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Dive industry faces tough new rules

By Janyaporn Morel

PHUKET: Phuket's Chief Administrative Officer (*Palad*) Nivit Aroonrat has submitted a proposal to Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura that all dive businesses on the island must register with the provincial government in order to ensure that they pay taxes in full.

The proposal is seen by its supporters as a pilot scheme that, if successful, would be expanded to all other coastal provinces in Thailand.

If the Governor gives his nod to the idea, dive shops will have 30 days to register. Thereafter, they will have to provide specific details of their operations – including how many foreigners they employ and whether the foreign employees have work permits, along with minute details of how they make their money, and how much they make.

The proposal is based on recommendations by a committee, headed by *Palad* Nivit, which was set up amid allegations that many dive businesses run by foreigners on the island are evading tax.

PERMIT

Palad Nivit told the *Gazette*, "[If the Governor approves the proposal] every dive company will have to register at the Phuket Marine Office within 30 days [of the order being issued by the Governor]."

At the end of the 30-day registration period, the operation will move into Stage 2, also of 30 days. During this period, operators who have registered must provide all the documentation demanded of them and apply for a permit to operate a dive business in Phuket.

"Dive operators will have to declare all information about their businesses, such as the number of boats they have, how many dive trips they make a day, how payments for dive trips are received, the number of employees in the company, how many foreign employees they have and whether those foreign employees have work permits or not, and so on," he added.

Phuket Marine Office Chief Surin Theerakulpisut said, "We are waiting for the



Palad Nivit Aroonrat headed the committee that came up with the proposed new rules.

Governor to sign the order before we will announce to dive operators that they have 60 days to complete the process.

"Dive operators will have to show us every bit of information about their businesses, including how they operate. For example, if companies have websites, they will have to inform us.

"They will also have to declare how they receive payments, and show us all their accounts. This way we will know how much revenue they receive, so that we can work out how much tax they should pay."

K. Surin added that the Phuket dive industry is believed to generate about 3 billion baht in revenue a year. "The province has never received all the taxes that it should get from them, and these new rules will help us to collect taxes in full.

"The plan will first be introduced in Phuket," he added. "We will monitor feedback and will spread the idea to other provinces soon."

Several crucial points are unclear at this stage: precisely what information will be re-

quired; what penalties will be imposed on those who do not comply; whether dive operators will be allowed to continue working during the 60-day process; and how long it will take for permits to be issued.

One dive operator, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "I'm not sure why they are doing this. They already get all this information from us. We have to be registered with the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and we have to have a properly established Thai company, so they have all our financial information, and we pay all our taxes."

PERPLEXED

He was perplexed by the dive-industry revenue figure cited by K. Surin. "To make 3 billion baht a year means [the industry in Phuket] would have to handle about 2,000 divers a day," he said.

Pakorn Katekan, Secretary of Diving Association of Thailand told the *Gazette*, "I think it's good that the province is moving to control this business.

"The government, however, should also do more research into the diving industry.

"The provincial authorities should provide more facilities for these operators such as establishing a safety center for when there is an accident or helping them by offering travel promotions. They should not just ask for taxes.

"Diving is a special business that needs specialists. Not everyone can run dive courses; customers must have confidence in their instructors.

"If Phuket squeezes dive operators so much that they have difficulty running their businesses, then they may leave the island.

"I think the province should take into consideration the opinions of dive operators and diving associations. Also, the rules should be in force all over Thailand, not only in Phuket. Regulations should be issued by the central government, not by just one province."

At the time of going to press, Gov Udomsak had yet to announce whether he would back the proposal.



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Shops damaged in Patong blaze

PATONG: Four shophouses on the corner of Thaweewong Rd and Soi Phermpong Phattana 2, just south of the Banthai Resort, were damaged by fire on June 13. There were no casualties.

Patong Fire Chief Paitoon Pholrop told the *Gazette* that the blaze broke out about 2 am.

"It took firefighters two hours to put out the fire. Luckily, no one was injured," he said.

He added that the fire spread quickly through the adjoin-

ing shophouses, which held small stalls and tailors' shops.

Pol Lt Pratheung Pholmana told said, "We are waiting for the results of forensics tests to determine the cause of the fire.

"We don't yet know how much damage was caused in financial terms; we're still waiting to talk with some of the shophouse owners," he said.

"There were people in the buildings when the fire broke out, but they all managed to escape."



Sikh community remembers martyred Guru

PHUKET CITY: The island's small Sikh community marked a particularly special festival in their religion on June 18: the 400th anniversary of the martyrdom of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev.

In 1606 Guru Arjan Dev was tortured on the orders of Emperor Jahangir, who saw Sikhism as potentially divisive. He was boiled alive and then forced to sit on a red-hot iron

plate, in an effort to make him recant his belief. When the Guru stuck to his beliefs, he was thrown into the River Ravi, where he died.

Each year, to commemorate his death – and the fiery torture that preceded it – Sikhs worldwide go out into the streets and hand out cold, refreshing drinks.

In Phuket the community chose the fresh market in Phuket City as their venue, giving away 200 bottles of cold drinks over a two-hour period.

Anan Singh, who took the photograph, said, "At first people were reluctant to take the drinks from us, thinking that we were selling them.

"But after we told them that this was a festival of the Sikhs to remember the great Guru Arjan Dev, they would smile gratefully and pick up a drink each."

Public urged to honor HM by donning yellow shirt every week

PHUKET CITY: Vice Governor Vorapot Rattasima has urged everyone, whether in government service or the private sector, to wear a yellow polo shirt with the symbol of HM King Bhumibol's Diamond Jubilee every Monday for the rest of the year.

