside the Thawee-wong Rd Post Office on the afternoon of February 27, died of circulatory and respiratory failure four days later.

High-voltage electricity shot

through Surat Thani native Roong-atit Piboon, 18, after he swung his arc welder and accidentally touched an exposed power cable along the beach road in Patong. K. Roong-atit, two stories above ground and attached by a safety harness to a

metal railing, slumped over the sign unconscious. Many tourists witnessed the gruesome event.

Kathu Police immediately called the Kusoldharm Emergency Rescue Foundation, members of which climbed onto the roof of an adjacent bar and freed the unconscious welder.

Panya Song-la-or, a volunteer with the foundation, later told the *Gazette* that K. Roong-atit's clothes were still smoldering when they arrived at the accident scene.

Theera Phruksanan, Manager of the Provincial Electricity Authority's Patong office, told the *Gazette* that the accident was caused by the victim's own negligence in misusing insulating covers provided by the power authority.

"A circuit breaker cut the power [after K. Roong-atit touched the cable] but the damage was already done," he said.

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Scheduled blackouts in March

PHUKET: The Phuket Provincial Electricity Authority (PPEA) has announced scheduled blackouts for March in order to continue ongoing work on the island's high-voltage power lines.

Scheduled blackouts will occur between 9 am and 4 pm in the following areas:

March 14, Chalong-Kata: south side of Patak Rd, from Chalong Circle to the telephone signal station on Kata Hill, including Moo Baan Patak.

March 28, Phuket City: Suthat Rd from Phuket Provincial Prison to the intersection with Thalang Rd, in-

cluding Soi Suthat 1 and 2, Luang Pho Wat Chalong Rd and some parts of Dibuk Rd.

March 28, Phuket City: Surin Rd, from the intersection with Narison Rd to the intersection with Phang Nga Rd (Mazda showroom), including Soi Surin 2, 3, 4 and 5, and Moo Baan Kulawadee.

Also, the south side of Phang Nga Rd as far as the intersection with Tilok Utit 2 Rd (Royal Phuket City Hotel).

This information is subject to change without notice. For more information or updates, call Tel: 076-211663.

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Tsunami aid theft investigation staggers on

PHUKET: More than a year after 2.05 million baht in tsunami aid funds went missing from Phuket Provincial Hall, the police investigation against the sole suspect is still far from complete.

The most recent delays have resulted from the wrong forms being submitted, twice, to the Police Forensic Science Office in Bangkok.

Meanwhile, the man charged with the alleged theft, Apichart Nooprod, continues to work as the Chief of the Finance Division of the Phuket Provincial Financial Office (PPFO).

The 2.05 million baht was reported missing from a metal strongbox in a locked room at Provincial Hall on February 15,

2005. Police photos appeared to show the box had been tampered with.

On March 11, 2005, however, a parallel investigation headed by then-Vice-Governor Supachai Yuwaboon concluded that the money was lost due to "poor accounting".

K. Apichart was arrested on April 22. After he claimed he would not get a fair trial in Phuket, the Phuket Attorney's Office agreed to transfer the case to the Attorney General's Office, Region 8 (AG8) in Surat Thani.

Last November, after several months of miscommunication, AG8 asked the Phuket Police to resume their investigation and submit evidence so that it could

decide whether to lodge court charges against K. Apichart.

On December 20, 2005, Phuket Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura told reporters he would be prepared to repay the funds if, as the CEO Governor, he were found ultimately responsible.

On March 3, five months after AG8 officials requested more evidence, Pol Lt Col Sien Kaewthong told the *Gazette* that police are still awaiting results of forensic tests on "samples" submitted to the Police Forensic Science Office in Bangkok.

"The reason it is going so slowly is that we have to work with so many officials. We collected the evidence in December, but twice submitted it with the wrong

paperwork. It was finally submitted with the correct documents in February.

"Now we are waiting for the results. When they arrive, we will forward all the evidence to the prosecutor's office in Surat Thani, as requested," he said.

K. Apichart told the *Gazette* that he has not been keeping up with progress (or lack of it) in the case. "I know I am innocent, so I don't need to know anything about that. How can the police collect more 'evidence' against me when I am not the one responsible?" he asked.

He added, however, that he does not intend to sue the police in the event that the case against him is dismissed. "I just want all of this to end," he said.

Japanese tourist dies while diving

KOH RACHA YAI: Japanese tourist Akira Egoshi, 24, died while diving in Siam Bay, off Koh Racha Yai, on March 1.

Pol Lt Col Chana Sutthimas of the Chalong Police told the *Gazette* that 11 Japanese tourists, led by four dive masters from Kata Diving Co Ltd, left Chalong Pier aboard *Laddawan 5* at 8:20 am, bound for Koh Racha Yai.

"The crew of *Laddawan 5* called in about 4 pm to report that a diver was missing," he said. "At that time, their divers were still looking for him."

He said that it seemed Mr Egoshi swam away from the other divers and became snagged on a rock. Unable to free himself, he ran out of oxygen.

Marine Police launched a search for Mr Egoshi, Col Chana said. "His body was taken to Vachira Phuket Hospital, where it was identified. We are continuing our investigation into the incident," he added.

The *Gazette* made repeated attempts to contact senior management at Kata Dive Co Ltd but without success.

Democrats slam PM at Phuket rally

By Janyaporn Morel

PHUKET CITY: More than 10,000 people attended a Democrat Party rally held at Saphan Hin March 5 as part of the party's Southern Mobile Tour.

Many held up signs protesting against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's perceived heavy-handed political and financial tactics. "We don't want to be Thaksin's shoes!" read one, while another announced, "Phuket people are anti-Thaksin! We want our country back!"

The Democrats held the rally to explain to voters why the party had decided to boycott the snap parliamentary elections and to explain why they felt it was wrong for PM Thaksin to have dissolved Parliament.

Democrat Party Secretary

Suthep Tueksuban, the first to speak at the rally, said that the Democrats decided to boycott the election because they did not want to be part of PM Thaksin's "...plan to cover up for himself and his mistakes".

"Do not think that because the Democrat Party is not taking part in the election that we are not there for the public. We are still your representatives in the fight against the Thaksin regime and in the struggle to return true democracy to Thailand," he said.

"If there still is an election on April 2, I would like to ask Phuket people to put a cross in the last box [in the ballot papers], the one that says, 'I don't want to vote for anybody'. And we will see how many Thai people don't want Thaksin to be Prime Minister anymore," he said.

Other speakers were Dr Trirong Suwankeree and Dr Surin Pitsuwan, both deputy leaders of the party.



Low-key entry onto the political stage: Wisut Santikul (left) and Dr Sriyada Palimapan.

TRT candidates register

PHUKET CITY: With little fanfare and facing an uncharted political landscape, Phuket's two Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party candidates – TRT District 1 candidate Dr Sriyada Palimapan and District 2 candidate Wisut Santikul – registered for the April 2 snap parliamentary election on April 6.

About 20 supporters were on hand to cheer on the two candidates and to offer them flower garlands.

"I accept that the current [political] climate has caused [the TRT] stress, but April 2 will be the day when the people can tell us what they want by how they vote ... Although we don't know how many parties will register candidates, there will be many boxes on the ballot for voters to choose from," she said.

One of the options alluded to in that comment was the "vote-for-no-one" ballot option.

K. Wisut said, "Some people are opposed to [TRT], and are protesting against us. But there are still some groups – the silent majority, the grassroots people who have benefited from TRT policies – who will make their voices heard this time around."

B2bn upgrade for Canyon course

MAI KHAO: The Blue Canyon Country Club (BCCC) has announced that its Lakes Course will undergo upgrading from April 3, with the end of this year penciled in as the target date to reopen the course. The Canyon Course will remain open for play.

The redevelopment of the Lakes Course follows the announcement in December last year of a 2-billion-baht "strategic partnership" between Murex, the club's owner and RREEF Global Opportunities Fund II LLC, a real estate investment fund managed by Deutsche Bank's DB Real Estate arm.

Sia Leng Yuen, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of BCCC, said of the course redevelopment, "This is only the first part of our overall master plan to position Blue Canyon in the forefront of all the integrated golf and country club resorts in Asia."

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A decade ago, the Poonphol area of Phuket City was literally a dump in the center of town, and just a handful of years ago it had a reputation for its sleazy bars and massage parlors – a stigma that it has struggled to lose as ghost stories about prostitutes murdered in the area continue to haunt local residents and become urban legend.

Now it seems that Poonphol is about to break free of its dark past, with Poonphol Night Plaza leading the way, as business owners and residents move in to take advantage of its cheap rents and central location.

The *Gazette's* Anongnat Sartpisut and Nattamon Ratcharak report.

Poonphol Night Plaza, at the eastern end of Poonphol Rd, where the road meets Kra Rd and Takuapa Rd, has been a long time coming good. For years it has been regarded as the “wrong side of town”, and just a decade ago was literally a dump.

Phuket City Deputy Mayor Chaiphruk Phunphruk remembers when that all changed. “In 1991, the area was best known for being a dump. Everybody dumped their garbage there. Then Kamol Rattanapibul filed plans to develop what is now called Poonphol Night Plaza, comprising 247 four-story shop-houses.

“It was a private investors’ project and was sold freehold to individual buyers. Today the complex is home to a variety of businesses with different owners, such as apartments, three hotels and entertainment venues,” K. Chaiphruk said.

However, he explained that the area has been slow to keep pace with the rest of the city’s development. For most people

Poonphol Night Plaza is somewhere one drives past on the way from Chao Fa East Rd to the shopping district centered around the Robinson department store, he said.

“The [Phuket City] Municipality has been working on widening Poonphol Rd to four lanes since 2000, but has been unable to because residents have refused to accept the prices being offered for their land,” K. Chaiphruk explained.

He added that ghost stories and a reputation that the area is bad luck for business have also hampered its development, although he fails to understand why.

“I don’t believe in ghosts, and businesses open and close all the time. In my opinion, this development should have been just as successful as any other residential-commercial development.”

So far, the businesses that have managed to survive the “curse of Poonphol” have been those that do not rely on an impressive front office.



‘In 1991, the area was best known for being a dump. Everybody dumped their garbage there.’

– Phuket City Deputy Mayor Chaiphruk Phunphruk

Poonphol comes



Dusk settles over Poonphol Night Plaza, which is shaking off its reputation for sleaze, ghosts and bad luck.

Kittikorn Prateep Na Thalang, General Manager of security company Srithep Protection, said, “We have been here for more than 10 years. I bought the building for more than 2 million baht at that time, and our business has been going fairly well.

“Our office is not a showroom, but we do use it for meetings with clients and for doing business, so it is not necessary for our office to be on a main road.

“I like this location, Poonphol’s reputation doesn’t bother me. I, as well as my customers, can easily find convenient car park spaces, and I can use empty car park spaces in front of my office for training our security guards.”

Sorawut Palimapun, Branch

Manager of Ayudhya Insurance Public Co Ltd, said, “We have been running our business here for five years. Our rent is 35,000 baht a month for two [shophouse] units.

“The location suits us well; it is in the downtown area and has convenient parking for our staff and customers. When I explain to customers where our office is, they have no problems finding it,” he added.

POWER

That said, for K. Sorawut, it doesn’t hurt to invite a little good luck. “When we opened our office, we made merit by giving food to monks in order to have a good business. It is also a particularly good location here. There are two power poles right in front of our office, which are a very good omen for business,” he said.

People’s perceptions of the area bringing bad luck for business began to change about

three years ago, says Chachris Singprasertwong, a Poonphol resident for 15 years.

“Over the past three years more and more businesses have been setting up here, such as tour companies, restaurants, bars and nightclubs. I look forward to this area being a good commercial area. It’s a good location, and has plenty of parking space.

“Old Phuket people always believe in spirits and ghosts, so many people shut down their businesses because customers did not want to come to this area. However, I have noticed that many people who are not from Phuket have started businesses here, and their businesses are going well,” he said.

For Kitipong Thiengkunagrit, Director of the Office of the Phuket Provincial Election Commission (PEC) office, bad luck and bad spirits were definitely not factors in his decision to set up the PEC at the plaza.

“It is in a good location

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within Phuket City, there is car parking space available and it is easy for people to find our office,” he explained.

“It is hard to find a place [that is so handy] yet where the rent for a three-story shophouse

is a reasonable 9,500 baht per month,” K. Kitipong said, adding that another advantage for the PEC is that it can use the vacant lot adjoining his office for setting up polling booths for elections.

“I am not afraid of Poonphol’s reputation as a bad place for business. I know some businesses here have shut down, but I am not worried about this because our office is not the same as running a business,” he said.

“We do not need to make a profit, we just need a place suitable for our work.”

Another newcomer to the neighborhood is Somkuan Tansakul, who opened the affordable but tasteful Twin Inn – a 51-room hotel in modern Thai style, with room rates starting at 550 baht a night.

“We chose to open a hotel here because the location has easy access, and is in the center of town, and it was cheaper to set up here than elsewhere,” K. Somkuan said.

The hotel occupies six consecutive shophouses, bought freehold from the owner of a failing gold shop for 30 million baht.

Flying in the face of the area’s reputation, the hotel is a booming success, said K. Somkuan. “We have had very good feedback, and we have an average occupancy rate of 85%-90%,” he said.

He already has plans to expand the hotel, but that may prove difficult. Although Poonphol seems still to be “undiscovered” by major investors, there are plenty of smaller investors who have persevered.

“We would like to add more rooms in the plaza because the cost of setting up here is cheaper, but there are no units available,” he said.

Looking toward future development of the area, K. Somkuan said the provincial and city authorities could play a vital role in how successful businesses in the plaza are.

“I would like to see the plaza decalred an entertainment zone. There are already many massage parlors, nightclubs, pubs and bars, so it would make sense.

“The Municipality could help by improving the infrastructure, especially the water supply, and the general cleanliness of the area. That would help this area to look good and local businesses to become successful,” he said.

Poonthip Wongsuwanwara also saw potential in the area, and moved from Nai Harn to open the stylish Wadee Spa as an independent operation within the Twin Inn hotel last November.

“I had a businesses in Nai Harn, but after the tsunami I decided to move to the city. I didn’t mind where in the city. My old location was in a quiet area in Nai Harn, and I had a lot of customers. But after the tsunami there were fewer and fewer customers, so I decided to move,” she said.

K. Poonthip, who is also Manager of the Pathum Thani branch of the Thai Traditional Medical Massage Association, explained that the major factors influencing her decision to open her business in Poonphol were its relatively cheap rent, its ample parking space, the fact that it is quiet while being in the city center, and its central location, which, she says, is ideal for her massage training center.

“We rent the ground-floor level of two shophouse units from the hotel for 16,000 baht a month. Other locations in the area now cost 15,000 baht a month for just the ground level of one shophouse, and the rents are continuing to rise,” she said.

NOT SCARED

Like K. Somkuan, she expects Poonphol to continue to grow, and is looking to reclaim her start-up costs of about 700,000 baht within five years.


“After I moved in I was told that many people were forced to close their businesses because they didn’t have customers and couldn’t afford to pay the rent. But now many businesses were opening up in the plaza,” she said.


“I am not scared of ghosts,” she added. “What I am scared of is that, if my businesses becomes very successful – mainly because I have doing it for 20 years – then after the lease expires the landowner will want the property back and operate the business for himself.

“In my 20 years of experience, this has been my only problem,” she said.

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ROYAL PHUKET MARINA

Queer News

Money no object for party guy

THALANG: Police arrested a young drunk who ordered a feast of food and drinks at a sing-song joint in Tambon Srisoonthorn and then couldn't pay the bill. Upon questioning, the man admitted to police that he had done this before. Forty-five times.

News of the penniless party guy reached Thalang Police at about 1:30 am on February 27, when a young waitress at Chief Café called to report the man.

She said he had been at the nightclub for hours: drinking up a storm, enjoying the food, chatting up the sing-song girls and freely – quite literally in this case – buying them garlands of plastic flowers, the currency of affection in such establishments.

The party ended as the place began to clear out around closing time and the man was presented with a bill for a whopping 5,770 baht.

When Thalang Police arrived, led by Pol Capt Jaran Boonsopab, they found the man, 24-year-old Nakhon Sri Thammarat native Tawee Na Suphan, sitting by himself at the only table still set up in the otherwise empty nightclub. He was drunk.

Officers took him and his unpaid bill to Thalang Police Station, where Tawee explained that he simply had no money to pay.

He said that he worked as a driver of a cement delivery truck and that his work took him all over the country.

"I have done the same thing in many other provinces all over the country – Ratchaburi, Kanchanaburi, Suphan Buri, Phang Nga, Krabi and Phuket. Each time it ends the same – I get arrested," he said.

As he had done so many time before, Tawee pleaded guilty to fraud. It was not reported what penalty he was subjected to.

Source: *Siang Tai*

US consular 'outreach' for Phuket

KARON: Officials from the Consular Section of the American Embassy in Bangkok will visit Phuket on March 23 to provide consular services to US citizens.

The following services will be available from 8 am to noon at the Phuket Hilton Arcadia:

- Passport renewal applications (US\$67.00 or baht 2,680 baht for adult passports);
- Additional passport pages (no charge);
- Notarial services (US\$30 or 1,200 baht for the first notarial; US\$20 or 800 baht for each additional notarial);
- Embassy registration and/or address change;

- Absentee ballot application and voting abroad information;

- Information on social security, Veterans' Administration or other federal benefits.

Due to the large amount of time and paperwork involved, no applications for Consular Reports of Birth will be accepted during consular outreach trips.

In addition, the consulate asks that all applicants bring the exact fee for the services required.

For further information email: acsbk@state.gov or call the American Citizen Services Unit at: 02-2054049.

Gambling again tops catalog of crime

PHUKET: Statistics released by the Phuket Provincial Police again show gambling as the crime category with the highest number of arrests.

Between February 1 and 21, 249 people were busted for gambling-related offenses; 24 of these cases involved the sale of illegal lottery tickets.

There were nine cases of attempted murder, with five arrests

made. Two murders were reported during the period, with one case solved.

There were 54 reports of theft, with three people charged with snatch-and-run crimes. Three cars and one motorcycle were reported stolen.

Fifty-nine people were arrested on drug related charges; 28 of these for offenses related to *ya bah* (methamphetamine), with 1,058 pills seized.

There were 20 arrests for sniffing glue or paint thinners; eight for possession of marijuana; and three for possession of *krathom*, an indigenous plant that acts as a stimulant.

Eighty-three people were arrested for working illegally and 29 were arrested for offenses related to prostitution.

Five people were arrested for possession of unlicensed firearms.

Stamps feature Red Cross fight against cancer

PHUKET: The next issue of special stamps by post offices across Thailand will be on March 29, with the launch of one million 3-baht stamps celebrating the Thai Red Cross's fight against breast cancer.

The stamps feature an illustration of the Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer building at Chulalongkorn Hospital, and a scanner used to detect the disease.





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Turtles face extinction from nets, resorts

The number of hawksbill, green, Ridley and leatherback turtles in the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand has fallen drastically over the past decade, said Marine and Coastal Resources Department Director-General Maitree Duangsawat.

Sea turtles are dying in fishing nets while seaside resorts and tourist activities are destroying their egg-laying grounds, K. Maitree said, adding that the number of leatherback turtles laying clutches of eggs on Phang Nga's Thai Muang beach and Mai Khao beach in Phuket has fallen to just a few over the past two years.

The practice of scooping up baby turtles and keeping them in aquariums until they have a better chance of surviving in the sea has been criticized by numerous marine biologists as ineffective, as it may causes turtles to lose their natural instincts.

It would take at least 10 years of studying turtle survival rates to determine whether the Thai practice of protecting baby turtles actually affected their instincts, K. Maitree said.

The best solution is to conserve the habitat of sea turtles, he added.

Thailand has signed an inter-governmental agreement to conserve marine turtles and their habitat in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Under the agreement, "the year of marine turtle conservation" campaign was launched on March 1. It aims to encourage people to help save turtles facing extinction.

Cracked icon: After inspecting the "Big Buddha" statue at Buddha Monthol compound in Nakhon Pathom Province, caretaker Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop said work will soon begin to repair several cracks found on the holy structure.

DPM Suwat said that the cracks signified "bad luck and unusual incidents" in the country.

"If we restore the statue to its original condition it will create peace. And when the country is



7 Sexy Leo Girls: Some of the 21 contestants to be the presenter in the next Leo beer commercial, replacing supermodel Methinee Kingpayome. The field will go from 21 contestants to seven, who will promote the beer as a group. The grand prize winner, to be chosen from that group, will win a one-million-baht prize. The government recently stepped back from a Public Health Ministry plan to ban all alcohol advertising in all media, 24 hours a day.

back to normal the morale of the people will rise and everyone will be happy," he said.

The statue, which depicts the Buddha walking, was built nearly 50 years ago. It has never undergone major repairs or renovation. DPM Suwat, who supervises the National Buddhism Office, said 7.5 million baht had been approved for initial repair work.

Taxi terror: Taxi driver Prasert Khianjaturas rammed his car into a motorcycle, injuring its driver and killing its passenger, after the passenger made rude gestures and pointed a gun at him.