He was speaking at the regular gubernatorial meeting with the press. Also there was Sompoch Sungkapong, Chief of the Phuket Internal Trade Office (ITO), who announced measures to correct the shortage of official yellow shirts.

"More than 4,700 yellow polo shirts will be on sale [from July 20] at the Big C Supercenter, in Siam Makro and at all 7-Eleven branches in Phuket.

"Prices will be 250 baht for a 100% cotton shirt and 200 baht for cotton-mix fabric.

"Anyone who fails to get a shirt from one of those places can order as many as they wish from the ITO from now until June 30, at the same prices. Sizes range from S to XXL for both types.

"The ITO will send all the order forms to Bangkok and the first batch of shirts will be available for collection from the ITO by the middle of July," he said.

He added that anyone coming across vendors selling shirts at "unreasonable prices" can call the ITO hotline at Tel: 1569. Offenders face a fine of 2,000 baht.

American teacher held for theft

PHUKET: An American teacher working part-time in Phuket was arrested on June 17 for stealing a mobile phone from a shop in Phuket City.

The 39-year-old man, Gary Thomas Carpen, was arrested after staff at Ann Phone Shop on Phuket Rd called police to report that a Western man had stolen a

Nokia N-Gage phone from the shop.

He was arrested at the scene and found to be in possession of the phone described, as well as two others, another Nokia and a Motorola.

Carpen has been charged with theft and receiving stolen property.

SCHEDULED BLACKOUTS

PHUKET: The Phuket Provincial Electricity Authority has announced scheduled blackouts for June. The power outages are needed to continue ongoing inspection, maintenance and repair work on the islands high-voltage power lines. The blackouts will occur from 9 am to 4 pm at the following locales:

June 29, **Rawai:** Wiset Rd from Muang Phuket School to Saiyuan Rd intersection, including Soi Suksan 1 & 2, Soi Masayit Bangkotee, Soi Ruamjai and Baan Bangkotee.

June 29, **Rawai/Nai Harn:**

Saiyuan Rd, From Wiset Rd intersection to Nai Harn Beach, and also affecting Baan Saiyuan, Soi Samakkee 1-3, Soi Saiyuan 1, Soi Ruam Nanachart, Soi Khok Yang, Soi Khok Makham and Soi Naya.

June 30, **Chalong/Kata:** South side of Patak Rd from Chalong Circle to the Signal Station on Kata Hill and including Moo Baan Patak Villa.

Note: This information is subject to change without notice. For more information or to check the latest status, call Tel: 076-211663.

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King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia pose for a picture with management and staff of the Bangkok Hospital Phuket.

Old papers reveal fascinating history

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn

PHUKET: The effort to classify four huge stacks of old documents found by workers fixing the roof of Phuket Provincial Hall nearly six years ago should be complete by the end of September, the official in charge of the project says.

Suntree Sungayuth, Chief Archivist at the National Archives in Trang, told the *Gazette* that some of the 70,000 pages of official documents date back a century or so.

The effort to read through and classify all the documents, now in its sixth year, has been slow because of the fragile state of the papers and the fact that only two people are responsible for all the work, she explained.

The papers have been broadly divided into two main groups according to date, and then subdivided into almost 300 topics. These should be listed by title and page number on the Fine Arts Department website within two month's time and on Phuket Rajabhat University's *Anurak Thai* webpages.

This first group of documents dates from 1900 to 1933, when Siam – as Thailand was called until 1949 – was still divided into administrative divisions known as *monton*, of which there were 10. *Monton* Phuket was the administrative center for a number of tin-mining areas in the south during that period.

"The documents tell us about the management and development of Phuket during that era. Among them are a daily account of the work by *Monton* Phuket's fourth Governor, Praya Rassada Nu Pradith. Many of the documents are official reports, local public announcements and tin mining concession contracts," she revealed.

Some of the documents discovered are in English, including

one contract with a foreign company in which the company agreed to complete a road building project in return for a mining concession, she said.

The second set of papers, from 1933 to 1952, deals with Phuket after it was established as a province.

K. Suntree said that documents of interest from this period include papers from the time the country was run by Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram.

SOCIAL REFORM

Observers who believe that the Thaksin administration was the first to employ country-wide campaigns to effect social change might be surprised at some of the official edicts issued back then.

"At that time, Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram had several policies intended to 'reform culture to make it more civilized'," K. Suntree explained.

"These included public directives on how people should live their lives, such as instructing them to clean their houses and keep them tidy and to stop eating betel nut and wearing *jonekar-bane* [traditional Thai trousers]. They were told to start wearing hats when outside the home.

"Men in Bangkok were also instructed to give their wives a kiss before leaving home," she said.

K. Suntree said that, for the moment, those interested in seeing the documents can do so only by visiting the National Archives Office in Trang, opposite the railway station on Nong Yuan Rd.

"We keep the documents in a climate-controlled room and we cannot allow people to make photocopies, as the paper is too old and fragile," she said, adding that once all the documents have been classified, each will be copied and made available to the public for research purposes through the aforementioned websites.

Swedish royals visit school and hospital

PHUKET: HM King Carl XVI Gustaf and HM Queen Silvia of Sweden visited Satee Phuket School on June 19. Later in the same day they were taken to the Tsunami Gallery at Bangkok Hospital Phuket.

Their majesties stayed in Phuket for six days on an unofficial visit after attending HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Bangkok.