Thirasak Aimsarn died instantly and Amnuay Chin-it was injured when K. Prasert rammed

his taxi into them at about 7:30 am on Ram-Indra Rd in Bangkok's Bang Khen District.

"I was afraid he might shoot me," claimed. Prasert, 50, who was detained at the scene by witnesses.

Police found a mangled toy gun near the scene. Prasert has been charged with premeditated murder.

April fool's bonus: Cabinet approved salary hikes for officials with local administration bodies across the country, effective April 1, said Deputy Government Spokesman Danuporn Puna-kanta.

He dismissed criticisms that the effective date for the hike – one day before the general elec-

tion – was intended to win support for the government from local officials.

He said the hike, earlier approved in principle by the Cabinet, was endorsed again by the Cabinet at the request of the Department of Provincial Administration "for the sake of formality".

"The hike simply applies to an administrative tradition that if a salary rise is approved for civil servants, those working for local bodies will have theirs increased as well," K. Danuporn said.

The officials eligible for the salary increases are *kamnan* (from 4,000 baht to 5,000 baht), village heads (from 3,000 baht to 4,000 baht), head doctors of each tambon, inspector *kamnan*, and

assistants to village heads (from 2,000 baht to 2,500 baht).

Songkhla bombing: A home-made bomb placed in the front basket of a motorbike parked next to a police vehicle exploded in Songkhla's Chana District, destroying three other motorbikes and shattering the windows of the Government Savings Bank office 10 meters away.

Chana Police Superintendent Maj Somkiat Ritruen said the blast panicked bank customers and pedestrians, who ran for shelter amid a scene of chaos.

Chana District chief Prasit Visutchindaporn said the bomb was detonated by a mobile phone and that it was probably set off by Muslim militants.

The site was a well-known gathering place for villagers and police, he added.

Rapist jailed: The Criminal Court in Bangkok convicted Manrat Nootboonlert, 33, of raping a 17-year-old girl and sentenced him to five years in jail for the rape and four years for illegally detaining an underage girl.

The first assault took place while the victim was visiting his daughter in March, 2004.

The court found Manrat repeatedly raped the victim over seven months and then continued to intimidate her, threatening to attack her and her family if she told anyone. In September 2004, he took semi-nude photos of her and threatened to distribute them.

That threat prompted the victim to tell her mother, who called the police. Manrat pleaded not guilty to raping the girl, claiming they were in love and had consensual sex.

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

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CUSTOM CRUISER

By Chris Husted

Phuket's annual Bike Week is approaching, with the main events being held on April 14 and 15. Hundreds of choppers, cruisers and other big road bikes – with Harley-Davidsons as the leaders of the pack – will take to the island's roads.

Although the partying and events will be centered at the OTOP (One Tambon One Product) market at the southern end of Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd in Patong, the big drawcard for the bikers will be what they always come to do – ride.

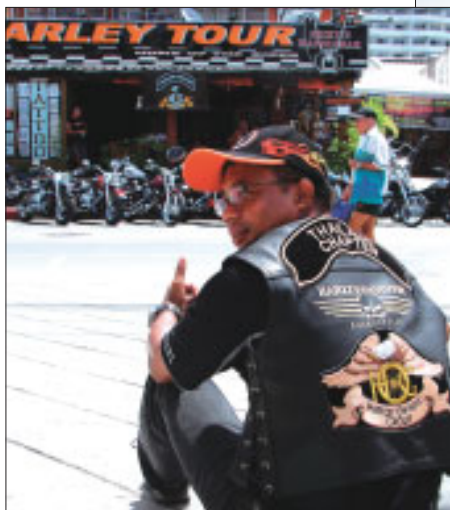
Somneuk "Nicky" Pornkaew, of Nicky's Handlebar, a venue in Patong that over the years has become synonymous with big bikes, expects more than 1,000 bikes to be on Phuket's roads during the festival, with nigh on 400 bikers joining his "poker run" to Tai Muang in Phang Nga Province and back.

"The trip is about 90 kilometers each way, and at this stage we're looking at holding it on April 15," he says.

As with every annual poker run, funds raised will go to charity – this year to the Racha Prachanukhro Foundation – a Royal foundation that provides continuing educational support for children affected by the tsunami.

"It is one of the best. They take care of all the children's needs until they reach 15 years of age – food, shelter, everything," says Nicky.

Of course, Nicky is looking to have something special for the bikers, too. "It would be nice to set up a quarter mile [drag strip] for both big and small bikes," Nicky grins. "I've already spo-



Above, Nicky Pornkaew and his Handlebar. Right, that bike - the B2.3-million supercharged all-chrome cruiser, featuring a frame Nicky designed himself.



ken with the *OrBorTor* [tambon administration authority] in Thai Muang and they've given the all clear to hold it along the beachfront there."

Back on Phuket, many of the bikers on the island are sure to stop by Nicky's place to check out his stable of two-wheelers. His workshop contains no fewer than 15 Harleys, including a replica 1910 Harley motorized bicycle and an original US Army issue 1942 model, complete with machine gun mounts.

And then there are his cars: a 1978 Camaro Z28, a 1964 GTO convertible; a '69 Vette with a 427 big block; and even a tiny 1958 "Topolino" Fiat 500 C.

But bikes are Nicky's pas-

sion. He started with the smaller models, but says he has a good reason for that. "I started when my feet could hardly touch the ground. The first was a Honda 50 – I borrowed it from my brother," Nicky recalls.

"Next up was a 125cc – which I also borrowed from my brother," he grins.

His subsequent choices were a graduation in power and size, from an AR125 Motocross bike, to an Italian Aprilia to his first big bike: a Honda CB750.

But it's his latest project that brings his collection bang up to date – a supercharged chrome cruiser based on the Orange County West Coast chopper, worth a cool 2.3 million baht.

"It's a soft tail cruiser with

a 1340 Evolution engine," explains Nicky. "The frame is my own design – a Nicky Handlebar Custom – and the swing arm and forks were made to spec overseas and imported."

The cruiser redefines the phrase "attention to detail" and, indeed, one aspect of Nicky's character that shines through in conversation is his attention to what many would mistakenly regard as irrelevant detail.

He opened Nicky's Handlebar on October 31, 2000, and before that he ran Phuket Riders' Club in Phuket Town for, "four years, eight months, three days," he says without pausing to think. That's detail.

To help him with the custom work that streams through his

bar to the workshop, Nicky has hired a man also naturally geared for precision – Robbie Le Bugle Jr, who spent 15 years working as a Harley-certified mechanic in California. "He's one of the best," says Nicky.

Though he spends much of his time riding big bikes around the island, we're not likely to see Nicky on the chrome cruiser on the streets of Phuket.

"I've just sold it to my brother," he explains.

Share the love, Nicky.

For the full program for Phuket Bike week see <http://www.phuketbikeweek.com>, or contact Nicky at Tel: 01-9792264, Tel/Fax: 076-345769-70, Email: nickyhandlebar@hotmail.com



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ANDAMAN COASTING

By Franky Gun

Trees are falling all along Highway Number 4, between Bang Niang Beach and Khao Lak center to make way for the ongoing four-lane road widening project.

A good friend of mine told me once that Mexicans call the white man gringo, because wherever he walks, the green goes...

Even though my online research proved that this statement is not entirely accurate, it at least hints at some overall truth worth a thought or two.

Still, there is good news regarding the serpentine road. It has been rather difficult, dangerous even, for tourists staying at the Baan Krathing Khao Lak Resort and neighboring resorts to walk along the highway to Khao Lak center.

This problem is history now, due to a concrete sidewalk with a shiny stainless steel railing that makes a nice addition to the surroundings. Well, isn't that something?

Waves of destruction: While it is not yet clear how much damage the construction of the tsunami memorial site in the Khao Lak Lamru National Park (with emphasis on the words "National" and "Park") will do to the environment, the damage done along the road running through the national park is all too obvious.

Mature and healthy trees were felled all along the road near the memorial site to provide parking space.



Man versus Nature – and Man shall prevail, thanks to his chainsaw.

Yet another great tree bites the dust

I remember how good it felt driving along that particular stretch of road just a few months ago, when the forest along that road was fully intact. Today, after three months of chainsaw blues, I just feel sad and, talking to many locals and expats, I am not the only one.

The usual comment about

the erection of a memorial site in the middle of Khao Lak's national park area is this: "We already have a memorial site! The police boat that has been washed ashore would obviously have been the best bet for a memorial site."

"The boat is still there, and people are visiting the site every day. Why not just put a huge granite

slate with the names of all tsunami victims there and leave the national park alone?"

Even though different people's concepts of the granite slate vary, with some suggesting engraving victims' names on the boat itself, the overall tenor is crystal clear:

"Why do we always have

to invent the wheel twice? Why does the initial wave of destruction have to be followed by a second wave of man-made destruction within Khao Lak's forest?"

Fintastic: A amazing discovery was made by a local worker at Bang Niang Beach. One of the several abandoned swimming pools near the beach was home to a small puffer fish, who, one presumes, must have been living in there since the tsunami, surviving more than a year in a mix of dirty seawater and rainwater.

A local dive operator, who had been appointed to relocate the small fellow to a nearby wreck diving site, had to postpone the mission due to lack of time.

Two days later, it was discovered that rubble and algae in the pool had been disturbed and that the greenish-blue tsunami survivor was gone.

Evidently someone had been in there and fishnapped the small wonder of nature. Hopefully, he did not land on somebody's dinner plate. Even though the incident might be considered as unimportant to some, I would like to hear about the plucky little guy's whereabouts and whether he made it back to nature.

Talking about wonders of nature... The recent discovery of an as-yet uncharted gigantic reef off Tai Muang, in the south of Khao Lak, is being cheered by Khao Lak businessmen and locals alike as a potential boost for the region's tourism industry.

Ernst Schlaepfer, MD of the Khao Lak-based dive school iQ-DIVE, on behalf of the Phang Nga Dive Club (PNDC) has contacted Songpol Tippayawong, Head of the Thailand Marine and Coastal Conservation Unit of the WWF (formerly known as the World Wildlife Fund), who discovered the reef in early January, to offer PNDC's assistance in protecting the reef, which may now be included in a Marine National Park.



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Happily Ever After

Recent weddings in Phuket



Jularat Hirunthalerngphan and Chaiwat Limsutthipong were married on January 5 in the Phra Pitak ballroom at The Metropole.



Marita Bergman and Mats Jansson were wed on the beach at the Katathani Phuket Beach Resort on February 12.

By the time you read this, two teenage girls from Phuket will be in the middle of their first week of their first real trip abroad – studying English for two months in the Irish capital, Dublin.

The two, Phuket Vocational College (PVC) students Thanaree Jooprasert and Nussara Lem, are the beneficiaries of the Coco de Mer Tsunami Appeal Fund, set up after the tsunami by Christiane and Barry Cager, currently living in Phuket aboard their yacht, the *Coco de Mer*.

The fund was born after the Cagers, sailing from Langkawi, arrived off Koh Phi Phi Don on December 27, 2004, the day after the tsunami struck.

Appalled at the destruction, the couple appealed to friends around the world to donate funds to help tsunami victims.

IMMERSED

The money poured in – and continues to pour in – and has been used to rebuild smashed restaurants; set up a computer center at a school on Koh Yao Yai; build boats for fisherfolk at Nai Yang and Laem Pakarang; pay for school uniforms, books and meals so that students can continue their education; and now to pay all the expenses for Thanaree and Nussara to spend two months in Ireland.

The two girls, who were picked out with the help of the Phuket International Women's Club, will be totally immersed in the language, living with families in Dublin and studying at the Lingua Viva school, set up nearly 30 years ago in an elegant Georgian building in the heart of the Irish capital.

Thanaree, 17, is in her third year of studying tourism at Phuket Vocational College and

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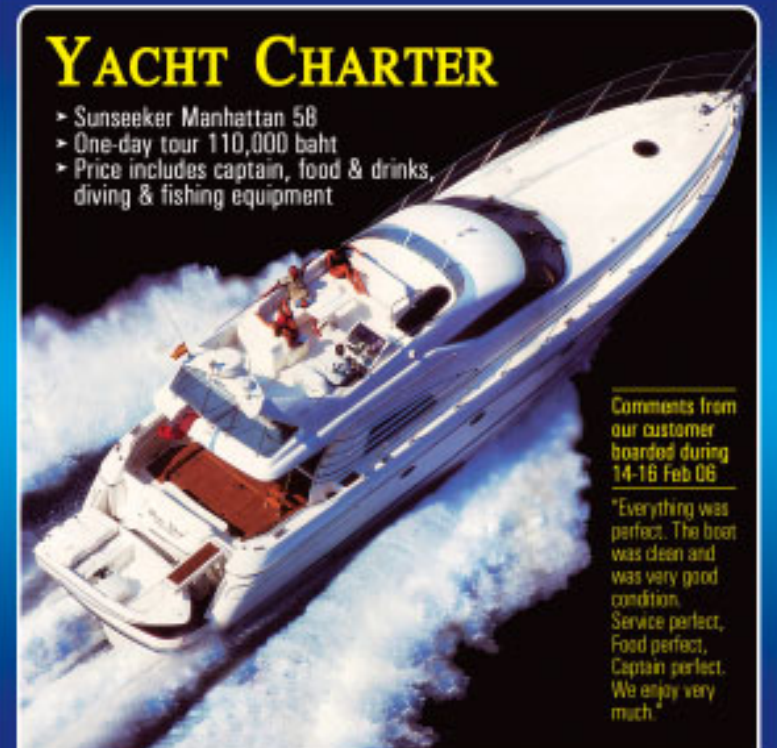
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Bound for Dublin

is due to start university studies in June. Her favorite subjects, she says, are English and Mandarin, and it shows in her good grades.

She lives on Koh Sireh with her parents and her 12-year-old brother, Tanisorn. She has a sister aged 26 who is working in a hotel in Prachuap Khiri Khan. Although no one in the family was killed or hurt in the tsunami, her father's squid boat was destroyed, leaving the family with virtually no income.

In addition to her PVC studies, Thanaree has been doing work experience with a travel agent, and also taking two-hour intensive English-language lessons with Piers Breck-Paterson, a teacher at PVC, who is giving his time free of charge.

Thanaree told the *Gazette* that she was delighted to get the scholarship, if a little nervous.

"I've prepared my personal things already, and we went to buy some warm clothes with K. Barry, for the cold weather in Ireland."

In Dublin she will live with a large family – her hosts have seven children at home, ranging from four years old to 14.

"I'm a little worried about living with a big family who have a different culture, and having to speak English with them. I'm also worried about the language because I have been told that in Ireland they speak very fast. But I think it will all go well."

She said that her original ambition was to become an air hostess, but she is not tall enough to qualify. So, instead, she had decided to work in the tourism industry.

"I expect that my experience of spending some time abroad and my skill in English language will be a great help to me in my future," she said.

She also had advice for other PVC students. "They must pay attention in class, especially in English classes.



Nussara, left, and Thanaree: Excited, if a bit nervous about living in a different culture for two months.

And I will do my best to help the next generation of students to get the same chances as me."

Nussara, 19, is a first-year student at PVC – she started late, she explained, because her parents are very poor and she has four brothers and four

sisters.

From a Muslim family in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Nussara said she had to fight some family opposition to her studying instead of earning money to support the family.

But her mother, K. Sapeeya, supported her, even

attended meetings between parents, teachers and Coco de Mer sponsors at the college,

despite the long bus journey between her home and Phuket.

"I'm very happy and very excited [about going to Ireland]," Nussara said. "I've been outside Thailand just once, across the border into Malaysia. I didn't have a passport, but when the Immigration officer heard me speaking Yawi [one of the Malay languages], he let me go over. But that was before all the current problems in the South."

She said that she had emailed her host family in Dublin. She had been told by Mr Cager that the father of the family is a policeman and that the family lives in a large 200-year-old home.

FOOD WORRY

She admitted, "I'm worried about my English, because it's not so good. I'm also worried about the food because I'm from a Muslim family and we don't eat pork."

Nussara, too, is studying tourism and said she knows what a huge advantage it will be to speak English well. Previously, she attended a Muslim school where she studied mostly Arabic and not much else, she said.

"I think I got this scholarship because I'm still in the first year of my studies, so I will be able to share my experiences in Ireland with other students when I get back," she said.

The two girls were due to leave Phuket on March 7, returning May 8.

For more information about the *Coco de Mer Fund* and its activities, see www.cocodemertsunamiappeal.com

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Gordon Oldham (left) senior partner of Pavilions Phuket told them to Go Forth and Party. And they did, in a two-night bash. The first night celebrated the official opening of the resort and villas development. Then the next night – somewhat subdued – they partied again on Layan Beach.

Pictures by Dan Miles, foto-asia.com



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HERE'S TO HETERO HOTTIES

Bangkok recently held its first conference on gays, lesbians, transvestites, and transsexuals. It was billed as a "queer conference", which I thought was rather... well, queer.

In my youth, the word "queer" was an insult used to disparage homosexuals. But nowadays the homosexual community seems to have adopted it as a catch-all term to include everybody who is not heterosexual.

Call me an old-fashioned fuddy, but to me "queer" still carries a lot of negative baggage. The non-heterosexual community might want to think about picking a more positive name.

They may have opted for "queer" as an act of defiance. "You want to insult us by calling us queers?" they may be saying. "OK, we'll embrace that word, turn it around and give it a positive spin and wear it as a badge of honor. Ha ha! In your face, creeps!"

Well, guys 'n gals and in-betweens, there is no need to get hostile about this. My objection is merely that "queer" used to be derogatory. It should have been chucked out years ago.

Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be an alternative word that encompasses all the different types of sexual orientation that the homosexual community wants to include.

We have only long-winded phrases that reek of political correctness and all the verbal pussy-footing associated with it, such as "non-traditionally-oriented, sex-wise".

But there is also the catchy term "gender-bender", which could be shortened to "bender". Consider the following dialog:

Q: What's your sexual preference, dude?

A: I'm a bender.

Q: Uhhhhh... what exactly do you bend?

A: My gender. (Singing)

I'm a gender-bender, and I'm OK!

I bend my gender every way!

I could be a lesbian, could be gay,

Could be anything that you might say.

Could be transsexual – that's all right!

And I could also be a transvestite.

"Gender-bender" suggests that the person is not only flexible about sexual preferences, he also has a light-hearted, sassy attitude toward the whole business. And that's good. Most people take sex much too seriously. They should save their seriousness for more important things, like drinking beer.

"Bender" could, therefore, be the name of choice for sexually non-conforming individuals who may be uncomfortable with the word "queer". It's cool, it's funky and it has spirit.

But there is a problem, and it relates to heterosexuals like myself.

Nowadays it is trendy to be gay, lesbian, transvestite, transsexual, bisexual, trisexual, quadri-sexual, omnisexual, or whatever. Heterosexual people are considered to be dull, old-fashioned and boring. That's why people call us "straight". Just like a straight line,



we are perfectly predictable – we move in only one direction.

In order to be interesting in this world, you have to wiggle-waggle. You have to be wavy or crooked or zig-zaggy. And het-

erosexuals aren't. We are glum, gray, plodding dullards who lack the imagination to move out of the rut of the missionary position.

Sheepish digression here: being a virgin, I have to confess that I have never really understood what the missionary position is.

When I asked a friend, he cackled, gave me a punch in the ribs, called me a dorkus, and said with a wink, "You just jump on." I'm not sure what he meant by that, but it sounds impolite. I mean, jump on what? And why?

But as Billy Graham is always preaching, we must have faith.

Missionaries are morally upright chaps who are famous for their rectitude, so we may infer that the position that is associated with them enjoys divine approval.

Presumably, too, it is endorsed by such eminent religious authorities as the Reverend Al Sharpton, Louis Farrakhan, Jimmy Swaggart, and Pat Robertson. Its only shortcoming is that it is perceived to be boring, just like the heterosexuals who practice it.

So how can we heterosexuals upgrade our dowdy image? First, we need a snappy name. I favor "hetero hotties". Second, we need to enliven our image with a zippy theme song:

*I'm a hetero hottie, and I'm OK!
I'm rather fond of the missionary way!*

It's not cool or hip or queer or odd,

But I'm pretty sure it's endorsed by God.

Finally, we need to wear crazy hats. These will distract people from our essential boringness. At the worst, they may say, "He may be boring, but he sure has a crazy hat."

S. Tsow has been searching in vain for a hat crazy enough to conceal his essential boringness. If you happen to find such a hat, please notify him at stow@yahoo.com

Hitman arrested at farm

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of March 1-14, 2001

THALANG: Bancha Noppawong, 34, was arrested February 7 on a charge of murdering environmental activist Jurin Rachapolon January 30.

He was arrested by 10 police officers on the Wachara Prawn Farm in Pa Khlok, where

he was employed. Bancha was released on bail in November af-

THE TIME machine

News from the past

ter being held in custody for about a month on charges of attempted murder after Pa Khlok activist Siripoj Chee-chang was knocked off his motorbike by a pick-up truck

Dragon Rouses Speculation In Phuket Town

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of March, 1996

PHUKET TOWN: Patana Saelim, 27, met with a reporter from Siang Tai Daily to tell a story and have photographic evidence of its truth published in the newspaper.

He said that a dragon had left its footprints on the roof of his friend's pick-up truck. The friend, Amphai Sae-tan, lived on Vichit Songkram Rd.

Reporters went to inspect the truck and found on the perimeter of the roof what appeared to be an animal's footprints and drops of saliva.

The abbot of Wat Naka, Pra Boonsri, when consulted Amphai, would not rule out a dragon.

Amphai said he would in no case wash his car until all traces of the dragon's prints were gone from it naturally.

He considered it a great honor that the dragon had chosen the roof of his car to come rest on and, although others might think or say what they pleased, he personally believed – and would continue to believe forever – that a dragon had visited his truck.

The reason for that, he said, was that his conscience was clear and he had never created problems for his neighbors.

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This week



COFFEE BREAK: Atthakorn Ongphoo (back, center), owner of Coffee Taro & Spa on Chao Fa East Rd, and Manager Rit Marasri (left) celebrate the spa's grand opening with guests Richmond Group Managing Directors Chomchanok Suthamma (front, center) and her husband Graham Bibby (back, right).



GLAZED OVER: Thai celebrity actors Nattawut Skidjai (left) and Jeeranun Manojam (right) join Wimonrat and Suwit Sa'ngiamkul, owners of the House of Sanitary Ware and Tiles on the bypass road, and Anuvat Chalermchai, Marketing Manager of Thai Ceramic Co Ltd, for the recent grand opening of the Cotto Tiles Studio at the store.



WHY, IT'S ART! At the opening of the YArt! Meditation Art Exhibition, on show at the Crowne Plaza Resort in Karon until March 31, are (from left) visiting Indonesian artist Teguh Osterrik; Cheryl Ho, PR & Marketing Manager for YArt! Gallery Thailand; Thai artist Varaporn "Map" Ponrit; Michael Stephens, an instructor for holistic living and meditation methods; Kamal Apandi, Manager of YArt! Gallery Thailand; and Abigail Levy, Managing Director of YArt! Gallery Thailand.



KEY PERSONNEL: Peter Hourigan (left), outgoing General Manager of the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa, hands incoming GM John Kidd (right) the 'key to the resort' at a sunset cocktail event at the resort's spa village, with the resort's Owner Representative Maitree Narukatpichai helping out.



WHERE IS THE LOVE? Sri Panwa Concept Executive Jared O'Brien (center), Executive Secretary Siriporn Kaewsawang (front, left) and staff enjoy the resort's Blossom's Party to celebrate Valentine's Day.



BETTER BY THE DOZEN: Lilly Walker from Jersey Island (front, blue floral blouse), who has spent six months each year for the past 12 years on Phuket, celebrates her 56th birthday with friends at the Pearl Hotel in Phuket City.



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In The Stars

by Isla Star

PISCES (February 20-March 20): If March hasn't got off to the roaring start you were hoping for, events this week should open your eyes to possibilities in store. In the work zone make the most of opportunities offered on Monday and Tuesday. Romance is set to glow for single Pisceans. A Leo thinks you're the cat's whiskers, but needs encouragement to make the right move.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): A quieter atmosphere prevails. If you are tired of the frantic pace during the first days of March, you can sink comfortably back in your hammock and indulge in nothing more challenging than staring out to sea. Business matters should be ticking along nicely, thanks to your efforts of recent weeks. Where romance is concerned, a new relationship should be slowed down unless you're ready for immediate commitment.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): One of your wildest dreams is about to come true. You are about to experience radical changes of lifestyle. You are usually someone who prefers to stick to the tried and trusted routine, but events during the coming days will nudge you onto a path of new discoveries. Good news should not be shared with everyone; Aries will not be offering support for one. The color silver encourages clarity of thought.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Someone is set to take advantage of you this week. Be especially alert for loopholes in important business dealings on Tuesday. It would be prudent to wait until the end of March before signing important contracts; you will rise in others' estimation by using delaying tactics. The temperature rises where romance is concerned; Aries has got your number and intends to use it soon. Number 7 is lucky next Thursday.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): Top priority this week should be given to family affairs. Those nearest and dearest to you have been dropping subtle hints lately about your lack of attention. These have probably fallen on deaf ears as most you have had to devote much time and energy to work. Take time out this weekend to plan a surprise outing and reap the benefits. Primrose yellow helps your outlook to lighten.

LEO (July 24-August 22): Time is ticking by too quickly for Leos with deadlines to meet. You need to set a schedule and stick to it in order to get the job done. Star-crossed lovers can look forward to an easier path this week; if physical distance has been a drawback to progress, there are signs that a meeting is imminent. Virgo has good news on Wednesday.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Astral conditions are supporting you if you are ready to take a chance on love this week – you will get proof that the person concerned feels the same. Work will be the last thing on your mind, but problems arising on Monday may mean a short business trip. Finances will continue to be a rocky issue until the end of March; improve the situation by chasing up unpaid debts.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): If you have been waiting for the green light to finalize a business deal, get ready to move by the middle of next week. The coast is also clear for a personal relationship to really get off the ground as a third party leaves the scene. A dream you have this weekend holds clues regarding the immediate future. Wear turquoise to be taken more seriously.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Your confidence receives a boost this weekend when Aquarius shows serious interest. Single Scorpions will enjoy being the center of attention and can look forward to this meeting developing into a meaningful relationship. If you are already spoken for, the stars are shining on a deeper commitment being made. Money matters require careful consideration before you agree to a deal next Tuesday. The color orchid purple helps you to find balance.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): A week of game playing lies ahead for you. If this is not your cup of jasmine tea, stay on the sidelines and wait for others to get their acts together. You should not expect much progress to be made where new work projects are concerned. The best way to use energy during the coming days is by sorting out personal administration. This could reveal a financial mistake made in your favor.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Your significant other has important news this weekend. Those Capricorns who are averse to change might not be over the moon when they hear it, but the outcome is guaranteed to be positive. Catching up with old friends will make Sunday special and could open the door to new leisure pursuits. Tuesday is the most auspicious day for financial discussions; crossed wires on Wednesday will ensure mixed messages.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): A week of ups and downs lies ahead for you. Being in the right place at the right time gives you an advantage this Saturday. Seek out shade early next week to avoid getting hot under the collar when others fail to keep promises. A snake in the grass would like to disturb your chances of succeeding in romance, but will give its presence away by making too much noise.

PHUKET DIARY of coming events

Until March 13: Tao Thepkrasatri & Tao Sri Soonthorn Cultural Fair. Held every year to commemorate the role Phuket's heroines played in the victory over a Burmese incursion in 1785, the fair this year will be bigger and better than ever.

Pattama Rujewong, of the Phuket Provincial Cultural Office (PPCO), said that the celebrations this year would be the biggest yet, to mark HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 60 years on the throne.

Activities will take place from 8 am to 10 pm each day, at Thalang Chanasuk Memorial Field, in Baan Kian, where the battle took place.

The battlefield covers 96 rai, one kilometer west of the main intersection in Thalang Town, on the road to Cherg Talay.

On March 11, 12 and 13, starting at 7 pm, actors will reenact the battle.

On March 13, remembered as the day of the battle, a wreath-laying ceremony will be held at the Heroines' Monument at 8 am.

Sport competitions, including *takraw*, *Muay Thai*, *Muay Thai talay* (boxing while sitting on a horizontal pole over a pool of water or mud) and greasy pole climbing, will be held as part of the festival.

The main sporting event, on March 12, will be a mountain bike race, with off-road sections, taking in historical sites en-route.

Riders in Category A of the race will cover the full 35-kilometer course, with riders starting at 1:30 pm, while riders in Category B will race over a 25km course, starting at 11:30 am.

Category C, for children under 13 years of age, will cover 10km, starting at 10 am.

Until March 31: Art Exhibition. YArt! is presenting an exhibition of paintings exploring themes of self, inner spirituality and man's relationship with the outside world, by Thai and Burmese artists, at the Crowne Plaza Karon Beach.

A "Mind Raft" meditation workshop will be led by Michael Stephens on March 10 and 11. Call 076-286359 to register.



Not long now till Songkran...

March 23-April 15: Art exhibition. Dusit Laguna Resort will host an exhibition of bronze sculptures and oil paintings for public viewing from March 23 to April 15. Entrance is free.

The works are by British artist and sculptor Paul McGarry, who incorporates Thai motifs and mythical figures into pieces of modern art.

April 6: Chakri Day (Public Holiday). Chakri Day commemorates the origins of the Chakri dynasty, founded by Rama I, who established Bangkok as the nation's capital.

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 bring them good luck through the coming Thai Year.

April 14-15: Phuket Bike Week. Phuket Bike Week 2006 will be held from April 14-15, 2006.

The Grand Dinner by Ride Thailand and Phuket Riders Club will be on April 14 at Thainaan restaurant, opposite Central Festival Phuket.

Visit www.ridethailand.com or www.phuketbikeweek.com for more information.

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Where IP means Internet Partner

The new Formula One season, which roars off tomorrow at Sakhir in Bahrain, has been chock-full of excitement even before the start lights go out.

To begin with, there is an 11th team this year – fledgling Japanese outfit Super Aguri, lining up with Honda refugee Takuma Sato and 2005 Formula Nippon runner-up Yuji Ide.

Formed by former Grand Prix racer Aguri Suzuki, with support from Honda, the new team was established mainly to calm the outcry in Japan when Honda's own team (née BAR) dumped the at-times wild Sato. Nobody denies Sato is talented, and on his day very quick, but he has had more than his fair share of accidents along the way.

Instead of Sato, Rubens Barrichello will this year line up alongside Jenson Button at Honda. Button is entering his seventh Formula One season, and after 100 Grands Prix is still chasing that elusive first victory.

Replacing Barrichello in the Michael Schumacher team – sorry, in Ferrari – is Brazilian Felipe Massa. He too had a reputation for being somewhat wild, but after a couple of years at Sauber has calmed down considerably.

Massa's place at Sauber, now owned by BMW, has been taken by "Quick Nick" Heidfeld. The German previously drove for Sauber before a fruitless year at Jordan in 2004, and a slightly more successful season at Williams last year – when he achieved his first pole position and a couple of podiums.

Heidfeld is the first to admit that 2006 will be a transitional year for the team as BMW takes the reins, but don't rule out his picking up points along the way.

Heidfeld's teammate is the "past his sell-by date" Canadian

Exciting F1 season wide open, with big changes

Jacques Villeneuve, the 1997 world champion.

There had been speculation that BMW would not honor Villeneuve's two-year contract, and would replace him with Austrian Alex Wurz, but BMW team boss Mario Theissen decided that continuity was better for the team in its first year as a Formula One entrant in its own right.

Last year's runner-up, albeit with 10 wins, was McLaren, although there have been doubts expressed about the power and reliability of the new Mercedes-Benz engine that will power the newly-liveried cars in 2006.

This season, in order to reduce speeds – and allegedly cut costs – new 2.4-liter V8 engines will be used. These will produce around 700bhp (515kW), compared with last season's V10s that gave more than 900bhp. The biggest difference, according to the drivers, is the lack of torque compared with the V10, which will favor smooth driving, maintaining momentum in corners and ensuring a good exit speed.

The McLaren line-up is unchanged with Kimi Raikkonen and Juan Pablo Montoya.

The same goes for reigning world champions Renault, with Giancarlo Fisichella and Fernando Alonso, whose car will sport the coveted No. 1 in 2006.

Alonso has signed for McLaren for 2007, though, and this



Above, Renault's Fernando Alonso will carry No. 1, but has signed to move to McLaren next year. Right, Pablo Montoya stays with McLaren, while Felipe Massa, far right, has gone to Ferrari.



may have the effect of destabilizing his championship defense.

Toyota is also the same, retaining Ralf Schumacher (reputed to be second only to his brother in terms of annual remuneration) and Jarno Trulli.

The dark horse this season may turn out to be Williams, which parted company with BMW at the end of 2005 and is now fully independent. Powered by a Cosworth V8 and running on Bridgestone tires instead of Michelins, Williams retains Aussie Mark Webber, and has signed 20-year-old German sensation Nico

Rosberg – son of 1982 world champion Keke. Rosberg Jr won the inaugural GP2 title in 2005, and has been praised by none other than Sir Frank Williams for his speed and consistency.

Mention must also be made of Dietrich Mateschitz's pair of teams – Red Bull Racing and the former Minardi outfit, now called Scuderia Toro Rosso (STR).

Drivers are veteran David Coulthard and Christian Klien at Red Bull, while the newly revamped STR has American aspirant Scott Speed and the 2004 F3000 champion, Vitantonio Liuzzi from Italy.

Finally, Midland Racing is the old Jordan, although it runs much the same way as Eddie's eponymous team – without a great deal of cash. Its drivers are

Dutchman Christijan Albers and Tiago Monteiro from Portugal.

The season begins in Bahrain, and with the cancellation of the Belgian round because of improvements being made to the Spa circuit, it will comprise just 18 races over eight months, culminating in the Japanese Grand Prix on October 8.

This should be one of the most wide-open seasons in recent years, but don't count on Michael Schumacher having another bad year, as he did in 2005.

The 38-year-old, seven times world champion, is still undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with.

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



By Jeff Heselwood

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On Yaowarat Rd, opposite Bangkok Hospital Phuket, a tiny shophouse with a red signboard reading "Kanomjeeb-Salapow" serves up hot and tasty *dim sum* for breakfast.

The owner, Yaowaluk Kordilokrat, launched her business 10 years ago and has been going strong ever since.

Her Chinese soup (boiled pork ribs with mushrooms), at just 12 baht a bowl, is a highly popular complement to the *kanomjeeb* (*dim sum* dumplings) for six baht per dish.

She and her two younger sisters make the dumplings by hand every day.

Also on the menu is *sala-pow* (steamed buns filled with pork and egg) for six baht each and pork congee for eight baht.

"My foreign customers tell me the menu really suits them, because it isn't spicy like Thai food," she says.

Kanomjeeb-Salapow is open daily from 6 am to 11 am. For more information, call K. Yaowaluk at Tel: 076-354421.



Above left, Yaowaluk Kordilokrat prepares for another day of serving hungry people a fine, inexpensive breakfast.

Left and above, the menu includes a wide variety of steamed dishes.

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Main picture: Skiing at night? Not a problem. Above: This scene could be from any ski resort in the world.

Getting piste in Korea

With a dozen ski resorts, excellent snow and facilities to match, South Korea provides many Asians with their first taste of the thrills to be had both on- and off-piste.

And the country's gung-ho sporting exuberance – which was given a tremendous boost when Seoul hosted the Olympics in 1988 – means that both novices and experts are guaranteed a superb winter holiday, whether they be skiers or snowboarders.

The republic's ski season is

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters

running at full throttle now, and doesn't ease off until the end of the month.

Most of the larger resorts have snow generators which come into play on the odd occasions when Nature fails to co-operate.

Skiing is a relatively new sport for Korea, but the country's younger generation has taken to it with alacrity, blending its fun with a natural physical hardiness into what might be described as *tae kwon snow*.

At weekends and on public holidays, coaches and trains heading for the resorts are packed, and the lines for the chairlifts form shortly after day-break.

Best of all – from a visitor's point of view – is that prices are inexpensive when compared with some of the world's other ski destinations, with all-in packages taking care of accommodation, lift passes and breakfast and supper.

One of Korea's best-known skiing areas is Muju in Jeollabuk Province, which hosted the 1997 Winter Universiade. Its 27 runs – including the six-kilometer Silk Road and the 60° Raiders – are spread over 700 hectares.



Now, the snowplow: Beginners get a lesson before taking to the nursery slope.

As with all Korean resorts, the aim is to get skiers up on the slopes as swiftly as possible, with equipment-hire shops and chairlifts working flat out. Floodlighting means that night skiing is highly popular, too.

Communal hot tubs – a way of life for Koreans – are a great way to soothe aching muscles unused to the rigors of downhill and sudden turns.

The nightlife at Muju is perhaps the most developed in all of

the Korean resorts, with a select coterie of pubs, bars and lounges, and there's even an indoor playground for children.

Although, overall, the *après-ski* tends to kimchee and karaoke, there is plenty of opportunity for everyone to wind down.

In Gyeonggi, there is a lot of sporting fun to be had at Bears Town,

which has grown over recent years to include 11 different slopes – the longest nearly three kilometers.

The gentler runs – Little Bear and Panda – are especially good nursery slopes for youngsters and adults new to skiing, and Bears Town's multilingual ski schools can cater to all levels.

Snowboarding is more than just popular here, partly because it is easier to master than more traditional skiing, and students with a reasonable sense of balance find they can pick it up after just a couple of classes.

For those not so keen on either skiing or snowboarding, the sledge slopes are a great family outing.

Phoenix Park, in Gangwon Province to the east of Seoul, lies 700 meters above sea level, with valley-type pistes designed to take the best advantage of the natural topography of Mount Taegi. Its 12 slopes are served by rapid lifts and state-of-the-art Austrian-made gondolas.

There's also a skating rink for those who prefer to try their skills at staying upright on the ice rather than on snow.

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The Cryptic Crossword

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are the names of at least 25 pieces of kitchen equipment. The names may read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They may also read right-to-left or down-to-up. Score: 10 or more, good; 15 or more, very good; 20 or more, excellent.

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

Solution on next page.

su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

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

Sudoku is very simple: each row, each column and each “box” of nine squares within the puzzle must contain all the numbers from 1 to 9 with, naturally, no repetitions. Beware: there is only one solution to this puzzle, which is on page 20.

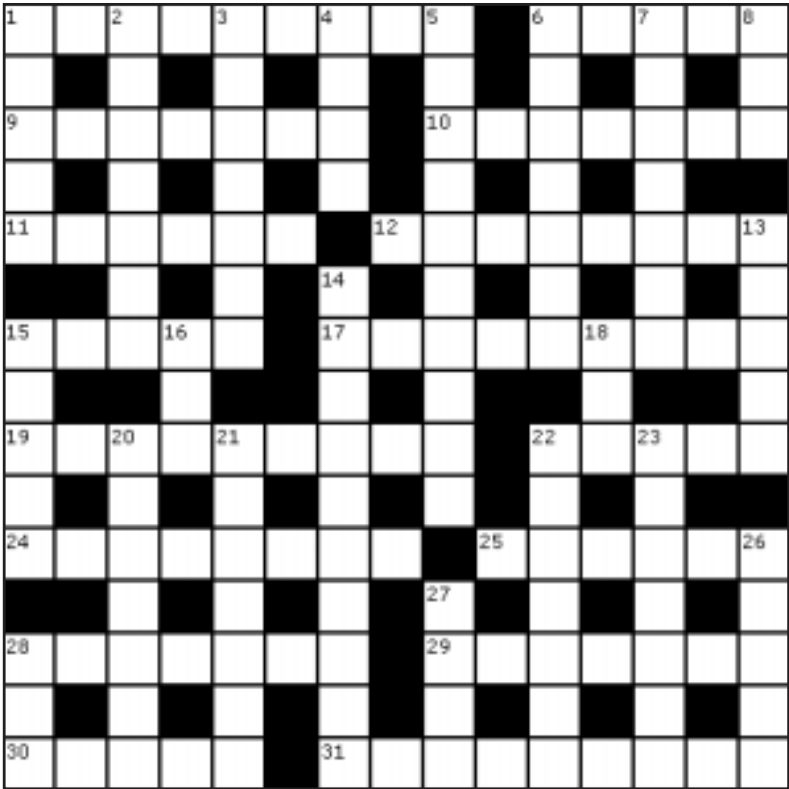
ACROSS

- Projectile excretion, it’s said, is out of the wind. (9)
- Colorless, rejected – throw it out. (5)
- Facial feature in Mae’s engine. (7)
- Encounter Meg outside noted container. (7)
- Money for clipped sheep? That’s nuts! (6)
- Labor ace cooked tuna. (8)
- Fool and Latin possession. (5)
- Can’t be beaten without tournament. (9)
- Tonic go in mix – unrecognizable. (9)
- Fish for dessert? (5)
- Composition or a rocky outcrop. I have nothing. (8)
- Encourage using trophy as food holder. (6)
- Note Ron has Greek letter for windpipes. (7)
- Scottish accent has gal mixed up with thief. (7)
- Windy? Happy about ship. (5)
- It’s Easter. Compose dissertations. (9)

EZ TRIVIA

- Brine is a solution of water and what else?
- What is Thailand’s international telephone dialing code?
- In *The Lord of the Rings*, who was Frodo’s most loyal friend?
- Stonehenge is located in which English county?
- What is the capital of Venezuela?
- What does DVD stand for?
- The term “spa” is derived from the name of which Belgian town?
- Which sign of the zodiac is represented by a crab?
- Who wrote *Of Mice and Men*?
- Which British pop star, a former member of Wham! was recently arrested on drug charges?

Answers on next page.