While at the school they gave grants to five students affected by the tsunami. They were also taken around the school's tsunami exhibition.

Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr, President of Phuket Provincial Administration Organization, presented a gift of a shell painting and a pearl necklace to the King and Queen to mark their 30th wedding anniversary.

Following the presentation the Director of Satee Phuket School, Kiatisak Pinlavas, took the King and Queen around the school's plant museum and afterwards they planted a teak tree in the grounds.

"The visit of King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden has made the school and everyone in Phuket very proud," K. Kiatisak added.

In the afternoon the royal couple were taken to the Tsunami Gallery on the second floor of Bangkok Hospital Phuket. They were also treated to a performance of *Rong Ngeng*, a traditional Sea Gypsy dance, by students from the Child Care Development Center in Kamala.

Another royal visitor, HRH Crown Prince Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan, left the island on June 18 following a three-day stay.

The Prince, a watersports enthusiast, spent his first day in Phuket sailing from the Royal Phuket Marina and then spent two days diving at Koh Maithon.

Ten deaf students from Phuket Special School turned out to wave off the Prince at Phuket International Airport. The students had their photo taken with Prince Jigme and also taught him how to sign "I love you".

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Solving Patong's traffic problems is still on hold, Deputy Mayor Chairat Sukkaban said, while two big public works projects are underway – the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT's) seafront redevelopment project and the municipality's *Phang Muang Sai Kor* project to build a new north-south artery between Nanai Rd and Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd.

"We are still waiting for the return to us of the areas we handed over to the TAT for their project to improve the scenery along the beach.

"They will return the land to us on June 27, after which time we can go ahead with our plan to solve the parking problem," he said, adding that a private consultant, NS Consultant Company, is now conducting a study of the road system to see where "trouble spots" are, both in terms of traffic and parking.

One idea to solve the shortage of parking space came from Provincial Vice Governor Worapot Ratthasima: to build a large multi-story parking garage beneath the football field along the beach road, similar to structures in other countries.

But K. Chairat said that was a provincial initiative and the Municipality is not doing any planning on it now. When asked if he thought it was risky to build a subterranean parking garage so close to the beach, he said it was not, because the town now has a tsunami warning system.

"Now it is low season, so we are not so worried about the parking problem because there aren't as many cars and motorbikes as in the high-season.

"However, I'm sure that when the high season arrives we will be able to provide adequate parking for all tourists' cars. Now we are hurrying to finish the *Phang Muang Sai Kor* road project.

"When that's finished it should take a lot of the pressure off Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd, both in

PARKING LOTS? IN PATONG, NOT A LOT

After the tsunami, there was much talk in official circles about using the redevelopment of Patong to rectify long-standing problems facing the town, including its lack of public parking.

Some 18 months after the disaster, most people would agree that, apart from Bangla Rd being turned into a pedestrian zone, the pre-tsunami status quo on the roads has returned.

The *Gazette's* Natcha Yuttaworawit and Stephen Fein took a look to see what plans, if any, are in the offing to deal with the shortage of public parking space in Patong.

terms of traffic volume and parking, because it will serve as a bypass for traffic wanting to flow though Patong. We already have the budget for this project and work is underway," he said.

K. Chairat downplayed the severity of the traffic problem, however, saying the Municipality has never received complaints about parking problems in the town.

As for the night-time closure of Bangla Rd, which has cut off access to some parking, such as the lot at the end of Soi Sea Dragon, he said there has hardly been any effect.

"Both local people and tourists are happy that they can park on that road from 6 am to 6 pm," he said, adding that the road is not reopened until 6 am because the Municipality cleans it every

day between 4 and 5 in the morning.

When asked if the town had any plan to ease the traffic problem by establishing some sort of park-and-ride system, he said he thought it was an interesting idea and one worth discussing at a future Municipal meeting.

He added that the Municipality currently collects five baht an hour for both cars and motor-



The pedestrianization of Bangla Rd is the only major change made to Patong's traffic since the tsunami.

bikes that park in the designated parking areas along the beach side of Thaweewong Rd.

Before the tsunami, car and motorbike rental services operating in the area had to pay a fee as well, but this has been waived until the TAT project is finished, when the fee will be reintroduced.

Most car rental companies and motorcycle drivers don't seem to mind paying a fee for the right to have their own designated spots, especially when they are in key locations.

Sangpet Chansri, who is second-in-command of the motorbike taxi stand in front of the post office on Thaweewong Rd, told the *Gazette*,

"I have been working here for six years. I had to pay [the Municipality] for parking before, but now we have the Sahakorn Patong [motorbike taxi co-operative], which pays on our behalf [out of our membership fees]."

The stand had been in place for 10 years, he said, during which time there had been no problems with parking the drivers' eight motorbikes in the area.

If the Municipality decides to charge a fee after the area reverts back after June 27, the motorbike taxi drivers would have no problem paying it, he added.

Somporn Tongteng, 30, who runs a car rental business on the beach road, said he didn't know why the town had stopped charging him to operate there.

"In the past we had to pay, but now we don't. I don't know why. They divided up the area

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'Now we don't have any problems about parking because we have our own area that can fit two or three cars, so I don't have to worry.'

– Somporn Tongteng, car rental businessman

they don't arrive in a car. So it's not really a critical situation for the hotel."

The town should establish some sort of public parking area and develop a park-and-ride system, he said.

"That's what they do in many cities in Europe. The municipality runs a public car park. You leave your car there and pay a fee. In some cities, they even have a small electric cart to bring you in.

"If Patong were in Europe or the the US, Thaweewong Rd would probably be a pedestrian zone. You would have a park-and-ride system with a huge car park, from which you would be whisked off to Thaweewong Rd by an electric car. This is how it works in major European tourist destinations – and it could be done here as well."

In contrast, he doesn't believe an underground parking garage located along the beach would be the safest or most cost-effective solution.

"It's not only tsunamis; you have floods too. Usually, parking garages are only built in areas where no land is available. It might help the situation, but I think the cost of a parking garage is probably very, very high. I think it would make more sense to have a piece of land dedicated as a car park.

"The reality of the situation is that no one wants to give up land for this purpose. I don't know how much the Municipality actually owns, but if they have to buy the land it will cost 10 to 15 mil-

lion baht a rai. That's serious money."

He emphasized that the needs of the local people had to be taken into account as well. "You can't tell the local motorbike and car rental people to take their cars off the road if they have no place else to park them. You would take away their livelihood. That's the reality.

"If they were given some place else to park the cars, they could still be at the beach and display what they rent and then call in the cars from the car park by mobile phone as needed," he said.

Just such a plan was much talked about after the tsunami, but never effectively implemented.

Mr Meusberger noted that local politics also plays an important role in how public space is allocated.

"As we all know, the people at the beach are voters. So as a local politician, you will do what brings you votes... That's democracy. I talk with these vendors in front of the hotel every day. I think if they are given an opportunity to park somewhere else, they probably would listen.

"But you can't take away people's livelihoods. You have to give them an opportunity to make money, and then you can organize it. I think most of them don't mind getting organized – if an opportunity is given to them.

"But the solution cannot be 'Get off the road, and we don't care where you park your car!' That's never going to work."

'I have been working here for six years. I had to pay [the Municipality] for parking before, but now we have the Sahakorn Patong [motorbike taxi cooperative], which pays on our behalf [out of our membership fees].'

Sangpet Chansri,
– motorbike-taxi driver



Patong, as we all know," said Holiday Inn General Manager Wolfgang Meusberger. "The whole area is usually blocked by rental cars and taxis.

"I think the only solution will be if the Municipality or government buys a big piece of land for public parking, or gives the rental businesses somewhere else to park their vehicles. That's the reality... As long as this is not happening the situation will not improve."

When asked if the lack of parking on roadways had an effect on the Holiday Inn, he said, "Yes, some people sneak in. A lot of people use our restaurants. We are not policing it in a way that if you park your car here we run up to you... We are lucky that some 99% of our hotel customers do not need parking, because

and we were given a zone about five meters wide to park our vehicles. Now we don't have any problems about parking because we have our own area that can fit two or three cars, so I don't have to worry," said the independent businessman.

One long-term resident of Patong who wished to be referred to only as Large William, told the *Gazette* that he did not find parking that much of a problem because he knew of a convenient place near Soi Bangla to park that is free if you park there before 6 pm, and just 20 baht afterwards. "I really don't what to tell you where it is, though!" he said with a laugh.

Another long-time foreign resident agreed, telling the *Gazette* under the condition of anonymity, "I never have much of a problem finding somewhere to park when I go over there. It's no worse than in many other cities I have lived in or visited. Sometimes you have a walk a

way to get from where you parked to where you are going – but walking's good for you."

But most foreigners seem to agree that finding a safe parking spot can be a real headache, especially at night in the high season.

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Queer News

A dose of tough natural justice was handed out recently by the denizens of a local swamp to a young ne'er-do-well from Ranong who was caught riding a stolen motorcycle.

The 16-year-old youth was taking his girlfriend for a ride around Chalong Circle when officers directing traffic decided there was something a little suspicious in his bearing and signalled him to pull over.

But instead of slowing down "Sak", (the name can mean a variety of things, including "mightiness", "vigor", "prestige" and "skill") revved up the bike and sped away along Chao Fa West Rd.

He didn't get far, however.

Bloody stupid idea

Just outside the Lamphun secondhand goods shop the somewhat less than skilful Sak lost control of the machine, sending himself and his girlfriend tumbling to the ground.

In a stunning show of chivalry he then ran away as fast as he could, leaving his girlfriend cut and bruised and in possession of a stolen motorvehicle.

Meanwhile, the traffic police had radioed in descriptions of Sak and the bike, and officers from Chalong Police Station were hot on his trail.

Sak ran all the way to the Chalong Tambon Administration Organization building and, just when it was looking like the pursuing officers had him cornered, jumped over a wall and dashed into a nearby woods.

The police surrounded the wood and began to comb through them trying to flush out the suspect. They searched for more than two hours but found no sign of the mighty Sak.

Sak, meanwhile, had managed to crawl into a swamp, where he hid for three hours.

After a while police gave up the search and went back to the station. Sak, beginning to feel a little hungry after all the exertion, then made his way out of the swamp.

Only then did he notice that he was covered in blood. He might have managed to evade the police but he had fallen right into the clutches of the swamp's plentiful population of leeches. The bloodthirsty creatures had attached themselves all over Sak's body and drunk their fill.

Now shirtless and dripping blood from leech bites all over his

upper body, he wandered into nearby Land and Houses Village 7 and asked one of the residents for a drink of water. He explained his sorry-looking state by saying he had been set upon by a rival gang of youths and had run into the village to escape.

Sak's tale of woe was not yet over, though. Unfortunately for him not all the police had given up the search. Just as he was being handed his glass of water an officer pounced and put him under arrest.

The vigorous Sak promptly confessed that he had stolen the bike, as well as two others on previous occasions. The officer took him to Chalong Police Station, where he was charged with theft.