Compiled by Tortuus. © 2006

Down

- Plague writer bowled over nasty plant. (5)
- Forgives explanations. (7)
- Fishing fork is identification in Canadian or British river. (7)
- Type of grass instrument part. (4)
- Destruction of protest fired particle. (10)
- Look at clean obfuscation. (7)
- Ode to cooked pies – one of a series. (7)
- Follow label. (3)
- Cardinals say “Try!” (5)
- Believing experience is best, crime tip is resolved. (10)
- French pal go to Spanish pal?
- For example, nothing is conceit. (3)
- Marvin’s shelter. (3)
- Goat after church in the morning ? Nothing is. (7)
- Bad-tempered Napoleonic general. (7)
- Two ways to run to get third. (3-4)
- Places locals out East. (7)
- Average is added to capital. (5)
- Before baker, is competent. (4)
- Capture awful woman. (3)

Solution on next page.

Scribble Space

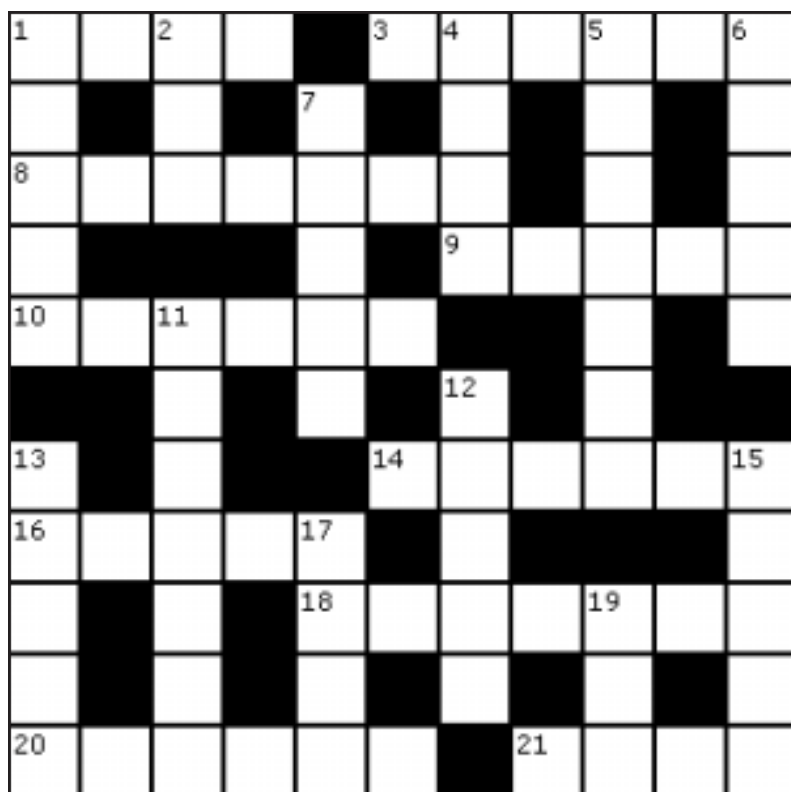


Brain Buster!!

Arthit, Boonchuay, Chatichai, and Damrong are standing in line to buy ice cream. See if you can figure out their order from the following clues:

Chatichai is between Arthit and Boonchuay.
Damrong is next to Arthit.
Boonchuay is not first.

Answer on next page.



Quick Crossword

ACROSS

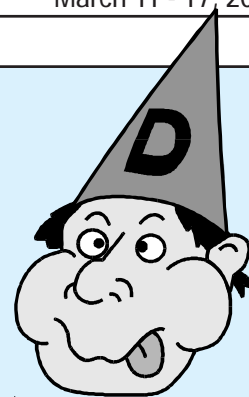
1. Bucket.
3. Haitian black magic.
8. Hair curl.
9. Sweet stuff.
10. Very large rope.
14. Stagger.
16. Indian currency.
18. Crustacean.
20. Argon and freon, for example.
21. Shopping center.

DOWN

1. W. Australian city.
2. Charged particle.
4. Horse food.
5. Severe dislike.
6. Smells.
7. Stomach ailment.
11. Gun and pike, for example.
12. Explosive devices.
13. Not right.
15. Of the countryside.
17. She, in French.
19. Afternoon meal.

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. Which constellation contains the twins Castor and Pollux? | 9. What was her nationality? | 15. <i>The Comfort of Strangers</i> is which singer-songwriter's most recent album? |
| 2. Which sportsmen might use a mashie-niblick? | 10. Which 59-year-old crooner recently released a compilation CD, <i>The Greatest Songs of the Fifties</i> ? | 16. Sworn in on March 11, 1993, who was the first female Attorney-General of the US? |
| 3. Which country's entire population was condemned to death by the Spanish inquisition? | 11. Puntland is a region of which strife-ridden country? | 17. Which production road car recently set a speed record of 407kmh (253mph)? |
| 4. Which country has been the site of most European battles? | 12. Singer Robbie Williams has just bought shares in which English soccer club? | 18. What do actor-director Kenneth Branagh, author John le Carré and actress Dame Helen Mirren have in common? |
| 5. What were the sides of the US fighting ship <i>Old Ironsides</i> made of? | 13. What do the following have in common? Singer/dancer Josephine Baker, writer Samuel Beckett, actors Audie Murphy and James Stewart, and a homing pigeon called Cher Ami. | 19. In which country is Raouché Rock? |
| 6. Which version of the Bible was published in 1610? | 14. Apart from acting, Audie Murphy was also notable for being what? | 20. Who wrote <i>The Ballad of Lucy Jordan</i> , the song made famous by Marianne Faithfull? |
| 7. Who is credited with being the first non-Muslim Westerner to visit Mecca? | | |
| 8. Who is the only woman to have won two Nobel Prizes? | | |

Answers below, left.

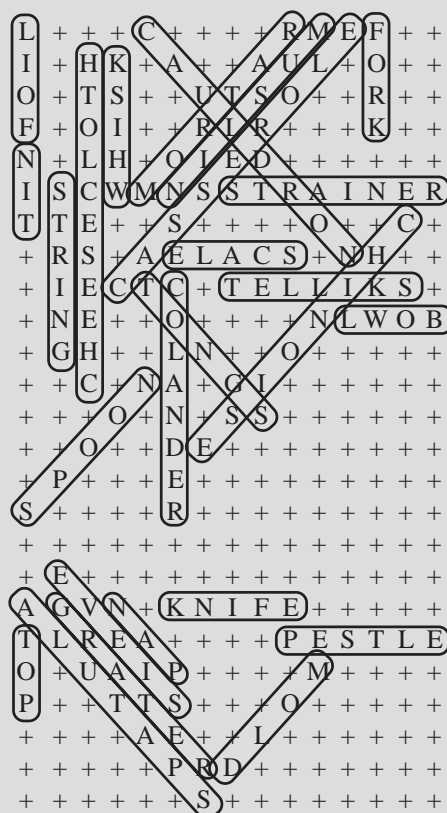
Puzzle Solutions

Monster Quiz Answers: 1. Gemini; 2. Golfers; 3. The Netherlands; 4. Belgium; 5. Wood; 6. The King James version; 7. Richard Burton; 8. Marie Curie; 9. Polish; 10. Barry Manilow; 11. Somalia; 12. Port Vale FC; 13. They all received the Croix de Guerre; 14. The most-decorated US combat soldier of World War II; 15. Beth Orton; 16. Janet Reno; 17. The Bugatti Veyron 16.4; 18. They have all refused the CBE (Commander of The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) honor; 19. Lebanon; 20. Shel Silverstein.

EZ Trivia Answers: 1. Salt; 2. 66; 3. Samwise Gamgee; 4. Wiltshire; 5. Caracas; 6. Digital Video Disc or Digital Versatile Disc; 7. Spa; 8. Cancer; 9. John Steinbeck; 10. George Michael.

Brain Buster Answer: Damrong is first, Arthit is second, Chatichai is third, and Boonchuay is fourth.

Hidden Words SOLUTION



Solution to this week's Cryptic Crossword



Solution to this week's Quick Crossword



Solution to this week's Sudoku puzzle



TSOW LITES THE WAY

Just because you're 70 years old doesn't mean you can't be immature. For nine years now, S Tsow has been the resident humor columnist at *The Nation*, reveling in jokes about farts and poo. His columns also appear regularly in the *Gazette*.

His new book of 35 humor stories is a sequel to his first *Thai Lite*, entitled *Thai Lite 2* (Bangkok Books, 2005, 204pp). The cover shows an overflowing beer stein labeled "The Refill".

A disclaimer: I've known S Tsow since 1992, when the fat poisonous toad came to visit me in Songkhla and then wrote a story called *A Literary Pilgrimage*. It was outrageously untrue and ridiculously funny.

S Tsow is a master of taking an outlandish premise and running with it.

Here is some dialog from his first story, *Thailand Q&A*, arising from the classic situation of a Bangkok expatriate returning home to his ignorant countrymen:

"Q: I hear that they have elephants in Thailand.

"A: Yes. Everyone has an el-



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

ephant. Mine is named Esmeralda. I ride her to work every day, urging her on with hearty cries of "On, on, Esmeralda, thou best of pachyderms!"

"Q: Where do they park 'em?"

"A: We have elephant parking lots.

"Q: Don't the elephants mess up the roads with their poo?"

"A: No. We have elephant toilets for them to relieve themselves in.

"Q: What's an elephant toilet like?"

"A: Big."

He then moves on to the subject of Thai nicknames, a new cartoon hero for Thailand named Geckoman, the Thai love of blocking sidewalks, the culture of bus riding in Bangkok, floods, elephant

toilet training, the quest for "quality" tourists, the reality of "scum" tourists, and his 20 "laws of the trail" gleaned from his backpacking days in the 1960s.

A trio of stories is dedicated to his years of teaching. He reveled in the respect he was entitled to as a foreign *ajarn*.

"I imagine that it's the same sort of respect that would be accorded somebody who had been born a savage in the jungle, but then got educated and went to another country. There, because of his education and his ability to teach his native language, it was decided that he was worthy of high status. People would show him respect, but they could never be sure he was not going to suddenly spear a passing dog and eat it raw on the sidewalk."

He goes into a very funny extended riff on the meeting of a

sex tourist and a bargirl, who exchange intimacies in formal Victorian English: "Good evening, sir. May I inquire if you desire to partake of liquid refreshment? And, if so, of what nature?"

And on to: "If you wish, sir, I can provide ministrations which will alleviate any stresses you may be feeling" leading to "a mating event".

This leads to *A Guide for Western Romeos* in which he cautions against marrying a "youthful, submissive Asian Juliet".

"Take a look at any Thai soap opera," he warns. "Watch as the minor wife and the major wife shriek obscenities at each other and tear each other to pieces, biting and clawing like alley cats. Watch as the husband, the object of their affections, stands there transfixed in helpless terror, looking like a constipated eunuch."

A trio of stories on food – *Food Wimps*, *The Right Hand is for Eating* and *The Somtam Lady* – are less successful. But he's back on form with an interview skewering a pompous jargon-spouting management guru.

He moves robustly onwards to ways of getting rich in Thailand. There's sex change tourism and dental tourism and medical tourism.

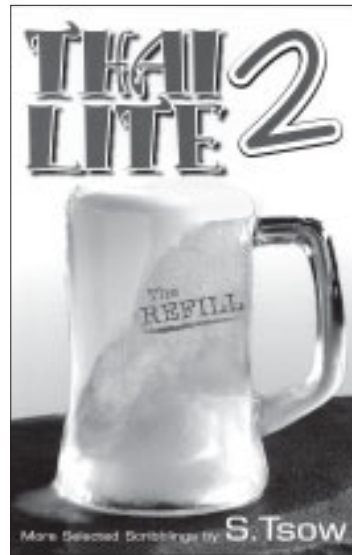
Why not – rounding out the services from womb to tomb – crematorium?

And finally there are his thoughts on his own funeral:

"I want people to wear bright colors at my funeral, and no speeches. As soon as the last chorus of *Livin' Next Door to Alice* has faded, I want them to crank up the loudest and snappiest *morlam* music they can find and pop my coffin into the furnace as the audience chants, 'Burn, baby, burn!' and fireworks light up the sky and writhing gogo dancers snake-dance topless around the crematorium."

As one of his friends, I think that's the least we could do.

Tsowndings is on Page 14 of this issue.



Busted blondes, Marley's mellow ghost

The wrong stuff: "I had always known that Phuket was a package holiday [hotspot], but I was unprepared for Patong. When I arrived, I noticed that the town was full of large, muscular men with no necks and little hair." (1)

The long stuff: "It's all a bit sad but wherever you go in tourist-Thailand there are advertisements to visit 'long-neck villages'. These poor asylum seekers from Myanmar are never referred to as the Patong people or even slightly, but forgiveably, erroneously as Karen or Kayan people, just long necked." (2)

Strange but true: "Pattaya's finest busted one blonde Russian lady and her pimp this week. They were arrested, quickly deported and barred from ever re-entering the Kingdom. They were not charged with prostitution or soliciting, but rather for working without a valid work visa..." (3)

Miles of smiles: "An aside. Thailand is known as the land of smiles. This is the smile of the taxi driver when you tell him where you want to go and he smiles and implies that he knows where to take you.

No, the smile means, 'I don't understand a word you are saying and I will take you where I think you deserve to go'. After telling a driver, The Sheraton, he smilingly delivered us to the Asia Hotel, on the other side of town, but oh well." (4)

Gibbon half a chance: "...we changed plans and headed for the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project (GRP) instead which is inside a National Park here on Phuket.

"The park entrance fee was a steep \$5 per person. I say steep because the only thing in the park is one small waterfall and a few food stall vendors. The guy at the gate did have himself an official looking uniform and a little booth to sit in so we paid up.

"The only other thing in the park of course is the GRP, but since not one penny of the park fee goes towards the GRP it doesn't really count.

"The Gibbons here were mainly confiscated from pet owners, street side acts, and bar-room entertainment ... Because they are trying to train them to be wild again visitors aren't allowed anywhere near them.

"We could see them through the trees and we could certainly hear them with their super loud calls, but we didn't get to see one of them smoking a cigar, drinking a shot of whiskey, and playing a game of eight ball." (5)

ZZZZZZZZ: Isn't it strange how everyone's Thailand Reggae bar experiences seem to be so similar? Here's a nice compare-and-contrast from two lads on the prowl in Patong. "The ping pong show was awful. The poor man's Bangkok... Like I said, this place was nasty. We left the joint soon

OUTSIDE IN

By Lis Kinswoman

Apologies for Lis's absence last week. She's been a little poorly and has undergone the chair-on-veranda treatment and highly recommends it.

This week we have men without necks (Aren't there a lot of them on the island? Do they have to have pit bulls or is it just Lis's impression?); gibbons with goats; the ubiquitous reggae bar experience; and an off-the-rail central Bangkok experience.

after polishing off our free beers, not looking forward to once again having to push our way past a sea of groping ladyboys and crazy hookers again.

"Then we spotted it, the diamond in the rough. The Rasta Bar. I don't know what it is about Reggae themed bars popping up everywhere we go, but we welcomed the sight with open arms. Not only that, but this was the best Reggae bar yet. In the true spirit of the theme, the staff were incredibly laid back.

"We sat down at the bar

and looked around for the barman – he was asleep in a hammock behind us. After he woke up and got us a couple of beers, we grabbed a seat, lay back and enjoyed the smooth grooves of Bob Marley. Very smooth. Almost too smooth. But smooth. Nice. Relaxing. Smoooooth. 2 hours later. Ok, so I fell asleep at a bar..." (6)

Off the rails: Some contributors to blog/information sites are well meaning, but ultimately confusing. Here's one from a few years back: "While the red-light district of Pat-Pong is depressing as far as the sex tourism is concerned, the night market there cannot be surpassed. I recommend the sleeper train to Chiang Mai..."

And here's another one: "While travelling in Bangkok be careful as to what you order in a Chinese restaurant. Dog meat is listed on the menu as 'urban deer' while jellyfish is called 'juicy noodles'." (7)

- (1) geocities.com/graydonandjoanne/oldtravelogs/may25log.html
- (2) patandhelen.co.uk/63thai.htm
- (3) www.stickmanbangkok.com/Weekly/weekly192.htm
- (4) irvingweb.com/new12.html
- (5) bumfuzzle.com/logs01-06.htm
- (6) thingsivewritten.blogspot.com/2005_08_01_thingsivewritten_archive.html
- (7) www.kinneret.co.il/easternet/tipthai.htm

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Extreme views on reef will do nothing but damage

The discovery of a wonder of nature, such as the enormous reef off the shores of Phang Nga, inevitably sparks debate. At one end of the spectrum of opinion are those who believe that everyone should have the right to admire it. At the other end are those who believe that humans are inherently destructive and therefore should not be allowed anywhere near it.

Already, the debate over the "new" reef has begun and months, if not years, of wrangling can be expected.

Given the well-documented effect of fishing and mass dive tourism on other reefs, unfettered access would surely be destructive. History also tells us that, now that news about the discovery of the reef is out, a total ban is unenforceable and, given human nature and petty economics, would probably most likely be destructive, too.

One irony of this story is that the reef was "discovered" thanks to information from fishermen, who are usually blamed for much of the destruction wrought by humans on reefs. Yet the researchers who have been inspecting the four square kilometers of coral say it is in very good condition.

This is not to say that fishing will not damage the reef, only that it does not appear to have done so thus far. Now that word is out, it is probable that more fishermen will be attracted to the area, putting increased pressure on the reef. While local fishermen know the importance to their own livelihood of keeping the reef in good condition, outsiders are unlikely to be as scrupulous.

There will also be pressure from dive companies to allow dive trips to the reef, especially from dive operations in Khao Lak that are still suffering in the doldrums after the tsunami. For them the discovery is a godsend. They, too, know that abuse will damage their own prospects, and have already vowed to do what they can to protect the new-found site.

The third group in the equation are the National Parks Department officials who will have to enforce any rules made to cover the reef. Chronically undermanned, under-equipped and underfunded, they will not be able to do this alone.

Future property development along the coast near the reef will have to be strictly regulated in order to prevent run-off and effluent from damaging the reef.

All of this will require an effort that goes beyond local considerations, yet still takes into account the needs and views of local "stakeholders". Without them, any attempt to police the park is bound to fail.

— The Editor



Letters

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

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

Reefer madness

The new reef [*Gazette* March 4] off Phang Nga is doomed. Your story notes, "For now, K. Songpol is keeping the location of the reef a secret in order to protect it."

Oh come on; if K Songpol were serious about protecting it, he wouldn't have mentioned it *at all*. This story has hit the international community and the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum.

It would be very easy to find the reef. Just wait until K. Songpol heads out there again and follow him. It's not rocket science.

Furthermore, there is not one park in Thailand, marine or other, that is protected effectively. Commercial trawlers come within Tarutao's borders constantly. Fishermen do almost whatever they want in the Similans and so on. The best way to protect a place is *not* to tell everyone!

Dave Williams
Kata

Speaking volumes

As a retired professional audio designer I would like to enlighten Somchai Wichitbut (First Person, *Gazette* issue of Feb 25) with some facts as to why his community loudspeakers idea do not work.

First, the loudspeaker system, at around 150,000 baht, costs much more than a clock radio (400 baht) for every house in the community.

Second, one loudspeaker cluster in middle of the community does not work because sound is echoed from every wall and roof, resulting in poor acoustics for most areas of the community. Also, the sound volume is too high at long range, too low at long range and comfortable only in limited areas.

Third, who wants to live in a jail or a military camp where

Big Brother wakes everyone up at the same time; too early for some and too late for others?

Fourth, who wants to live in a place where Big Brother decides what everyone must hear, whether they want it or not?

Fifth, a long time ago radio frequencies were allocated to broadcast news for the masses, for numerous good reasons. Those reasons remain the same.

I hope the officials of Theprakasat Municipality have the common sense to keep these community loudspeakers turned off.

Heikki Malkki
Phuket

Losing the way

In claiming that (a) foreign guides are unnecessary, and (b) the practice of employing "sitting guides" is demeaning to local guides [*Gazette* February 25], the Phuket Professional Guide Association's argument against the licensing of foreign guides falls over itself.

No tour operator in his right mind would spend money on the additional foreign guide, if the local guide was capable of providing the service to a satisfactory standard.

Caught between the requirements of the market place and TAT regulatory requirements, tour operators have no choice but to incur duplicate costs; the foreign guide, to satisfy customer requirements, and the local TAT-licensed sitting guide to satisfy regulatory requirements.

The well-intended TAT licensed guide program has thus unfortunately evolved into an artificial "make-work program", funded by the tour operators, and at the expense of more productive investment in sales and marketing jobs, safety, modernization of equipment and capacity expansion.

Let's go beyond the foreign guide debate and eliminate the licensed guide program entirely. Let's have the government stop dictating to tour operators how to run their businesses. Let's allow free market forces to determine who hires whom, to guide whom, or even whether a guide is needed at all.

Let's allow the police to go back to real police work, and stop wasting their time chasing buses to check whether there is a quiet man on board with a TAT badge hanging around his neck.

Let's shut down the TAT's guide licensing department, and redeploy these people to selling and marketing Thailand as a destination. Let's stop wasting all this valuable human capital!

No doubt these guides can find more satisfying and rewarding jobs providing goods and services that people actually want to buy! Phuket's tourism industry, and the guides themselves, would all be better off as a result.