Source: Siang Tai

TRASHING Phuket



KATHU: Welcome to Baan Kathu. Just two meters from the sign at the entrance to the village is this delightfully welcoming dump consisting of sanitary ware, the innards of an ancient fridge and various other sad artefacts discarded by what is commonly known as civilization.

Seen a good place to dump your unwanted trash? A place to enhance the view with some plastic bags or other garbage. Email a couple of pictures to dump@phukegazette.net and we'll let everyone know.



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*When the taste is perfect,
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Drivers making their way along Chao Fa West Rd for the first time are likely to do a double-take when they look into the open field opposite the Kajornkietsuksa School, where there appears to be a small herd of elephants moving through the grass.

On closer inspection the pachyderms aren't real, of course, and Phuket is not under threat of invasion by Hannibal the Carthaginian.

But that leads to the obvious questions: Who made them? Why are they there? And isn't there already enough chaos and mayhem along Phuket's roads without introducing such life-like mammoth sculptures?

The man responsible is 38-year-old Khunsawang Nusin of Nakhon Sri Thammarat, a graduate of Poh Chang College of Arts & Crafts in Bangkok, one of Thailand's oldest and most prestigious art schools.

With his degree in sculpture and design and 20 years of experience, K. Khunsawang has been involved in many projects familiar to Phuket residents, including the water fountain at Karon Circle and a number of sculptures he made for Phuket FantaSea in the late 1990s. He has also been commissioned to produce wax figures for display by different branches of Thailand's National Museum.

Before moving to his cur-

rent location, a small hut in Ta Wichit, K. Khunsawang had a workshop opposite Phuket Country Club in Kathu. He was getting ready to move in to a new location at the Phuket Night Bazaar when the tsunami hit, putting that grand scheme on hold.

Despite the change in plans, K. Khunsawang remains optimistic. "I think I will be here for long time because Phuket has so many people who love Thai sculpture, both Thais and foreigners."

Explaining how he first started creating animal sculptures, he said, "There were fields around my home where I grew up in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, so I have always been interested in nature."

"When I was a teenager, I started to make casts and molds of many different animals, especially buffaloes. I knew what I wanted to do early on in life, so that's why I first started studying at the Nakhon Sri Thammarat School of Art," he said.

Explaining why he would choose to recreate the largest of the Earth's terrestrial creatures, he said, "The elephant has a charm all its own and despite its large size it is not fierce. It also has friendly eyes."



Khunsawang Nusin: 'The elephant has a charm all its own.'

"Life-like elephants are not easy to make. I needed to draw on all my knowledge and experience to create these ones, the first of which were originally intended for the Night Bazaar. Any-

way, if anyone admires my work, they welcome to stop by and have a close look. I can guarantee they won't get hurt," he said with a laugh.

For anyone interested in

owning an elephant without having to come up with the 80 kilos of vegetable matter an adult elephant must consume every day, perhaps one of K. Khunsawang's replicas is just the ticket.

They can be fashioned either from cement or fiber. Cement is the cheaper option, with a 20,000-baht baby elephant taking about one week to make and an adult, which can cost as much as 100,000 baht, taking a month.

In fiber, prices start at 80,000 baht for a baby and can reach as much as 200,000 baht for an adult. The adults also take longer to make. Little Dumbo might take one month to reproduce, his mother up to three months before the buyer can expect delivery.

Speaking of delivery, just how does one get a huge concrete elephant over Patong Hill? K. Khunsawang said it's not as difficult as one might think and that most people can move it on their own if they have their own truck.

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For more information call K. Khunsawang at Tel: 09-730-8415.



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FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND

By Barry Singleton

The 25-million-baht public pier at Samui's Big Buddha beach was completed last year, but since it opened only small fishing craft have been able to use the pier because the water is too shallow for larger vessels to moor alongside. As a result, the pier has been standing idle for several months.

Now, however, Seatran, one of the largest boat operators to and from Samui, has taken over management of the pier. The company has already brought in a dredger and started making the bay in front of Samui's most famous landmark deeper.

A company spokesman says Seatran hopes to have the pier operational for larger vessels "within two months".

Initially, the pier is likely to be used for ferry services to Koh Pha-ngan, Koh Tao and Chumphon. Seatran will also rent space to other boat operators.

Despite Seatran's desire to open the pier quickly, Lopburi Yothasiri, the Director of Samui's Maritime Transport Division, said that the company will first have to conduct a proper environmental impact assessment and apply for the necessary licenses.



Samui's new pier was completed last year but has lain idle most of the time since then.

Seatran to take over Samui's B25m pier

Most local business owners welcome the takeover because it will mean that boats will gather at one end of the bay rather than mooring all along the beach, which adds to pollution and reduces the natural beauty of the bay.

Volunteer security: On June 4 Samui District Chief Decha Kansanan opened a workshop for local security volunteers at a training ground on a hill just outside Nathon. The aim of the workshop was to train a volunteer security force that will be equipped and ready to help both the authorities and the general public in emergency situations.

A military expert was brought over from the Royal Thai Army Training Center in Surat Thani to instruct the 185 volunteers attending the training session. The skills taught included self-defense and weapons training, with some time even allocated to live-firing exercises involving M16 rifles at the Samui Shooting Range.

Before the workshop, trainees took a psychology test to make sure they were appropriate for handling firearms.

Further workshops are scheduled, and the local authorities hope to be able to draw soon on a pool of skilled local volunteers to keep the island safe.

Tailor murdered: Pol Col Apichart Bunsrirot, Deputy Superintendent of Samui Police, recently announced that three men had been arrested following the discovery of a body in a plastic bag dumped near Chaweng Lake.

Col Apichart explained that police received a call from a Burmese woman married to one of the co-owners of the Tony Armani chain of tailor shops, a man he named only as "K. Sun". The woman had not seen her husband for 24 hours, and was worried that he may have been attacked by his business partners over a dispute over control of the tailor-shop chain.

Later that day, refuse workers reported finding a large bag containing K. Sun's body. He had suffered severe blows to the chest and head.

Col Apichart and fellow police officers found two of the

victim's three business partners at the main shop, one of them being the dead man's brother, whom Col Apichart named only as "Vijay."

Both men denied killing K. Sun, but one of them was found in possession of the victim's mobile phone, and officers found traces of blood on a towel as well as plastic bags similar to the one containing the victim's body.

After further inquiries, police apprehended the third partner, named as "Big Gum", whom Col Apichart said confessed to police during questioning that they men had been responsible for the murder.

Col Apichart reported that the men attacked K. Sun with a steel bar while he was watching television, then stuffed his body into a plastic bag and drove it by to the lakeside on a motorbike.

All three men were taken to Samui Prison, where they now await trial.

Centennial celebrations: Festivities at Surat Thani's Wat Suan Mohk marking the birth of the wat's founder, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, 100 years ago, began on May 27.

Special events to be held throughout the year to honor Buddhadasa Bhikkhu include speeches, the release of reprints of his books and Dhamma tapes, a search for unpublished manuscripts, meditation camps for children and adults, the setting up of the Buddhadasa Institute, and at least one concert by musicians who have been inspired by his teachings.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu took a radical look into the sources of Theravada Buddhism and dedicated his life to following the Dhamma, correcting what he saw as the numerous mistaken beliefs and practices that had crept into the philosophy over the centuries.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, who died in 1993, was named as One of the World's Great Personalities by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the temple continues to attract large numbers of foreign and Thai disciples in search of a deeper spiritual understanding.

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Seven hurt in eruption of bombings

Explosions continue to rock the Deep South, as a morning of 44 well-coordinated blasts at security positions and government installations on June 15 left two dead and 25 injured. The following day, eight more targets were hit, mostly railway stations. Seven more people were wounded.

Before leaving for a conference in Kazakhstan, caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra expressed concern and said he had left his deputy, caretaker Justice Minister Chidchai Vanasatidya, in charge of dealing with the insurgency's latest flare-up.

Chidchai called a meeting of agencies to review the situation and stepped up security measures with a proposal to install closed-circuit televisions at hot spots, sources at the meeting said.

In Narathiwat's Rangae District, police arrested Indonesian Zablee Ahmaeruding, 37, from Sumatra, as a suspect in the bombings. Police said they also seized about half a kilogram of ammonium nitrate and two kilos of nails believed to be materials for making bombs.

Zablee said he had nothing to do with the series of explosions. He settled in the district two years ago after marrying a local girl and was working in a rubber plantation, he said.

Underdog meat: Police in many northeastern provinces are monitoring a widespread marketing gimmick whereby self-grill restaurants offer customers extra food free when favorite football teams get beaten by underdogs.

Lt Col Aphilak Thammakij, acting police chief in Muang Amnat Charoen District, said all eateries had been told they could continue to run such a campaign as long as they did not charge more if the favored teams defeat the underdogs. That would make the campaign a game of chance, which is illegal.

More than 20 restaurants are offering one free set of food for correct predictions. A manager said the campaign was being run just for fun and was not aimed at encouraging gambling.

Some places charge half price if their customers' team wins, without the underdog condition.

Muang Khon Kaen police said they had arrested 10 bookies and were watching many grill-plate restaurants in an effort to prevent gambling.

Cot death tragedy: A three-month-old infant suffocated after her 14-year-old mother put her to sleep face down in the belief that this would help her sleep comfortably and make her head grow into a round shape, police said.

Police found the dead infant and her mother Ae in bed at 5 am at a townhouse on the Khlong Luang housing estate.

The infant's grandmother



ROYAL RELEASE: A woman bursts into tears after being released from the central prison in Khon Kaen Province. The woman was among 183 inmates released to mark the 60th anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession to the Throne. Most were women jailed for petty crimes.

Noi, 41, called police after she woke up and she saw the baby lying still, facedown on a pillow, while Ae was sleeping on the other side of the bed.

Noi said she believed Ae was unaware of the danger of suffocating her child by putting her to sleep in such a position.

She said Ae became pregnant after she was raped by a conscript who broke into their home nearly a year ago. The man was later jailed for raping a girl aged under 14, she said.

Since investigators found the family loved the infant, her death was likely an accident, police said.

Lotto luck: Having been in the red for the previous three draws, the Government Lottery Office (GLO) finally raked in nearly 1 billion baht from ticket sales of 2.1 billion baht when none of the touted lucky numbers came up.

Permanent Secretary for Finance Suparat Kawatkul, who presided over the 64.39-million baht jackpot draw, said ticket sales had been the highest in three years.

It is believed the record sales were due to speculation on the numbers 558 and 41 hinted at by a Buddhist monk and on 960, 922, 69 and 60, all linked to the Diamond Jubilee of His Majesty the King, according to a GLO source.

The GLO would have had to pay out 74 billion baht if the projected numbers had been drawn, the source noted.

In fact the first prize number was 110935, the two-digit winning number was 17, and the three-digit numbers were 381, 410, 595 and 250.