Frank Chandler
Rawai

Stop the nightmare; I want my dream back

I was afraid to drive along the main roads on Phuket during my most recent visit – one of many I have made to here – by motorcycle. There were big vans driving like they owned the road, in fact, the traffic has gone crazy.

In the four days I spent in Phuket, one of my friends had a fatal accident and another was struck by a hit-and-run driver. Thailand, and Phuket in particular, are precious places to relax and enjoy the full meaning of life. What are the police going to do about this? Please protect the island. I want my dream back.

A Biker
Finland

The Phuket Gazette

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Phuket's prosperous marine industry does little for Thais

I understand that the government is trying to ease the difficulties felt by foreign yacht owners and boating-related businesses as well as to bolster tourism. I also understand that the proposal would apply only to Thai-registered sailboats that are under 16 meters (52 feet) in length with a limited size of motor. However, some 80% of Phuket's Thai-registered sailboats are 12-13 meters in length.

Some say the marine industry increases employment, but it actually doesn't make much difference. Moreover, [foreigners] enjoy our resources, but leave their waste behind. And when they have got what they wanted, they simply return to their home countries.

Although yachting in general may not produce a huge amount of waste, the high number of yachts in Phuket does result in a large amount of waste going into the sea at anchorages and marinas.

It is good to support foreigners doing business in our country, but it is also important to examine whether or not Thailand benefits from it. For example, 95% of the scuba diving businesses are operated by foreigners and they take advantage of a loophole in Thai law. These companies don't collect the tax payable by scuba divers to the Thai government when diving in National Parks in Phuket, even though the industry generates about 3 billion baht [revenue per year]. How is that good for local people?

When foreigners come to do business in our country, they should pay some taxes; we can use the money to recover and

FIRST PERSON

The joint declaration, "The Plan of Action of Franco-Thai Tourism Cooperation", signed on February 18 by Thai Tourism and Sports Minister Pracha Maleenont and his French counterpart, has been described by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MoTS) as beneficial for international-standard marinas and supporting the growth of the marine industry in Thailand.

In the wake of this, a MoTS proposal to allow people with foreign captain's licenses to skipper Thai-registered yachts is to be put before Cabinet. While **Surin Theerakulpisut**, Chief of Marine Office 5 Phuket Branch, supports yachting and marinas, he wonders how such latitude granted to foreigners benefits Thais.



develop our country. However, some people are unscrupulous and don't declare their income honestly. For example, they may rent a boat for 100,000 baht per week to an customer from overseas and declare it rented for a mere 10,000 baht.

And, I would say, nowadays, it's not just foreigners sailing on yachts or running marine businesses; Thais do, too.

The law is set up to protect the best interests of Thai people, but the regulations are not always effective. To do business in Thailand, Thais must have a 70%

share and foreigners are entitled to a 30% share in a company. Unfortunately, many foreigners use Thai people in order to register their business and yet the business is, in fact, controlled by the foreigners who then pocket the profits.

We imagine visiting millionaire yacht owners come and spend money on various things in Thailand, such as dining, but when it comes down to it, more often than not they come here to do business and to make money.

Also, any boat that enters Thai waters should go to the

Marine Office 5 at Ao Chalong, be declared and pay 100 baht to us, but many of them neglect to do so. We only have that one checkpoint at Ao Chalong and whenever we survey the area, we find yachts that have not been declared to the authorities, or are breaking the rule about having a Thai skipper.

If the illegal boats are not spotted by our staff, the owners get away scot free. The new regulation will not change that. But the new regulation gives the Thai-registered yachts without Thai skippers legal status. It ben-

efits them and does nothing for us.

Our control and enforcement has relaxed in the past two years; this came about because of foreigners complaining about our strict application of the law. They claimed that arresting people whose yachts are here illegally or without documentation required by law demonstrated a lack of support for yachting, marinas and tourism in the province. So, now we are slow to arrest them, waiting to get clearance from the Marine Department to take any action as they advise.

Unfortunately, without strict controls, serious crimes, such as the smuggling of drugs and weapons on boats, are easier to commit. As a nation with coastal geography, we need to be extremely careful.

The government has done enough to support foreigners in the marine industry: taxes on yachts have been cut to 0%. Maybe the government believes that the marine industry boosts employment, or enhances economic growth. I doubt that it does.

As for Phuket itself, Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura's strategy is to make Phuket an attractive, international-standard maritime province – we already have three major marinas (Boat Lagoon, Yacht Haven and the Royal Phuket Marina) – we support this. I support this.

However, we also need to maintain effective control.

I don't hate foreigners and I am not against a free and open economy. Nor do I oppose commerce, but the Thai government ought to prioritize what is of real benefit to Thai people.

Foreign objects in prepared food

I bought take-away lunch from a *pad Thai* restaurant recently. As I was eating the noodles at home I felt something hard in my mouth. It was a rusty, half-inch-long black nail, the tip of which pierced the roof of my mouth.

I thought my luck had hit rock bottom when I pulled a cockroach leg out of my home-delivery pizza. Who do I report this type of thing to?

Charlie
By email

Supaluck Dumrongchua of the Phuket Public Health Office replied:

Anyone wanting to complain about food can call the Phuket Public Health Office (PPHO) at Tel: 076-211330 (ext 204, 205). It helps if the complainant can provide us with the foreign matter found in the food, along with information about the shop, including its name and location.

Complaints may be lodged though the Public Health Ministry's Consumer Hotline number, 1556. In this case the complaint will be first noted in Bangkok. This takes more time [to get to us] so it is best to contact us directly.

Either way, the PPHO will follow up complaints by inspecting the food-preparation procedures of the food outlet in question and issue a warning to the shop if it is found that hygiene standards are not being complied with.

We recommend that the public patronize food outlets that display a "Clean Food Good Taste" certificate.

If there are problems from these restaurants, it is easy for us to follow up because they have to maintain a stringent set of hygiene standards to merit this certificate.

Issues & ANSWERS

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

Did gov't renege on tsunami promise?

What became of the government's promise to pay the hospital bills for all tsunami victims?

I know that all foreigners paid their bills, otherwise they were not allowed to leave.

Just Curious
Patong

Arun Keodsom, Chief of the Phuket Provincial Office for

Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (ODPM) replied:

Under Thai law, in the case of tsunami victims, the ODPM, Thai hospitals or, indeed, any Thai state organization covers expenses for Thai citizens only.

Foreign tsunami victims are not eligible to have their medical bills paid covered by the Thai government.

Watch out for litter touts

I am sometimes asked my opinion about the suitability of a particular breed of dog as a pet in Phuket. Any breed of dog can be acquired abroad and taken to Thailand, providing the correct steps are followed.

But just why anybody would want to do this, unless bringing over an existing pet, is completely beyond me, considering the significant costs involved and the fact that many breeds are unsuited to a tropical climate.

Is buying a Thai-bred pedigree dog an alternative? My answer would be simply this: let the buyer beware! To understand how pedigree dogs are bred and sold in Thailand, it is probably worth first looking at how this happens in the West.

Basically, there are three main sources of pedigree dogs in virtually any Western country. The first is a "reputable" breeder. This will generally be somebody who breeds one or two different types of dog.

The prime motivation of reputable breeders is to raise dogs for the showing, as showing dogs is their hobby. If successful, they can make a significant amount of money from stud fees, and a lesser amount from selling puppies that do not meet the high standards required of a successful show dog.

Show-quality puppies are usually sold only to clients who are actually prepared to show the dog. This is the safest route to follow, but even the best breeders can produce puppies with significant faults and inherent health problems.

Many breeds have reached the standard they are at today through inbreeding. While this can stamp in good qualities, it can



First one, then the other: Nappa and Andy Anderson with their two former street dogs.

also stamp in faults which may be impossible to eradicate. The most popular breeds all come with almost certain future health problems, whether it be heart defects in small breeds such as the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, or hip dysplasia in most larger breeds.

The second route followed is through newspaper advertisements. These will generally lead to one of two sources. The first will be a local person who maybe has a pet bitch from whom the owner, for whatever reason, has decided to produce a litter.

In most cases the owners will have used a friend's animal as stud, or hopefully a good-quality stud dog. But although their pet may be the most beautiful dog in the world in their eyes, they

probably know little or nothing about the breed standard or any faults the dog may be carrying.

Other advertisements may well take the buyer, knowingly or unknowingly, to commercial puppy farms. These establishments are usually in rural areas, often on farms, and have large numbers of dogs of many different breeds. The bitches are bred from every season, and are kept purely to produce puppies as a money-making concern.

These dogs are usually poor quality and in poor health, and if you do receive pedigree papers, they may well be totally inaccurate. There have been many campaigns to shut down such establishments.

It would also be highly un-

usual to find a pedigree dog in a pet shop in the West.

If you are determined to buy a dog from another country, ensure that you do your homework closely. Also, be aware that there have been many cases of dogs being stolen, so you may well end up guarding your dog rather than the other way around.

How does this compare with Thailand? Dog shows, although not unheard of, are still novel in this country, and reputable breeders are therefore rare and difficult to find, as anybody entering "dog breeders Thailand" into an Internet search engine will quickly discover.

The fact is that most pedigree dogs in Thailand are sold in pet shops and at markets such as Chatuchak in Bangkok. Others are offered for sale through private advertisements in veterinary clinics and in newspapers. They generally come from exactly the

same sources as two sources in the West mentioned above – puppy farms or local people looking to make a buck.

All puppies look cute, whatever the breed, but again, buyer beware. Other than native breeds, nearly all of the pedigree dogs available in Thailand arrived as a result of somebody bringing in a pair of dogs from abroad. What the quality of these dogs was is anybody's guess.

The fact remains that there was very little breeding stock available here, and as a result inbreeding proliferated. The result, sadly, is that most of the so-called pedigree dogs available in Thailand bear little resemblance to the original breed.

I have seen breeds such as Labradors, Retrievers or Cocker Spaniels that I find hard to believe do not have mixed blood in them. They may well be very nice dogs, but it never ceases to amaze me that people spend so much money on buying something they have no idea about.

The number of pedigree dogs turning up abandoned at temples and at other locations such as the Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) attests to the fact that people do not always get what they think they are buying.

In recent weeks, the SDF has had the following breeds thrown over its fence – pug, poodle, shitzu, doberman, schnauzer, great dane and chow – in addition to many cross-breeds.

Nearly all of the pedigree dogs dumped were suffering from some medical condition, in some cases treatable but in others not. One imagines that they were no longer considered beautiful by their owners.

My own recommendation to anybody wanting a dog, either as a pet or for security reasons, is to follow the example of Andy Anderson and his partner K. Nappa – contact the SDF. It has dozens of dogs of all ages and sizes, any of which would make an ideal companion.

A dog of this type is suited to the climate, extremely protective of its owner and property, and comes with far fewer complications. The added bonus is these dogs are free, and come ready-neutered and vaccinated.

The two dogs pictured are typical of Thai stray dogs – two surviving sisters of just one of the hundreds of litters of puppies dumped each year on the streets and at the temples of Phuket.

Bella, on the right, was adopted last August when she was about 18 months old. Andy and K. Nappa were so pleased with her that they also adopted her sister. The dogs' happy ending is, unfortunately, a rare event.

For more information, contact the Soi Dog Foundation at Tel: 07-0508688 (in English) or 09-8167853 (in Thai).

MAKING TRACKS

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Not so long ago, a young tour guide died while paddling his inflatable. A doctor raced to the scene, but returned long-faced. "It looked like an epileptic seizure, but nobody knew first aid or CPR, and they did all the wrong things," he said. "It was probably an unnecessary death."

I recommended, to the owner of the tour company in question, CPR training from a local hospital with a price tag of 10,000 baht. This was deemed "too expensive". He added, flippanantly, "What can I do? He had a bad heart."

Another fatality occurred on the first whitewater rafting trip organized by another company. The owner simply bought a raft and took bookings. Knowing nothing about rivers, he didn't understand the warning signs; a flash-flood capsized his raft.

Whitewater rafting is inherently dangerous. The main safety question is not elimination of the risk, but minimizing it. The better the training and experience, the better the odds. If any industry needs attention paid to training, it is whitewater rafting. So why don't all companies – and guides – complete certificated training before they start accepting bookings?

Here is another sad example: some time ago a friendly lead guide paddled over to me to apologize for his 50 guests feeding monkeys. I discovered that the company had about 150 guests in total, but didn't know the exact headcount. Some years earlier, this same company lost a tourist to drowning on a 120-person trip.

Paddle guides still don't have to pass a swimming test, or to have lifeguard, first aid or CPR training.

Most lead guides don't paddle anyway, preferring to doze on the escort boat while freelance guides operate unsupervised.

In another incident some years earlier, a man was killed on his first day at work when the escort boat ran him over. Again, no training had been provided.

And yet another: a bookings clerk wanted to make more money as a speedboat captain. So he did. Early on in his "career", a guest went off the stern into deep water and drowned.

Speedboat sinkings are common, too. Tourists have told me about Thailand's strange

WANTED:

Guide for dangerous sports. Experience not necessary; training will not be given



The waters around Phuket are gorgeous, but hold dangers for the unwary and the untrained.

– Photo courtesy TAT

mathematical system, whereby 34 people on a boat somehow equals 22 passengers and two crew. That's a handy calculation when 22 is the maximum number of guests a boat is supposed to have aboard.

Imagine, too, the conversations back home about transferring – on the high seas – from one overloaded speedboat to another.

"Snap" credentialing does not work, either. One foreigner I know of selected "dive master" as his Phuket profession. "I can be certified in nine months," he told me. I pointed out his lack of ocean experience and suggested that he try another profession. Ignoring my advice, he was duly certified in months – and lost a diver within

six months. There is simply no substitute for experience.

Worst of all, many fatalities go unreported, or blame is placed on the victim, meaning that nothing happens to prevent more deaths.

Outdoor activity accidents will happen, but we can reduce their frequency, and, perhaps more importantly, learn how to deal with any injuries that occur.

Unfortunately, the only criteria currently for setting up an outdoor activities venture

are forming a company, registering it with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), and offering a product or service for hire. No actual experience is necessary.

Responsible outdoor adven-

ture firms require more investment than capital. The real investment isn't in land or capital, but in expertise. Without a personal investment in activity experience, managers cannot manage – and they should certainly not accept bookings from unsuspecting tourists.

Phuket prospers from tourists who visit its beautiful nature, much of it marine. We therefore have a moral obligation to offer professionally run and safe activities. Tourists may be so naïve that they feed monkeys or swim in dangerous waters – but "guides" are paid to guide. As the opening examples show, however, moral concerns apparently count for little.

Financial incentives can work, though.

There are hundreds of "marine" destinations. Travelers understand that accidents happen, so they choose "responsible" destinations that minimize risk. When they buy such tours, they expect competence, safety and guidance. Hawaii proved that with its 1990 Marine Master Plan that set designated activity areas, volume

limits, and professional standards.

After a recession in Japan, Hawaii's overall tourism dropped 42% during the plan's first three years, but marine tourism rocketed from US\$300 million in 1990 to US\$1 billion in 1993.

Despite a downturn in the number of arrivals, when Hawaii introduced professional standards and usage zones, tourists took part in more marine activities.

When overloaded speedboats sink, or when tourists witness unnecessary deaths, they go home and they talk about it. A big reason for one's selection of a destination, after all, is to tell one's friends and colleagues afterward about the vacation.

The market decides if we become the destination we think we are, so Thailand needs realistic, attainable professional standards that are enforced. The first line of responsibility, of course, is the tour operators themselves. But if that were the case in reality, you wouldn't be reading these words. So who should be responsible?

Government agencies do license boats and their captains are licensed also, but those of us in the business all hear speedboat stories. No matter what criteria become law, enforcement will always be an ongoing issue.

When the TAT promotes activities, it has a responsibility to guarantee safety, credentialing, and maintaining Thailand's natural treasures. It should promote only properly accredited companies that treat both customers and locations with respect.

The Department of National Parks is the "landlord" of many popular tourism destinations in Phang Nga Province and on Koh Phi Phi. It is therefore in a position to supervise visits – and require its own guide training on basic environmental behavior.

We don't need to set Hawaii standards, but we can at least start somewhere. Shouldn't a swimming test, basic life-guarding, and first aid and CPR certificates be minimum requirements for marine tour guides?

It sounds like common sense to me. But want to bet on when it actually happens?

THE GRAY AREA



By John 'Caveman' Gray



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The meeting is at 9am

(I'll be the one in sandals and shorts)

As our island's broadband and infrastructure improves, I come across more and more businesspeople who have chosen to set up corporate "digs" right here in Phuket. These work-at-home entrepreneurs mostly consist of CEOs of top banks, financial and management consultants, marketing firms and even magazine editors.

Ten years ago, I made the decision to leave corporate office life and became an independent traveling technical geek, and seeing this trend increase in popularity excites me no end.

STIGMA

Home-based businesses are gaining new legitimacy as affordable office technology levels the playing field and a growing number of downsized executives and successful business owners opt to work from home.

Yet for years, entrepreneurs who worked out of their homes suffered from the stigma and prejudice that they were somehow second-class operators solely because of where they hung (or, in most cases, did not officially hang) their shingle.

Building a home corporate image has never been easier. You can go to any one of a hundred image sites on the web and download your very own cool logo.

Using MS Word to place that logo onto the header of a standard document and then put your contact information into the footer and *voila!* You're in business with company letterhead.

Use MS Front Page to choose a standard template website, drop in your logo and fill in the company information, pop out your mission plan and poof! You have web presence.



The home worker can get plenty of help from the Internet.

'Although I never lied, I used to be a lot more evasive about telling people where I worked. Now if I'm on the phone and my dog barks, I'll say something like, "My only office, mate."'

Then contact any of the search engine registrations services mentioned in my most recent article and now you can come up as one of the Top 10 listed sites for just about any search words or phrases you want.

Picture "47/1 Prabaramee Rd, Suite 34 Phuket, Thailand" on a company letterhead or on a business card and you can understand why many startup owners who were chained with such unattractive addresses head off to the post office to pick up their mail.

But the truth is that countless home-based entrepreneurs with far less fancy residential addresses continue to rent post-office boxes in a wishful attempt at camouflaging the little secret that their daily commute is up or down a flight of stairs.

Other transparent façades: adding a simple "& Associates" to one's surname, masking a spare-bedroom office as Suite 2B, and recording a message on the answering machine that says, "All our lines are currently busy."

Can you blame us? These days there are so many opportunities available for businesses and individuals around the globe that we no longer need to base our butts in some fancy high-rise in Hong Kong or London.

In fact, when I was consulting for Internet startups, my apartment overlooked Chrissie Field in San Francisco and my biggest problem was keeping the cat from typing on the keyboard as he walked around my desk or purring into the telephone handset as he tried to stake out his territory in my lap.

This sort of life has its advantages and disadvantages but for the most part, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

Home, to many corporations, has traditionally been a business backwater, the domain of piano teachers, part-timers, and multilevel-marketing schemers – a location that has been demeaned by all those "Earn Money at Home" classified ads.

Ten years ago, if you were working out of your home, it was like you had some sort of disease.

But a lot has changed in that time. Home-based businesses appear to be shedding their stigma. Many, indeed, are actually coming out – if not out of the closet, then certainly out of the spare bedroom or the basement.

Nowadays, most work-at-home executives and businesses probably garner more envy than scorn from the people they do business with.

Many of Phuket's and Samui's residents epitomize today's home-based entrepreneurs' outlooks and despite their business's success, they have decided to forgo the trappings of a typical business office.

One of our clients started working at home seven years ago when he bought back his ad agency from the larger company that had taken it over. He then restarted the agency at home as the Advertising Group, fully intending to get a "real" office when he had the time.

He uses our technology to connect seamlessly to his clients around the world by Virtual Private Networking.

But when the time came he asked himself why assume the monthly overhead of renting a 2,000-square-foot office, which he would have to fill with a secretary/office manager, a production assistant, an art director and perhaps an accountant?

Like many home-based entrepreneurs, he decided to stay the course, sailing on with his virtual company and subcontracting work out to other home-based entrepreneurs.

He communicates with them, and with his clients, by fax, email, VPN and a corporate website.

The home office used to be simply a stage in growth for many businesses. Now there's less of a need to ever move out of the house.

Moreover, not only has technology helped level the playing field, but many more – and more prominent – players have joined in the game.

With downsizing so common now, many former senior-level employees are working out of their homes as consultants and heading start-ups.

And thanks to telecommuting, the ranks of work-at-home managers have swelled, making the practice of conducting business away from the office far more common.

And it no longer comes as a surprise to anyone that real business is getting done in home offices.

NOT WELL REGARDED

Just ask our advertising man whose \$1.3-million company converts raw graphic images to a finished product, ready for magazine files.

He contracts out the conversions but has three full-time employees working from his home here in Phuket.

He says, "When you first start to work at home there's a tendency to feel you're somehow not as well regarded. But with a little success those feelings disappear."

As working at home becomes more commonplace, society's attitudes about it are changing.

"Although I never lied, I used to be a lot more evasive about telling people where I worked. Now if I'm on the phone and my dog barks, I'll say something like, 'My only office, mate.'"

More often than not, he notes, the response he gets is one of jealous curiosity, such as: "I've always wanted to do that. How do you like working from home?"