The lack of pay-outs means the next draw, on July 1, will have a jackpot of nearly 100 million baht. K. Suparat said the GLO

would actually be able to pay it as it had Bt15 billion in funds.

Landmark win for disabled: In a landmark verdict, Bangkok South Civil Court ordered the management of a condominium project to return a parking space for disabled people to a foreign occupant with prosthetic legs.

The court also ordered company officials to comply with the ruling within 30 days, or face prison terms and/or fine for disobeying a court order. As a result, Werner Treder, 64, from Germany, will be given back the parking space that he first used when he bought a unit at the condominium many years ago.

After buying a unit in the condo, Treder had a parking space near an elevator in the five-story car park.

However, the management later removed a disability sign and revoked his reserved space, saying that Treder could drive and park his car in any space before walking to the lift on his prosthetic legs without assistance.

The verdict's conditions regarding the penalties resulted from a legal improvisation made by the court. A 2002 regulation for disabled people itself imposes no criminal or civil penalties on owners of buildings that do not provide facilities for occupants or users of relevant services with disabilities.

Family Thais: Social Development and Human Security Ministry Inspector Ubol Limsakul told participants at a "Family Empowerment" seminar that capitalism and the transformation from an agricultural to an industrial society had created changes to the Thai family structure, including making it more like families of the west, limited to parents and children, rather than extended.

Currently, about 55% of families are categorized as "nuclear", while just 32% are extended families, K. Ubol said, citing a study entitled, *Thai Children Nurtured in the Four Years of the New Government*.

The study also found that as the marriage registration rate had declined, the number of unmarried couples had increased, K. Ubol said.

The high divorce rate had now affected three million families in Thailand, especially in Bangkok and nearby provinces. About 1.3 million families were found to be single-parent families, she added.

A new type of family – same-sex couples – had emerged and was growing, as Thai society had become more open and gave opportunities for gay people to live openly as couples. There were no statistics on this new family type as yet, she said.

Capital commuting: Park-and-ride blocks will soon be built at 15 locations in outer Bangkok to encourage motorists to use public transport more, said Energy Policy & Planning Office Deputy Director Weeraphol Jirapraditkul.

The locations are deemed appropriate as connecting points between suburban areas and road networks in the inner city in four directions around the capital: Rangsit in the north, Samut Prakan in the south, Thon Buri in the west and Bang Yai area in the northwest, he said.

Park-and-ride car parks at Mor Chit terminal and Bang Sue area had proved effective in solving traffic problems and are popular with the public, he added.

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

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BEHIND THE WHEEL

By Jeff Heselwood

The region's premier auto show, arguably the most prestigious annual show of any kind, takes place each year at the Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition Center (BITEC).

Thai motor manufacturers and major importers exhibit their wares at the Bangkok International Motor Show, and this year some more exotic motors were on show, including the new Jaguar XK, priced at 13.3 million baht, and a Mercedes-Benz SL sports cabriolet at 14.4 million baht.

Some, though, were less exotic. At the more down-to-earth end of the scale, and likely to become a popular choice in Thailand, was the latest offering from Chevrolet, the 1.4-liter Aveo sedan.

INEXPENSIVE

The South Korean-built Aveo makes no pretence at offering luxury or sophisticated motoring; some might say that it is patently out of date. But what it does offer is relatively inexpensive driving in – again relatively – reasonable comfort.

It is also safe, with side as well as front airbags for driver and front seat passenger.

The 1.4-liter engine may be modest, but is more than adequate within the confines of Phuket. Producing a competent 94 bhp (69 kW), with maximum torque of 130 Nm, the Aveo is a lively performer without attempting to set any records.

Its makers claim a respectable 13.7 kilometers-per-liter gas consumption, but expect to fill up more frequently over Phuket's undulating terrain.

Automatic transmission is standard, and the top speed claimed is 170 kmh.



The 'best-selling small car' in the United States is set for Phuket

Its makers assert that it is America's best-selling small car and it certainly possesses the right credentials: roomy, good ride quality and an understated appearance that makes it an ideal family sedan. The styling is the work of Giorgetto Giugiaro's Italdesign studios in Turin. The veteran Italian designer has some worthy models to his credit, though older readers may recall with a shudder one of his less successful designs, the dreadful Hyundai Pony of the mid-'70s.

On the plus side, the man was also responsible for the long-running VW Golf, the futuristic Lotus Esprit of the '70s and a number of Alfa Romeo models.

Regrettably, the Aveo bows to price constraints and is equip-

ped with rear drum brakes allied to ventilated front discs.

The Chevrolet website proudly proclaims, "A four-channel, four-sensor ABS system with electronic brake force distribution is available". Translation: it's not standard, as it should be on all cars in this day and age.

More relevant perhaps, the car has Chevrolet's advanced Euro-ride suspension, as fitted to the Optra/Nubira/Lacetti (see *Gazette* January 7) consisting of the Macpherson struts and gas shock absorbers up front; a torsion beam and helical springs at the rear.

An added advantage to this set-up is that it does not intrude on occupant or luggage space.

In addition, the wheelbase



is one of the longest in its class, which contributes to a well balanced ride and the soaking up of any unexpected undulations.

The passenger compartment is essentially a "safety cell". Made from high-strength steel, it forms a protective cage around the occupants, with the front structure dissipating impact energy through multiple paths.

The B-pillar is a significant part of this design; instead of collapsing and penetrating the passenger compartment in a crash, it moves like a pendulum – a design feature normally found only in larger, more luxurious vehicles.