Phuket & Samui

The Islander Restaurant & Pub

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ON THE MOVE



Dawn DelVecchio, 40, from Connecticut, USA, has been appointed Associate Editor of *Asia-Pacific Tropical Homes* magazine at ArtAsia Press. She graduated with a degree in English and women's studies and then became a Master Instructor of *muay Thai* under the Thai Boxing Association in the US. She also won first place in the 2005 "Writing Cash Contest". Before moving to Phuket she worked as a Bangkok-based freelance writer covering stories on South-east Asian art, history and culture.



Alain Mekwattana, from Bangkok, is the new General Manager of the Phuket Resort Management Co, a part of the Richmond Group. After graduating in 1977 from L'Ecole de Commerce in Neuchatel, Switzerland, he worked at the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok. Moving to Phuket, he worked at the Phuket Yacht Club until 1997. Then followed stints at the Emerald Hotel, the Allamanda and the Banyan Tree. Immediately before joining the Richmond Group, he was General Manager of Arahmas Resort & Spa.



Patsy Palmer, 35, from England, is a new Director of EurAsia Development Company. She studied business administration at the University of North London and has worked extensively in the property and travel and tourism sector in the UK.



Fishing Port Chief Pramuan Rakjai: Will negotiate for fishing rights in the Andamans for the Phuket fleet.

Phuket and Andamans set date for trade talks

By Nattamon Ratcharak

PORT BLAIR: Initial trade talks will be held between authorities from Phuket and Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI), early next month, Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura announced on February 15.

The talks, for which a date has yet to be set, will mark the first formal step toward boosting commercial relations between the two Andaman Sea locales.

Phuket Commercial Affairs Office Chief Thada Pithayaporn said that his office will propose that the Indian government improve Port Blair Airport to facilitate trade and tourism. He will also present a list of goods that

Phuket is able to export, such as construction materials and cooking oil, as well as a list of potential imports from India, such as wood.

Kanokporn Kanthana, Marketing Officer of the local Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) office, said that to facilitate tourism between Phuket and the ANI, her office would request that visas to enter India be issued in Phuket and that arrivals from Phuket be issued visas on arrival at the Indian territory.

"We will also propose direct flights between Phuket, Bangalore and Chennai," she added.

Pramuan Rakjai, Chief of the Phuket Fishing Port Division of the Department of Fisheries, said that he would enter negotia-

tions with a view to improving relations between the fishing ports, including having part of Phuket's commercial fishing fleet being able to fish in Indian waters, and for fish and other seafood to be exempt from import duties for both fleets.

"We would like to set up a joint committee for resolving issues between the Phuket and Port Blair fishing industries, and we would like to set up information-sharing projects and training courses with the Indian local fishermen," he said.

Chaisak Koaysomboon, Director of the Software Industry Promotion Agency (Sipa) Phuket office, said that Sipa was looking into offering Indian ICT businessmen privileges for relocating to or setting up offices in Phuket, including having investment in Thailand approved in 14 days.

Associate Professor Meethee Sunpanij, Dean of the Service Industry faculty at the Prince of Songkhla University's Phuket Campus, said that he would consider sharing information at an academic level. There would be a particular focus on ICT issues, including "populations moving towards a knowledge-based society", e-learning development projects, and research and development.

He added that talks would include developing two-month and five-month student-exchange programs.

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To look at Germany as part of the European Union, and its largest economy, is to see a perfect dichotomy.

Corporate Germany, the business sector, is dynamic; the Germans are the most prolific exporters in the world.

With a total population of 82 million and, in size, smaller than the US state of Montana, it managed to export goods worth an estimated US\$1 trillion last year, a figure even China, Japan and the US failed to beat.

Germany, however, has serious problems including over-regulated labor markets, budget deficits, massive unemployment and a poor education system due to demographic shrinkages.

Combine this with a national sense of depression, which coexists naturally with low consumer spending, and it is hardly surprising that the German economy has experienced years of recession or low economic growth.

The situation appears to be improving. The latest business figures released in late February 2006 reflect confidence unmatched since October 1991.

The 2005 elections brought a change of government to one under the leadership of Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel. Her party, because of a very slim margin of parliamentary seats, was forced into a coalition with the previous governing party.

However, in the field of foreign relations, Merkel has already made a favorable impression. In a very short period of time she has mended the relationship with the US and has improved relations with the UK. She shows little enthusiasm for the former French-German partnership of her predecessors, once referred to as the "Fast Track Europe Team" that, in reality, became an economically moribund team.

Merkel's approach is far more pro-business than the previous government's stated abhorrence of the Anglo-Saxon economic model and an economic mix of something between social

Merkel begins to rescue Germany

democracy and socialism. The latter "mix" had led more to a dead end than a country with a bright economic future.

However, even under the previous political administration, some changes were introduced, albeit grudgingly as unemployment, budget deficits and sheer political survival forced them to happen.

Fortunately for Germany, the business sector consists of people who are far more able and determined to effect change. Anais Faraj, a strategist at Nomura, put it this way some months ago: "German companies are rapidly changing and restructuring and will soon closely resemble their cross-channel and transatlantic counterparts."

The German GDP looks set to exceed 2% in 2006, and even if this is a mediocre performance compared with the world average, in German terms it is a step in the right direction. Even a relatively modest upturn in German economic growth will have a positive impact on its neighbors. Holland, which is very

dependent on German economic prospects, is already showing marked increases in business and consumer confidence.

For investors with an interest in Europe, the outlook is excellent. Continental European stock markets are small compared with others.

For example, the combined market capitalization of both France and Germany's stock markets are smaller than the UK, but this is more a symbol of a lack of truly free markets and a limited and hobbled historical free-

enterprise ethic than for any other reason.

However, comparing the French and German stock markets performances with the UK's, one conclusion is readily apparent. In good economic periods, Continental European stock markets substantially outperform the UK. Unfortunately, in periods of economic decline, the reverse is true.

For the investor looking at Europe for part of a portfolio, I would, as usual, recommend the mutual fund/unit trust approach. The biggest decision in this area rests on investing in Europe without Britain or Europe and Britain.

Most fund managers make it perfectly obvious which option they offer. Funds that offer Europe including the UK will, normally, include a significant percentage of their investment in the UK simply because the British stock market is by far the largest in Europe.

However, with Continental Europe looking increasingly attractive, I favor the Europe-without-Britain approach.

I have little doubt that the UK will have, in stock market terms, a good 2006, but in a rising market Continental Europe



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

does have its attractions. A resurgent Europe will, in global terms, also help to counter a slowdown that can be expected in the US later this year. This is not a prediction of a US recession, but rather a move downwards to economic growth of around 3%.

Europe and many other countries, including the US, are likely to see above-average merger-and-acquisition activity in 2006. Many large companies have extremely attractive balance sheets, but are simply holding too much cash. This leaves them with two choices: to return the cash to shareholders or make acquisitions.

In Europe, and in particular in France, the reality of acquisitions has not reached the politi-

cal level. The proposed acquisition of Arcelor S.A., a French steel manufacturer, by India's Mittal Steel N.V. was recently blocked by French politicians, even though Arcelor has its listing in Luxembourg.

French business is well managed and competitive, but the opposite applies to their political elite. The latter still believe in some weird xenophobic concept of French National Champions (companies) and the "Fortress Europe" approach. Unfortunately, the ruling party in France is the "pro-business party"; the opposition Socialists are even worse.

The European Central Bank is likely to continue to slowly increase interest rates currently at 2.25%, but it is unlikely to derail economic expansion. European companies are, on average, trading at a price/earnings PE ratio of 13.5, which, although not bargain basement, is attractive when compared to either the US or Japan.

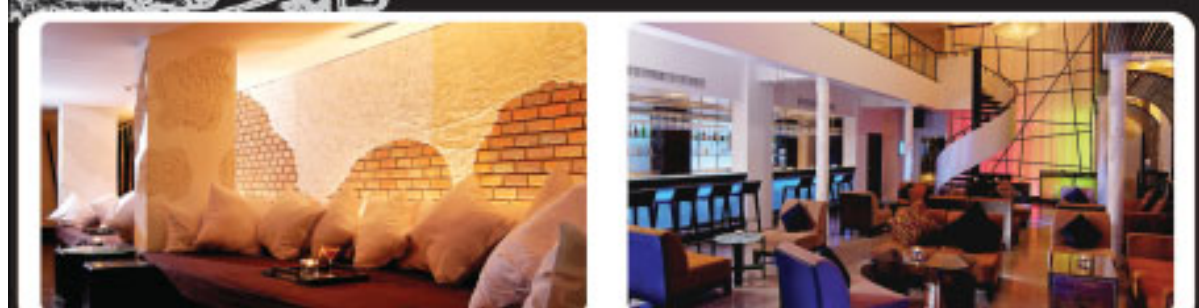
Richard Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial planning service. He can be reached at Tel and Fax: 076-381997, Mobile: 01-081-4611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th

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Pencak Silat martial art coming to Phuket

PHUKET: The 13th Pencak Silat Martial Arts World Championship 2006 will be held in Phuket on November 18-26 at Saphan Hin. More than 500 competitors from 25 countries are expected to take part.

Silat is a martial art of Indo-Malaysian origin that is practiced all over the Indonesian archipelago. It has several names, including *Panchak*, *Montjak*, *Silék*, but is most commonly known as *Pencak Silat*.

The ancient discipline is popular throughout Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia, Indonesia and the south of Thailand, but did not become an organized sport in Thailand until 1987.

It is hoped that this tournament will lead to a greater awareness of the sport in Thailand and will be instrumental in preparing local athletes, in particular for the 24th Southeast Asian Games to be held in Thailand next year.

Thai competitors are not as proficient as their neighbors: in 2004, Thai *Pencak Silat* athletes, competing in Singapore, took home just four bronze medals.

For more information contact the Pencak Silat Association of Thailand in Bangkok at Tel/Fax: 02-3180940 or visit www.thaipencaksilat.com or contact the Sports Authority of Thailand, Phuket Office, Tel: 076-250110.



Moto Inzi blitzes Chalong regatta

AO CHALONG: Roger Kingdon's *Moto Inzi* set a blistering pace in light winds to take line honors by a staggering 1 hour, 18 minutes and 38 seconds in the first race of the Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC) Keelboat and Multihull Series 2006 on March 5.

The incredible lead gave the crew enough time to enjoy a dip in the pool and a few cold beers on Koh Lone before idling across the bay to pick up their prize.

Crossing the finish line to win second place was Mark Pescott on *Summersalt*, with Phil Bender on *Charro* third.

Kevin Gillow aboard *Minx* won the Racing Class, with Stuart Crowe on *Cinders* second.

In the Cruising Class, *Sofia*, with skipper of the day Raymond Knight calling the shots, managed to win despite the crew finding themselves struggling to overcome the shifting light winds against the current. *Four Winds*, finished second.

At the time of going to press, Tony Knight of the ACYC told the *Gazette* that the next ACYC race on March 19 will be sponsored by the Royal Phuket Marina.

"Marina Manager Mark Rey has offered every boat that enters the March 19 regatta one week's free berthing at the Royal Phuket Marina, from March 26 to April 2," he said.

Fun triathlon draws 55 competitors to Marriott

PHUKET: A total of 55 young athletes took part in the inaugural "Kids' Triathlon" held at the JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa on February 26.

The contestants, ranging from six to 14 years of age, started with a 200-meter ocean swim followed by six-kilometer bike ride around the Prujae San Lake at Sirinath National Park and ended with a 1.5-km run around the resort to the finish line.

There were no awards for

winning the fun event, but all the kids got drinks and snacks to enjoy with their families.

The resort, together with the with Tri-Ballistic Triathlon Club (Phuket), will hold a team triathlon event at the resort on March 26. Applications must be submitted by March 14.

For further information about this event, contact Sean Pantan at Tel: 076-338000 (ext 3700) or Email: sean.pantan@marriotthotels.com



Still plenty of energy: Participants in the kids' triathlon celebrate completing the event.

Three-way tie at top of Patong Darts League

PATONG: Didi's, Amigos and Piccadilly are locked in a three-way tie for first place, after Didi's took all three points in a beer-powered 8-1 rout of Two Black Sheep, and Piccadilly picked off table toppers Amigos, 7-2, also winning the beer leg.

Lurking close behind the lead pack is Queen Mary, who trounced Valhalla 8-1 and won the beer leg.

While there have been several reports of 180s this season, Queen Mary's Raymond goes down as the first person in league history to notch up two in the same round: the first in the singles and the second in the doubles.

February 28 results: Queen Mary* 8 Valhalla 1; Two Black Sheep 1 Didi's* 8; Piccadilly* 7 Amigos 2; The Boss Bar 3 Shakers* 6; OffShore* 3 Dog's Bollocks 6 (* = winner of beer leg).

Standings: 1.= Amigos, Piccadilly, Didi's (22 points.); 4. Queen Mary (20); 5. Dog's Bollocks (18); 6. Shakers (17); 7.= Valhalla, Coyote Bar (16); 9. OffShore (14); 10.= Two Black Sheep, The Boss Bar (6).

March 14 fixtures: Dog's Bollocks v Queen Mary; Valhalla v Amigos; Didi's v Shakers; Coyote Bar v The Boss Bar; OffShore v Piccadilly (home teams first).

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Theerawat Larhip celebrates another victory for Thailand.



Right, Governor Udomsak Usvarangkura fires the gun to start the first race. Above and below, the action was fast and furious.



Thais sweep first round of jet-ski supercup

PATONG BEACH: The Flamingo Racing Team of Thailand completed a hat-trick in the first round of the Asian Watercross SuperCup 2006, held at Patong Beach on March 4 and 5.

Competition between professional champions was divided into three major categories: pro ski, pro sports and pro-am runabout, with coverage broadcast on UBC's SuperSport channel.

All three categories were won by the Flamingo team riders of Chaowalit Kuajaron and Theerawat Larhip, who amassed 329 points to Japan's second-place finish with 101 points. Malaysia finished third with 53 points.

SuperCup 2006 will now move on to rounds in Chanthaburi, Yasothorn and Surat Thani, leading up to the final in Bangkok, which will determine who qualifies for the World Championships in the US in October.



Japan's Youhei Yamamoto pushed hard – but not hard enough.

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Construction Update

by Anongnat Sartpisut

Immigration to rise to new heights

The one-story Phuket City Immigration Office will soon be demolished to be replaced by a new 8.5-million-baht complex. Work on the project in Saphan Hin will begin in April and is expected to take about a year to complete.

Pol Col Prayut Chommalee, Superintendent of Phuket City Immigration Office, told the *Gazette* that the idea for a new Immigration office on the seven-rai site was first put forward by his predecessor back in 2003. The project has already been approved by the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning, which deemed the old building too old and in need of replacement.

The current office was built in 1982 and is coming to the end of its life. "We are continually repairing the building's support structure, but it is old and the steel [reinforcement] is corroded. The problems got worse after the earthquake that caused the tsunami shook the building," he said.

When completed, the new complex will comprise two build-



Left: The old building, constructed in 1982, is in poor shape. Above, Pol Col Prayut Chommalee with the plans for the new, much larger building.

ings that will share a first-floor parking garage, with space for 20 cars, and a large second-floor

customer-service area. The larger of the two buildings will also have third and fourth floors,

on which will be offices and meeting rooms, respectively. The entire complex will be much larger than the single-story building it will replace and much of the front garden and flagpole will be taken up by the new construction, he said.

"When completed, this will be the only Immigration office in the country of Sino-Portuguese design," Col Prayut said, adding that Immigration wanted to preserve Phuket's unique culture.

The plans for the project have already been drawn up and the contractor will soon be chosen by e-auction, as required for government projects costing more than 2 million baht, he explained.

During the work, foreigners seeking Immigration services will be able to get them in a make-shift service area in the orange-

roofed building that currently serves as a storage area. Additional customer services will be provided outdoors, under a canopy in front of this building. Some other offices will be moved into the staff dormitory while the work is underway, he added.

As for concerns that the temporary arrangement might affect the smooth-turning cogs of bureaucracy, he said: "There is nothing to worry about. It will make no difference to how we approve and issue documents."

"It may cause some inconvenience to customers in the short term, but in the long term our facilities will be more comfortable."

"We get an average of 400 to 500 people a month seeking our services. When the new building is complete we will have up to nine counters to serve them," he said.



While building is underway, Immigration operations will move temporarily to this building nearby.

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Decor

by Chris Husted



The reception desk at Mangosteen, where the fish tanks ease the pain of paying the bill.

DESK THAT FISHES FOR COMPLIMENTS

Being just wood or metal, with flat surfaces, desks are among the most boring of furniture items in the world, right? Well, they don't have to be, says architect Kurt Rotman, who says he can prove it.

Kurt has extended his belief in the interesting potential of the desk jockey's workplace to the hotel world, where the best example of his work is on display at The Mangosteen Resort & Spa, which he designed. There, he has incorporated aquariums into the resort's reception desks.

"I wanted to create a place where people wanted to pay their bills – and who likes to pay a bill?" he asked.

"But if you have nice surroundings and a pleasant atmosphere," he says, then paying what the French refer to as *la douloureuse* – the sad one – is not so terrible.

That's where fish tanks come in. "The fish bring people closer together naturally, so staff can ask quietly and pleasantly, 'Nice fish, aren't they? Can I help you?' instead of calling it out from across the desk," he explains.

What Kurt considers to be the ugly necessities of the re-



Kurt Rotman: 'Fish bring people together.'

ception desk – computers and the aquarium pumps and filters – are hidden from view behind panels.

"It has all the combinations of a technical piece, a beautiful desk... with life in it. That's what I wanted to have," he explains.

When it came to building the desks, there was no substitute for first drawing up very clear plans of what was wanted – and then using the best contractors available for each phase of the work.

"John Underwood was the contractor for the steel and the glass. He's actually an artist. We sat down and went through every [detail] together," says Kurt. "We used another contractor for

the granite, yet another to make the aquariums. My brother organized the pumps and filters – he's good at that."

Mangosteen guests find the results make the otherwise painful process of paying a hotel bill go quite swimmingly.

For more information about custom-made aquarium furniture, contact Kurt Rotman at Building Insulated Construction Co, at Tel: 01-8173776 or Email: bic1@phuket.ksc.co.th or visit the website www.phuketarchitect.com

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Home of the Week

Karon

Although this apartment offers impressive views from every room, the best view – of course – is from the front balcony.

From there you can enjoy a vista of about three kilometers of uninterrupted beach views including both Karon and Kata Beaches. Toward the rear of the property there are other striking views, this time of the hills that surround Karon.

Central Waterfront Suites, now something of a landmark, has been a popular holiday destination for families and couples for more than 12 years.

The powdery sand of Karon Beach, which is just a two-minute walk away, is an obvious attraction.

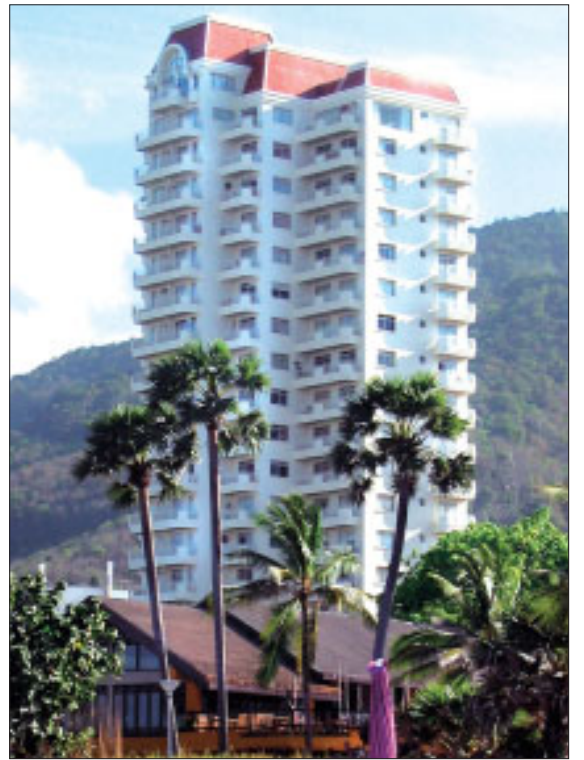
A management service, described as “hands on”, keeps the 70 apartments of the 21-story block in top shape.

For sale is this outstanding two-bedroom, 167-square-meter freehold apartment, one of four on each floor.

The apartment is built in a D shape that comprises two spacious bedrooms with balconies, two showers and toilets, a walk-in closet for the master bedroom, a combined dining and living area (with balconies either side), an open-plan kitchen and lockable storage space.

Located on seven rai of land, this complex is just minutes from entertainment areas, restaurants and Karon’s shopping strips, with the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa just a 10-minute walk away and the Crowne Plaza situated almost next door. The airport and a number of golf courses are to the north and Patong Beach is just a 10-minute drive from the apartment.

On-site amenities of this complex include an enormous swimming pool and shady Jacuzzi, a pool bar, a tennis and squash



High over the ocean

court, library, games room, locker room and covered parking. There is also 24-hour security provided by an international firm, all set in tropical landscaped gardens.

Two lifts ensure that guests and residents never have to wait too long to enjoy their apartments after a relaxing day on the beach.

Enjoy an evening drink, with cool sea breezes flowing into the apartment and watch the sun set beyond the horizon.

Alternatively, enjoy any one of the restaurants and bars nearby.

Water sports feature heavily

at Karon with beach swimming, windsurfing, sailing, snorkeling and scuba diving with many more facilities offered for the water enthusiast.

For those who enjoy an early-morning or late-afternoon stroll along the beach, the clean seaside environment ensures that at no matter what time of the day, you can always enjoy its serenity.

The apartment is fully air-conditioned and furniture is included in the sale. It would make an ideal holiday investment as occupancies generally run at



100% in the high season for short-term guests. Or it would suit a retired couple who could enjoy the very best of Phuket’s lifestyle, without the responsibility of maintaining a villa.

The freehold status also means that you can own the apartment – for sale at 14.5 mil-

lion baht – in your own name with no company formation required.

For sale at 14.5 million baht. For further details, please contact Stephen O’Brien, Knight Frank Phuket. Tel: 01-8255126. Email: stephen.obrien@th.knightfrank.com

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Some people have too much time on their hands, and Internet computer geeks are probably the worst. These types surf the online message boards, complaining about what other sad geeks say in response to something that didn't matter in the first place. They really have nothing to say themselves, and whether or not they agree with other "posters" is not important.

Then there is the colorful (sic) psychobabble of the transatlantic cousins of the Brits. Take the following example of two people trying to communicate. I haven't the faintest idea what they're saying, and I suspect they don't either:

"Hey, I'm in a space where I'd really like you to relate to me more. Do you hear what I'm saying?"

"I'm just not in a space to handle that right now, like I'm just really not into that trip, dude. But I can see the space you're coming from."

You get my drift.

Such people obviously have too much time on their hands. When I was a little Bert, if I was sick my parents took me to a hospital to see a doctor. Modern American parents take their offspring to a "health-maintenance organization" or a "wellness center" to consult a "health-care delivery professional".

Some people used to live in slums. Now the "economically disadvantaged" occupy "inner-city substandard housing". Unfortunately, many of these people are poor. They may be described as having a "negative cash-flow situation", but they are poor – it's as simple as that. This could be because they were "downsized" when management wanted "redundancies in the human resources area", and many suddenly found they were no longer "viable members of the workforce".

Psychologists have even started labeling ugly people as having "severe appearance deficits". The list goes on and on.

Anyway, rather than

Art of the vertically challenged



Any numpty can create a bonsai – just don't expect to do it overnight.

dreaming up new ways of over-complicating the English language, why can't they just take up gardening? Specifically a branch of gardening that requires a long period of time.

If they did, then they would soon twig that bonsai is an art for people who are not in any rush, and who want something to fill their day. Those expecting instant

results will be severely disappointed.

You may have visited a nursery or garden center and seen tiny trees growing in shallow containers. These miniatures have all the characteristics of larger, mature trees, but they never seem to grow.

They have been created by a specialized horticulture tech-

nique called bonsai. I'm guessing here, but it's probably the same word in Thai. Bonsai is essentially two Japanese words meaning "pot" and "to plant". It is an art form that comes from an ancient culture that originated in China and was later pinched by the Japanese – though no doubt the Japanese would argue against this version of its history.

Today, techniques have been developed so any numpty can create a bonsai. Plants for bonsai can be collected from the wild, or propagated from seeds, cuttings or grafting, "borrowed" from a neighbor's garden, or just bought from the nearest garden center.

When you are looking for a suitable plant, pick one that's well-rooted and well-branched – ensure that it has plenty of each, in other words.

All parts of the bonsai should be in proportion with the size of the tree, so choose a plant with small leaves or needles. If you use a large-leaved plant, it may later look weird and unbalanced. Plants suitable for bonsai include: casuarina, cedar, bald cypress, elm, pyracantha, citrus, hibiscus, jacaranda, orchid tree and royal poinciana.

What about looks, then? Totally up to you, but think about the tree's natural form before deciding on bonsai shape. The most common styles are upright, slanted and cascading. The first two are fairly obvious, but "cascading" basically means clumps of foliage here and there. After you figure out the normal form of the tree, pick the style you feel will suit it best.

The basic procedures for creating a bonsai are pruning, pinching, wiring, potting and repotting. After selecting your plant, you start shoot- and root-pruning. By pruning you can shape the plant, control its growth, and remove any foliage you don't want. In most cases, the tree will need only one heavy pruning in order to develop its shape.

After pruning, pinch back new growth to maintain the shaping process. The bottom line is

that you want to prune the shoots to create the gnarled appearance of a full-sized tree.

The root system should be pruned gradually, which reduces it over a period of years. Prune the roots at the same time that you prune the shoots so that the bonsai does not become root-bound. The surface roots should be left intact.

Wiring comes next. It is this process, together with bending of the branches, that makes bonsai unique. Wiring is done after the tree has been pruned to its essential branches. Copper wire is flexible and ideal for this job.

Start by wrapping wire around the lower parts of the tree and work upwards. After most of the tree has been wrapped, shape the plant by hand, gradually bending the trunk and main branches into the position you want. Remember to remove or loosen the wires later to avoid the bark becoming constricted and the formation of ridges.

Phuket has light and heat in abundance, so you can even grow your bonsai indoors – as long as you avoid airconditioning units and it is placed near a window. Bonsai require the same care you would give any other pot plant. Water it when the soil surface feels dry, but avoid making the soil soggy.

Although creating and maintaining a bonsai is not easy, the feeling of having made a living piece of art makes all the effort worthwhile.

These things can take a lifetime to finish, so if you're in a rush, you may want to grow something else instead. You could, of course, try an "alternative leisure resource activity" if you find yourself in a "time-disadvantaged position". But if you do that, you could also find yourself barking up the wrong tree.

Want to know more
about a plant
in your garden?

Email Bloomin' Bert at:
bloominbert@hotmail.com

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 POOLVILLA
KATA PHUKET THAILAND

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

Every day is a holiday at The Beach Pool Villa.

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

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

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

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

Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

NEW HOUSE IN PATONG



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

COURTHOUSE HOMES



2 detached bungalows at Loch Palm, set in a safe, secure complex with swimming pool, terraces and gardens. Prices 5.9 to 7.5 million baht. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447. Email: mail@villa.co.th

LAND IN CHERNG TALAY

3 rai with Chanote title near Laguna Phuket. Prefer sale of whole 3 rai but may consider division. 3.5 million baht on per rai. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-8925478. Email: euansandy@tiscali.co.uk

RAWAI SHOPHOUSES



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

NAI YANG - PHUKET

Small development of 5 houses. Display home now open. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, large living + dining room, European kitchen, laundry, all-round veranda, boundary wall, electric gate, carport, landscaped garden. Living area 153sqm, land 532-740sqm. First house for sale at 7.5 million baht. Tel: 076-328424, 01-895-3481. Email: golddigger_phuket@hotmail.com

LAND FOR SALE

2.5 rai at Loch Palm, good location and view. Tel: 06-279-0837, 01-7196998.

SEAVIEW HOUSE

in Rawai. 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, pool, sala. 7.9 million baht. Tel: 01-8941660. Email: cottrell@loxinfo.co.th For details, please see our website at: www.homesinphuket.com/saliga.htm

LAND IN PATONG

Stunning sea view. More than 1,000sqm. Private road. 4.4 million baht. Tel: 076-296-555, 07-8893838, 09-291-1112. Email: lovephuket@hotmail.com

BEACHFRONT LAND



63 rai, 300m beachfront land in Chalong. Price 185 million baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 01-8916143.

NEW VILLA FOR SALE



240sqm living space, pool, 3 bedrooms. Absolute privacy. Price 9.9 million baht. Please call for more details. Tel: 07-8896074.

CHALONG 5 RAI



Seaview land for sale. 3.5 million baht per rai. Please call for more details. Tel: 01-8916143.

NEW VILLA FOR SALE



4 bedrooms, office building, total 350sqm living space. Ready to move in. Price 15.9 million baht. Tel: 01-8916143.

KAMALA: SALE/RENT

2-story house with 3 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms, air conditioning, a pool, walled-in garage, and a garden. Asking 35,000 baht per month or will sell for 6.2 million baht. Call after 5 pm. Tel: 03-1753996.

www.knightfrankphuket.com

Knight Frank



Laguna Townhome Phase 1

We sold this property within days of it appearing in the Phuket Gazette. The capital appreciation being achieved in the Laguna development in our opinion will continue their sharp climb, as too will rental values.



Laguna Townhome Phase 1

Within hours of this townhome settling, we received an offer for long-term rental, giving the new owners an immediate rental return on their investment.



Laguna "Chaba" Villa

Within the same day of the purchaser inspecting this property (managed by Knight Frank) we sold it. Located in Phase 1, a highly sought-after area for rentals and sales, the owners had achieved an outstanding capital gain, negotiated on their behalf by Knight Frank Phuket.



Laguna "Banburi" Villa

Our instructions on this sale were crystal clear, "bring me the best offer" Indeed, that's just what we did - and not just one offer, but 2 at the same time. We continue to receive strong inquiries for 2-story residences for both rental and sales, and transact them very quickly after listing.



Laguna Townhome Phase 1

The first Laguna Townhome in Phase 1 offered for resale and the interest was outstanding. The property was quickly transacted and the new owners have entered the townhome in the Sheraton Rental Program, whereby they achieve exceptional rental returns along with lifestyle usage and Laguna benefits.



Laguna Residences Phase 1

Over the past 12 months, Knight Frank Phuket have achieved outstanding rental returns on behalf of Laguna owners. We presently have new townhomes and residences available for rent on either a short or long-term basis.

If you are looking for a rental or resale property in Laguna, then talk to us. We are the most experienced property broker dealing with Laguna resales/rentals.

Phuket
+66 (0)76 318 151
info@knightfrankphuket.com

Stephen O'Brien
+66 (0)11 825 3126
stephen.obrien@th.knightfrank.com

Masae Ono
+66 (0)11 956 6321
masae.ono@th.knightfrank.com

BEACH APARTMENTS

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

PATONG CONDO

Studio 47/65 3rd floor, the last, for sale. Title in foreigner's name. Asking 850,000 baht. Tel: 01-5367985.

KATA LAND PLOTS

900m to the beach. Priced from 1.3 million baht. Tel: 07-8852969. Email: junekata@hotmail.com

LAND IN RAWAI

1, 2, 4, 9 rai. 4.5 million baht per rai. Tel: 04-8374429. Email: sales@chokechaiproperty.com

KATA SEA VIEW

2 rai with a beautiful sea view and 9 bungalows at Kata. Ready for business. 15 million baht. Tel: 01-6937786, 09-4721969.

RAWAI: HOUSE FOR SALE

Distinctive 2-story house plus large, Thai-style guesthouse on a half-rai, with walled, tropical gardens. Private pool, woodland views. Chanote title. 12 million baht. Tel: 07-2730141.

HOUSE FOR SALE

in Phuket City. 2 stories, 91 sq wah, 5 bedrooms, fully furnished. Tel: 01-8928740.

LAND FOR SALE

Half a rai, 5 mins from Rawai Beach, quiet area. Tel: 09-4729870, 01-3961694.

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www.andrewpark.com



This fully furnished house offers one of the best sea views available in Patong. It is located within a private area on Patong Hill and is absolutely unique.

Priced at only 14 million baht, this is a great home to buy.

Note: We have more villas, condos, sea view land, beach land hotels & developments available. Contact us now!



This beautiful detached luxury villa is well designed, and built for a western taste. It comes with a big pool, high-quality furniture, 3 bedrooms & 2 balconies. At only 17.2 million baht you will not find a better home. Call now!

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Property Gazette

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From Baht 14.2 Million



- Modern Thai style houses
- 3 b/r, 3 baths, swimming pool
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Baht 9.5 & 11.5 Million



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IMMACULATELY PRESENTED APARTMENT



with stunning decoration and design throughout. Bright, airy atmosphere, set in tropical garden surroundings, only one minute to Laguna Beach. Located in safe, secure private compound. Convenient road access. Price 16 million baht. Please call for more info. Tel: 076-354016 or 01-8923633.

SEAVIEW APARTMENT



for sale in Sai Roun, Patong residence, 85sqm, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 1 kitchen, 1 terrace about 25sqm and a swimming pool. Asking 5 million baht. Tel: 04-8505413. Email: myprojob@hotmail.fr

3.5 MILLION BAHT KATA SEAVIEW



Perfect for high-end development, 13.5 rai of panoramic seaview and hillside land for 3.5 million baht per rai. Chanote titled and priced for immediate sale. Serious enquiries only. Tel: 076-282864, 04-8501340. Email: southseasurf@gmail.com

DETACHED HOUSE

One-story, 3-bedroom house, with 2 bathrooms, on a land area of 345sqm. In Land & Houses Park. Selling price: 3.3 million baht. Tel: 09-7292313.

HOUSE & LAND

for sale. House and land for sale just 2 minutes from beautiful Nai Thon Beach. Price is a negotiable 3.2 million baht. Call owner for details. Tel: 07-2811995.

SEA VIEW, RAWAI

2 rai in Nai Harn/Rawai. Asking 6 million baht per rai. Many small plots available. Tel: 07-8938747.

KATA SEA VIEW

Asking 3.3 million baht for the most beautiful land in Kata: a 6-rai plot, with Chanote title. Please call for more info. Tel: 07-8938747.

1.8 MILLION BAHT CHALONG SEAVIEW



20 rai of Chanote-titled seaview land. Superb location and priced for immediate sale @ 1.8 million baht per rai. Serious inquiries only. Please contact. Tel: 076-282864, 04-850-1340. Email: southseasurf@gmail.com

KAMALA VILLAS



2 Thai-style villas with 3 bedrooms and two bathrooms. Ground level has marble flooring, the upper level has hardwood flooring. Swimming pool & Jacuzzi. Price: 8.2 million baht. Tel: 07-8948379. Email: info@malee-baan-thai.com Please see our website at www.malee-baan-thai.com

3 NGAN IN CHALONG

2.5 million baht, with Chanote title, near main road, good location. Tel: 01-5376866.

BEACHFRONT LAND

on Koh Yao Yai. 16 rai, with white sand and very beautiful water. Tel: 09-6525664.

RAWAI, SMALL PLOT

500sqm, a short walk to Rawai beach. Nice location. Tel: 01-5376866.

RAWAI SEA VIEW

Good for developer. Has Chanote title, road and electricity supply. 4.5 rai. Tel: 09-6525664.

SALE OR RENT

4 bungalows, 1 restaurant at Bang Tao Beach. Tel: 01-894-6686.

Super cheap land near Kamala Beach for just \$675,000

This gem, a 16m x 10m plot of level land is big enough for one nice-sized house – your best chance to snap up a slice of paradise!

Has a water well, nearby electricity and phone hookups, easy road access, and an extra six meters of road frontage. Within walking distance to the powdery, white sand of Kamala Beach on Phuket's prestigious west coast, the property is less than 100m from award-winning restaurants and only a ten-minute drive to Patong, with its amazing nightlife, shopping and an endless supply of fun, sun, and sand; and a 25-minute drive to the airport.

Demand for Kamala area land is extremely high and small, buildable plots are scarce. Prices are skyrocketing due to a new and improved infrastructure. The latest projections are for explosive and continuous growth. With land prices potentially doubling again in the next two or three years, it's no wonder multi-million-dollar homes are already popping up here.

But this choice plot along Bang Waan Rd is now available by the owner for quick sale at 675,000 baht – less than \$17,000 – not to be missed!

The neighborhood is a popular, peaceful, and safe farang enclave, while the property itself is situated in a natural setting with unspoiled surroundings and expansive tropical rainforest views.

Take advantage of this extraordinary investment opportunity to own a rare parcel of land at a cost below market value. Build your dream house, build to resell, or build for high rental income returns.

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NEW HOUSES IN PATONG



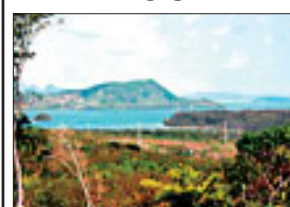
3 new connected deluxe houses on Patong hillside, Soi Thamdee, for sale. Ground floor: Garage and separate one-room apartment with toilet. Second floor: 2 bedrooms and bath, balcony. Third floor: living room with balcony, built-in kitchen and dining room, toilet. Fourth floor: big roof garden with Jacuzzi. Usable area: 200sqm; freehold land: 100sqm. Price: 6.2 million baht. (US\$155,000). Please contact K. Peter. Tel: 01-8928526. For details please see our website at: www.phuket-besthomes.com

CHALONG/RAWAI VILLAS FOR SALE!



Fully furnished Thai-style villa with indoor swimming pool and gardens leading to own sandy beach! Asking 23 million baht. A large, lovely new villa in half a rai of landscaped gardens with swimming pool for 11.5 million baht. Spacious new family home set in lovely gardens with terraces and swimming pool. Price: 14 million baht. New detached bungalow fully enclosed with lovely kitchen, terraces and swimming pool, gardens, etc. Plus much, much more! Asking 8.9 million baht. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447. Email: mail@villa.co.th

2 MILLION BAHT MAI KHAO SEAVIEW



25 rai available in this rapidly appreciating area @ 2 million baht per rai. Amazingly positioned, close to the stunning 10+ kilometer beach of Mai Khao. The famed Blue Canyon Golf Club is only 5 minutes away and the international airport only a 10-minute drive away. With views of both the Andaman sea and Phang Nga Bay, this is perfect for the discerning developer of high-end properties. Serious inquiries only. Tel: 076-282864, 04-850-1340. Email: southseasurf@gmail.com

KATA SEAVIEW

development. 9 houses on 2 rai of land overlooking Kata Beach. A great investment. Price: 17 million baht. An additional 5 rai also for sale at 5.5 million baht per rai. Tel: 076-280447, 01-0808557. Fax: 076-280447. Email: admin@no1phukethomes.com

PATONG HOUSE:

7.9 million baht. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, Thai roof, 2 stories. Email for photo. Email: ek_phuket@hotmail.com

PATONG SEA VIEW

A small plot of 75 square wah, nice for a house. Has road, electricity supply and Chanote title. Tel: 06-2670898.

SUPERIOR HOUSE,

modest price. 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom house for sale in Kathu. Large living room, kitchen/dining room. Situated in a small development, still under construction so allows for personalisation. Price: 4.25 million baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 04-8439579. Fax: 076-323421. Email: somlerdee@yahoo.com

ECO-COOL

Thai home. Award-winning 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom, energy-efficient home in Rawai. Learn how to beat the tropical heat without air conditioning. Has a modern, open air-design. Many designer features, 400sqm pond/pool. Price: 9.5 million baht. Please call for more information. Tel: 07-8987062 (Gary), 01-077-5042 (Wanida).

SEAVIEW LAND

for sale. 1-story house, with a perfect sea view, on a half rai (800sqm), selling for 3.5 million baht, or 1 rai for 8 million baht. Located in Rawai. Please call for more information. Tel: 09-7291391.

LAND NEAR KHAO LAK

22 rai of beautiful land in Tab Lamu, near Khao Lak and Tab Lamu Golf Course. For sale at 400,000 baht/rai. Please email for more information. Email: info@swethai-realestate.com

Property Gazette



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2 LUXURY VILLAS



2 detached & elevated luxury villas opposite a national park in Kathu. Just minutes to everything. 10m x 5m pool. 3 bedrooms, stunning views & 60% complete (ready end of July). Price: 9.5 million baht. Please contact. Tel: 076-296072, 01-7196088. Email: info@gardenislandphuket.com Please see our website at: www.gardenislandphuket.com

SEAVIEW LAND
Urgent sale. 20 rai of stunning seaview land in Chalong, overlooking Phang Nga Bay. Chanote title, priced under market value for fast sale at 36 million baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-282864, 04-8501340. Email: sean@sean10.wanadoo.co.uk

HOUSE FOR SALE
in Patong. 2 stories with 5 bedrooms, fully furnished. Please contact for more details. Tel: 01-9563061. Email: sohail_carpet@yahoo.com

KATA BEST LOCATION
Best price. 2 stories, near beach. Please call for further information. Tel: 076-284065, 06-5958512, 01-9704638.

FREEHOLD APARTMENT



Phuket Palace Condominium, 300m from beach. Fully furnished, 1 or 2 bedrooms, 1 or 2 bathrooms, plus kitchen, living room. 120sqm. Asking 5.9 million baht. Tel: 09-8719739.

KATA YAI SEAVIEW
land. 13 rai of Chanote-titled, hillside land looking north over Kata Bay. Priced under market value @ 56 million baht, for immediate sale. Tel: 076-282-864, 04-850134. Email: sean@sean10.wanadoo.co.uk

KATA BEACH
shophouse. 46/2 Ket Kwan Rd. 4 million baht. Tel: 076-330889. Email: dr_cracknell@hotmail.com

KHAO PILAI
beachfront. 26 rai. Nice plot with coconut trees. Price: 4 million baht per rai. Email for photos. Email: ek_phuket@hotmail.com

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

LAST PARADISE HOT PROPERTY



For sale at 7.4 million baht. Location: Chalong, Phuket, on Soi Nakok at the three-way intersection to the weather station; 5 minutes to Phuket City, Central Festival, Big C and Rawai. Two Chanote deed titles (for 2 x 1-rai plots). Two 3-bedroom registered houses (290sqm, 55sqm), with terracotta floors, 3 bathrooms, 2 toilets, a kitchen, two living rooms, plus an extra hall (50sqm, 300sqm), and a carpark. The land is hilly with a natural waterfall in rainy season and a garden with fruit trees. The first floor has a 25sqm balcony with a sea view over Chalong Bay and Chalong Temple. Private sale, no commission. Please call Tel: 01-9796011 (Stefan), or contact 53/10, 53/12, Moo 5, T. Chalong, A. Muang, Phuket.

URGENT SALE,
4-bedroom house. Fully furnished, brand new, 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom house for urgent sale by owner. Has a landscaped garden, 600sqm of land area, 2 telephone lines, located in Chalong area. Price: 12 million baht. Please call or email for more details. Photos are available upon request. Tel: 06-6823672. Email: pomme@resorthotel.net

BRAND-NEW
3-bedroom, 4.1 million baht. Brand new, unfurnished home for sale by the owner. In Land & Houses Park, new Parichart home. Total area: 96 sq wah. Single story, spacious garden, 3 bedrooms + 2 bathrooms, 3 LG aircons, cable TV, phone, entire electricity system upgraded. Price: 4.1 million baht. Tel: 01-4167711. Email: faa@loxinfo.co.th

LAND FOR SALE
Central Phuket City location, just off Choa Fa Rd. 400,000 baht. Please contact me for more details. Tel: 07-896-8436. Email: arunleklai@hotmail.com

AO CHALONG SEA VIEW
19 rai with sea view, lake view and hill view. Chanote title. Asking 32 million baht. Tel: 06-9520772. Email: kamala@phuket.ksc.co.th

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184sqm, 2 bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, storeroom, large living area, 2 air conditioners, and a well supplying water for all seasons. 5 minutes to Lotus, 25 minutes to airport. Contact for more info. Asking 2.7 million baht. Tel: 06-6861119. Email: thaisproducts@hotmail.com

HOUSE FOR SALE IN VILLA 5



Phuket Villa 5, 90sqm, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a large living area and kitchen, 3 air conditioners, built-in wardrobe, 5-piece rattan lounge suite and a phone line. Only 5 minutes to Central Phuket Festival and only 15 minutes to Rawai. For sale by owner. Asking 4 million baht (negotiable). No agents! Tel: 04-1868531, 01-5988725. Email: s_oranut@hotmail.com

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SEAVIEW LAND
for sale. 2-rai seaview and lagoon view, in Nakok, Chalong. 4 million baht per rai. Please call for more details. Tel: 01-6937786.

SEAVIEW LAND
in Nai Harn. 640sqm, panoramic views out to Phi Phi. 3.2 million baht. Tel: 01-894-1660. Email: cottrell@loxinfo.co.th

Properties For Rent

HOUSE + BIG GARDEN
2 bedrooms with air conditioners, hot shower. Located in a quiet area at Palai Green, Chalong. Tel: 01-8924311.

9 RAI
Plot with a nice view - good for a resort, spa, etc - next to Pae Ma Nam, for long-term rent. Close to hospital, about 1.5km from Big C, Tesco-Lotus, and Central Festival. Please call for more info. Tel: 01-8675084.

VILLA FOR RENT



275sqm living space, 3 bedrooms, 10m pool, 1,200 sqm of land. Fully furnished, Nai Harn. 70,000 baht per month. Please call for details. Tel: 07-8896074.

HOUSE FOR LONG-TERM RENT



Beachfront house, fully furnished. 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms with hot shower, kitchen, 3 air conditioners, UBC, 2 phone lines, a big, fenced-in garden. Located 2 minutes from Chalong Circle in a very quiet area. Tel: 01-8931121.

BIG SHOPHOUSE
located in Soi Patong Resort, off Soi Bangla, the commercial hub of Patong Beach. Nearly 170 square meters on two open floors. Not suitable, as it is, for residential use. Please contact for further details. Tel: 076-340290. Email: paciugo89@yahoo.com

NEW HOUSE, CHALONG
Brand new 2-bedroom townhouse to Western standards, near Chalong Circle. Has 2 bathrooms, air conditioning, telephone line, carport, hot water, etc. Tel: 076-280-466.

PA KHLOK PACKAGE
Deal includes fully-furnished house with 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, dining area, sofa, 3 air-con units, and kitchen, as well as car and motorbike. Secure parking. 5 minutes from Heroines' Monument. Tel: 07-2760529.

BEACHFRONT CONDO
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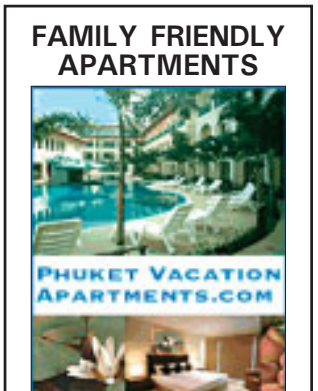
LAGUNA RENTAL
Resort design, furnished, with 3 bedrooms, air conditioning, pool, spa and garden on 1 rai. Asking 40,000 baht per month. Please call for more info. Tel: 09-5944067.

FULL SEA VIEW



Seeing is believing the view from this newly-decorated 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom house with air conditioning, ADSL, UBC, pool, phone and big-screen TV. Long-term let. Can also be a 3-bed, 3-bathroom house. 65,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-292279, 07-882-1963. Email: benlee53@hotmail.com

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Tel: 81-3-37103946. Email: bookings@phuketvacationapartments.com or see website: www.phuketvacationapartments.

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Property Gazette



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for lease. Has 5- to 10-year lease. Asking 150,000 baht. Please contact for info. Tel: 06-6865567. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

RAWAI HOUSE

for lease. Has 5- to 10-year lease. Asking 250,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 06-6865567. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

APARTMENT

with seaview. Condo for long-term rent in Rawai. Asking 8,000 baht per month. Please contact for more information. Tel: 04-8505413. Email: myprojob@hotmail.fr

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FUENG FAH CONDO

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HOUSE FOR RENT

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I'm ready to buy small plots of land in Chalong, Rawai or Nai Ham for up to 1 million baht for land only, or 2-4 million baht for land with a house. I'm not an agent. Tel: 01-7930862 (English) or 06-8928108 (Thai).

RENTAL VILLA

or apartment wanted in Phuket City, Rawai, Karon or Kata. A good, 2-bedroom place, in a quiet location with parking, a telephone line, kitchen and terrace, for about 15,000 baht per month for an apartment or 30,000 baht per month for a villa. By contract, willing to pay 2 months rent in advance and pay monthly in cash. Tel: 01-3610358. Please send a photo to andre.lopez.j@wanadoo.fr

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Nice 3-bedroom house in good, quality area, required by responsible and careful expat. Need for a minimum of six months, permanent if suitable. Must be furnished, preferably with pool and close to Royal Phuket Marina. Tel: 01-968-1927.

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42 Ft	1987	Westail 42	Euro	60,000
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40 Ft	1991	Steel Sloop	US\$	90,000
39 Ft	1983	Astilleros Barrera	Euro	39,500
38 Ft	2003	Athena 38 with management	US\$	225,000
37 Ft	1988	Gibsea 372	US\$	85,000
36 Ft	1974	Pearson 36	US\$	49,500
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63 Ft	1997	Hatteras Copy 2 x 280 hp Cummins	THB	7,300,000	
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hanging frames. 14" and 21" NEC TVs hanging in metal frames. Can view at Michael's Bar, 12 Takau-Pa Road, from 1pm to 12pm daily. Offers. Excellent condition. Tel: 01-2722392. Email: michael@phuket-town.com

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Nearly new. Purchased for 3,000 baht. Will sell for 1,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 05-7841257. Email: jesse_in_phuket@yahoo.com

BRAND NEW

crossbow. 150lb draw weight, very powerful! Scope and laser, shoots BBs and darts. Used twice. 3,000 baht. Please contact. Tel: 04-746-7304 or send email to: steverose_76@hotmail.com

35,000 BTU AIRCON

Mitsubishi, 3 months old, 2-year warranty and free cleaning service. For quick sale: only 29,000 baht. Tel: 01-0808557. Email: info@no1visa.com

PLAYSTATION 2

in good condition. Comes with 2 controllers, 1 memory card and 10-12 games. Price: 6,000 baht. Tel: 06-1206934. Email: go2spoon@yahoo.com

LEFT-HANDED

golf clubs. Titleist steel-shaft lob wedge, 60  as new, 3,500 baht. IS 300 driver, 3,500 baht. Tel: 09-9091917. Email: porter20022@yahoo.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)

EXPERTS?

Does, HTML, SEO, JAVA, PHP, PERL or C + mean anything to you? If so we would like to hear from you via email. Email: jvizard345@aol.com

Business Opportunities

CLUB AND TRADE

Want partners for buying O'Malleys, on Montri Rd, to be used for business and clubs. Starting a Phuket people club like www.pattayapeople.com with cultural information, travel, society, history, business, etc, in connection with experience at Club Pattaya, Koh Samui and Chiang Mai. Tel: 06-2672161. Email: tlodden@yahoo.no www.pattayapeople.com

KAMALA

restaurant & bar. Famous for pizza + Tex-mex: 40 seats, air conditioning, equipment, stock, and furniture. For sale at 500,000 baht + rent 6,000 baht per month. Call after 5 pm. Tel: 076-385940.

QUICK RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Entertainment venue (disco, club & lounge). A prime location in the heart of Patong with qualified foreign management. Seeking an additional 5 million baht investment. Serious inquiries only. Please contact for more details. Tel: 01-968-4541. Email: j_vpartners@hotmail.com

SALE COMPUTER SET

Full Internet shop equipment: 7 computer stations. Best offer. Tel: 04-6304243.

LARGE &

successful. Established bar on Soi Bangla for sale, with pool table, darts, own sound system and a 5-year lease. Tel: 09-8677969.

O'MALLEYS IRISH PUB

Small business, big opportunity! Recently refurbished pub & restaurant, located in Phuket City. Package includes all paperwork, visas, 2 work permits and all licenses for a smooth takeover. 400sqm, live music stage, sound and light system, UBC TV, 3 new pool tables (including pool room), 15 tables, 40 bar stools, 5 fridges and freezers, new kitchen equipment and over 300 taxi-bikes with O'Malleys vests driving around the city! All offers considered. Please contact. Tel: 09-7292846. Email: scottshaw77@lycos.co.uk

COMPLETELY

different! For sale at cost due to over commitment of time. Ladies-only Fitness & Weight Loss Centre. Tel: 076-209424, 01-9683120. Fax: 076-209-424. Email: jazzybyname@hotmail.com

RESTAURANT,

Rawai. For sale, with a 16-year lease, fully equipped, 60 seats. Tel: 05-8843610.

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SMALL INVESTMENT

Coffee/Internet shop with bar-restaurant in Patong. 490,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Email: swisstreff@gmx.net

Find more Recruitment Classifieds at
www.phuketgazette.net!

Tout, Trader & Trumpet

BUSINESS FOR SALE

Well-run visa run business including tour office at Rawai Beach. Please contact K. Jaochim. Tel: 04-8512378 for more information.

FISH RESTAURANT

Very nice restaurant and bar for sale, specializing in fish 'n' chips but serving a large international menu. Fully-fitted, large kitchen with all latest mod cons. 20 seats outside + 6 bar stools + 4 sofa seats and 2 tables. Townhouse with 2 rooms upstairs, 2 bathrooms, and extra kitchen. Good business and growing, but ill health forces reluctant sale. Tel: 076-294330, 07-8960235. Email me for details and price. Email: sgb.fishnchips@gmail.com

GUESTHOUSE

for sale. Guesthouse and restaurant, located opposite the main entrance to the Royal Paradise Hotel, for sale. Six luxury guest rooms with shower, aircon and TV. Beautiful restaurant with kitchen. High standards. 14 million baht. Tel: 01-5385322, 01-8956587. Email: rudolfpanz@hotmail.com

BAR-RESTAURANT

Separate pool room, 2-room guesthouse, all fully air-conditioned, well established, with long-term lease. Located on Nanai Road. Asking 1.35 million baht. All genuine offers considered. Tel: 01-747-7520. Email: phuketpete@yahoo.co.uk

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.

SERIOUS INVESTMENT

Thai company since 1998, with two work permits, and includes 2 rai of seaview land (Chanote). Unique offer, investment opportunity. Tel: 01-3652020.

BAR FOR SALE/RENT

New bar in Patong on Soi Sukhumvit, at a good price and for long-term rent. Please contact us for more information. Tel: 07-0145817.

PIZZA DELIVERY BIZ

For sale. Low overhead business delivering Patong's best pizza. Huge potential, including franchising for someone with advertising & promotion skills. Please contact for more details. Tel: 076-341827. Email: thairuss@yahoo.com

Business Products & Services

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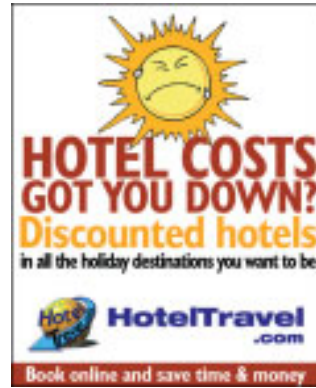
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trainers at Tailife Health and Fitness. Tel: 076-341116.

Cameras & Equipment

NIKON D50

and equipment. 2 months old. Comes with 18-55mm wide angle lens + 70-300mm zoom. Lithium battery with charger, 1GB memory card, filters, bag, flash, etc. 60,000 baht. Tel: 076-597474, 01-6768797.

UNDERWATER

photography. For sale: Sea & Sea DX-5000G housing, Sea & Sea YS25 auto strobe plus fiber-optic sync cord and flexible light arm set. Hardly used, still under warranty. Tel: 04-9928016.

Computers

PRO DATA RECOVERY

All kinds of computer magic phuket-data-wizards.com Tel: 06-6827277, 01-581-9782.

APPLE POWERMAC

desktop. Dual processors, 450MHz with OS 9 (OS X not installed yet) (180GB hard disk, 1.25GB RAM). All programs for image and video editing as well as web design and Microsoft Office. Sold with 17-inch Acer monitor, Apple keyboard and Apple mouse. 30,000 baht or best offer. Tel: 076-282311, 06-7423437. Email: marcduncan@hotmail.com

CREATIVE INSPIRE

5200. Inspire 5200 5.1 speaker set. Only 3 months old. Price new: 4,190 baht. Will sell for 3,000. Tel: 076-378255, 07-8822597. Email: euro-art-gallery@planet.nl

DIGITAL CAMERA

wanted. I want to buy a digital camera in excellent condition. Please contact me if you have, or know of, something for sale. Tel: 06-9476298. Email: vigen2002@hotmail.com

COMPUTER REPAIRS

English technician, new or used computers. GPRS, ADSL, WLAN and Internet access without a phone. Please call for more information. Tel: 09-4735080.

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Friendly farang fixes copiers and faxes and has laser toner refills. Please call George. Tel: 06-9724805.

COMPUTER SET

A set of 7 computers: full equipment with LCD monitor. For sale as a set or all together. Tel: 04-6304243.

NIKON OS 5

Underwater camera with flash 60 or 120 Sea & Sea. In good condition. Tel/Fax: 076-388256, 06-6821310. Email: qshphuket@hotmail.com

POLAROID DIGITAL

camera with memory card, 3.2 megapixels. 2,500 baht. Call for further details. Tel: 07-8896758. Email: ukdj007bond@yahoo.co.uk

Miscellaneous for Sale

PIZZA OVEN

Double pizza oven. Second hand, newly renovated in Sweden. Electric (380 volts, 15 Kw), stone plates, big glass windows in the doors, stainless steel, made by Dahlens in Sweden. Space for 2x6 pizzas. The oven is located in a warehouse in Bkk. I can email more information and pictures. My price is 100,000 baht (firm). Tel: 06-1057068. or Email: rolandholm@hotmail.com

HIGH-END AUDIO

Magneplanar flat panel speakers excl for music or movies. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-7888535.

TREADMILL & STRIDER

Super condition. 15,000 baht. Call quickly; it will sell fast. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-6919679. Email: choice@loxinfo.co.th

Miscellaneous Wanted

SURF/BOOGIE BOARD

I want buy a surfboard (6'8" or longer) and must have leg rope or plug for fitting rope, and/or a boogie board (adult size). Can be well used; will look at anything. Please advise make, size, condition and asking price. Email: clarkstar888@hotmail.com

POLO SHIRTS

I require a price for 50 plain, good quality polo shirts with pocket in large and XL sizes. Please contact via email at. Email: mike7474@hotmail.com

LOAN WANTED

10 million baht required. Will pay 8% quarterly interest with good security. Please contact for more information. Email to: patongbrewery@aol.com

ENGLISH LESSONS

In your home with qualified native English teacher. Good price, and friendly staff. Tel: 06-050200172. Email: carryonstalking@hotmail.com

Personal Services Wanted

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lessons. Intensive German lessons required for 5-6 days per week for 3-4 weeks to gain written and verbal business skills. Please call Simon Tel: 010810812. Email: simon@simonashby.com

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Physics Tutor required for 2 senior students. 1 or 2 hours per week. Tel: 07-2814954. For further details please contact via email, Email: lizette@andamanproperty.com

Personals

SPECIAL LADY

Sincere farang with good qualities and a healthy lifestyle seeks special lady on this island to love and care for. Please contact for more information. Email: ackroydee@yahoo.com

SAILING CREW

wanted. For a trip to the Andamans and Chagos. Mid-to late March, for about 3 months. Single male, female or a couple. Experience desirable. Owners are a couple with baby. Please contact. Tel: 01-2729355, 01-2737326. Email: keithmarshall747@yahoo.co.uk

THAI LADY NEEDED

American businessman will visit Phuket April 14-27 to register a business. Fit, 54 (but looks 45), handsome, classy and fun, seeking beautiful, fit, Christian Thai lady 25-45 for relationship. First meeting no expectations. Please contact for more details. Tel: 702-5920888. Email: garyteets@yahoo.com

BACKGAMMON

Retired businessman looking for backgammon players on Phuket Island. Please call for more information. Tel: 076-386113, 01-5778443.

ESCORT, COMPANION,

tour guide. Looking for a Thai lady, pretty, 20-30 years old, English-speaking, to share my vacation in Phuket beginning in April for about 10 days. I am 50 years old, slim, sportive, generous. Please mail photo to Email: golfo1@freenet.de

LOOKING FOR

Fencing partner. French guy in Chalong seeks fencing partners, foil or sabre, any level. I have the equipment; let's share the fun! Tel: 076-381-737, 07-0085970. Fax: 076-381730. Email: svaminito@hotmail.com

HOST FAMILY

We are a family of two adults and two children. We hope to find a family who can help us in getting settled in Kata, from July 2006. We are looking for a "friend family". Hopefully, we can start a shop when we are settled. Tel: 45-302-00018. Email: monalockdahl@mail.dk

LOOKING FOR

old friend. I am looking for Vincent Cruickshank whom I knew in Japan. Please contact via email, Email: santini47@yahoo.com

Pets

PLEASE HELP ME!

Alice is a 2-year-old bitch who was thoughtlessly abandoned at Nai Harn Beach a year ago. She is an exceptionally gentle and friendly dog – now sterilized – who would greatly appreciate becoming part of a family. If you can give Alice a home before the next poisonings, we would be very thankful. Please call Tel: 09-8682563 if you are genuinely interested.

FREE DOG, NEUTERED, UNDER 1 YEAR



Location 55/146 Soi 2 Chao Fa Road. Good with children. Nice gold coat. Attractive and healthy. Owner moving to Bangkok. Tel: 07-2719414. Email: pritchah@hotmail.com

FREE TO GOOD HOME

Two neutered female cats around 6 months old. Prefer not to split but will if necessary. Expat must return home soon. Tel: 076-282672, 06-9481042. Email: archiedixon@hotmail.co.uk

Notice

Public Notice

This notice is to inform the public that as of February 20, 2006, Mrs Duangkamol Khaochatr (Mod) has no further involvement and is no longer associated in any way with The Surin Bay Inn Hotel.

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The French Red Cross

Invitation to bid for the construction of a village for children on Koh Sireh, Phuket

Modification date of bidding

Delivery of the bidding documents to all interested companies

The bidding documents (drawings, specifications, administrative documents) will be available at the French Red Cross office from 10 am on March 15, 2006 (not February 27, 2006) for all authorized representatives of qualified bidders upon receipt of a refundable guarantee fee of 15000 baht.

French Red Cross office is at:

100/170 Moo 6, Srisuchat Village, Tambon Rassada, Amphur Muang, Phuket 83000.

Contact:


Mrs Sirirat Saekim (Mobile: 09-4712596)

Mrs Monchana Pelaud (Mobile: 01-0834191, 09-7253351)

Deadline for Wheels & Motors page: Saturday 12 noon.

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