Although inevitably compact, the Aveo's interior is sur-

prisingly well equipped, with a European-style console in a mix of chrome and black, and containing the digital clock and a quality audio system with tape, CD and MP3 functions.

Overall, a self-effacing motor car but one that is sure to find new friends in Thailand.

And if nothing else, it is an alternative to all the bland offerings from the Land of the Rising Sun.

Expect to see the Aveo in Phuket from next month, priced at 520,000 to 640,000 baht.

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



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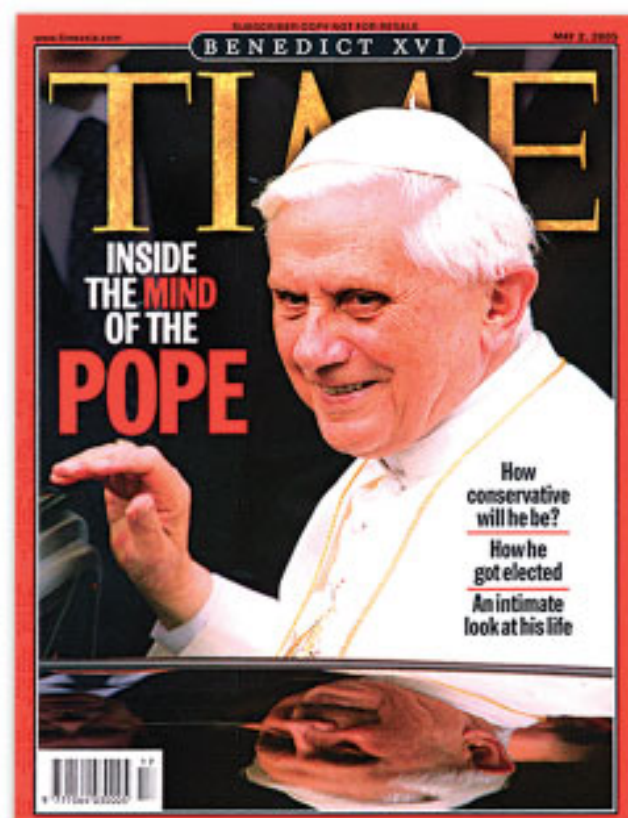
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in Chinese, too!

By Jenjira Ruengjarus

For 65 years Rahn Mee Pae Teaw, or Uncle Teaw's Noodle Shop, on Satun Rd near Plukpanya Municipal school, has been serving up Chinese favorites to people in Phuket.

Somsak Suwichathikarn, the owner, inherited the shop from his father, the original Pae Teaw. In 2001 he opened a second branch, Bahn Mee Pae Teaw or Uncle Teaw's Noodle House, on Hongyok-Uthit Rd, Samkong.

October 2005 saw him open a third branch, Rahn Mee Pae Teaw VIP (Uncle Teaw's VIP Noodle Shop), at Villa Dowroong, Chao Fa East Rd, opposite Dowroong School. All the branches have many reasonably priced dishes.

No Phuket native can be unaware of *mee kwang tung* and *mee hokkien*, Cantonese and Hokkien noodles. These local staples, along with many other dishes on the island, owe their presence to the large Chinese community, especially Cantonese (*kwang tung*) and Hokkien, and are served in all of Pae Teaw's restaurants.

Mee hokkien are long round yellow noodles as big as Japanese soba noodles. *Mee kwang tung* is a little smaller and is made from flour mixed with egg.

Another of the recommended dishes is *mee kiew sen foi thong*. It consists of Cantonese noodles, which are made on site; dumplings; fried shrimp; roasted marinated pork (*moo daeng*); and fish balls, along with soup made to Pae Teaw's own special recipe. "You do not need add any extra seasoning because the soup is already flavored so well," K. Somsak said.

The *Gazette* caught up with K. Somsak at his VIP restaurant, "I have run this business since my father died. It has now been open some 65 years. When my father first came here from Canton, he worked as a laborer and a sales-



O-tao.



Mee kwang tung.

Chinese favorites

No Phuket native can be unaware of *mee kwang tung* and *mee hokkien*, Cantonese and Hokkien noodles

man. After that he was able to do what he was best at – making noodles," he said.

"At the original shop I have my own place to makes noodles, both to use in the shops and also to sell for 150 baht a kilogram. I make most of the seasonings myself and also have my own special recipes for the dishes we serve.

"I chose this location because it has a good view and it is

easy to get to," K. Somsak said.

Another popular dish on offer at the VIP restaurant is *o-tao*, or *hoi tord Phuket*, as it is also known. It is made from small oysters and square-chopped yam fried with flour, egg and dried shrimps. It is served with fresh bean sprouts or Chinese chives.

O-tao at Mee Pae Teaw VIP is different from the *o-tao* on offer at other restaurants. It is fried until it is dry and served

with a special dipping sauce that combines sour, spicy and sweet flavors.

"If you are not full after the main course, then you can order satay for afters," K. Somsak suggested. The satay there are bigger than in other shops and are cheap – just three baht a stick.

A filling dish of *mee kwang tung* or *mee hokkien* is 35 baht and *o-tao* is 30 baht. Other dishes such as *kouy teaw kui* (Phuket

style-fried noodles), *pad thai* and *raht nah* start from 30 baht.

Rahn Mee Pae Teaw VIP is open daily from 9:30 am to 7 pm. It situated at 55/700 Villa Dowroong Chao Fa East Rd, in front of Dowroong school. It is busy everyday, but especially so on public holidays. You can call to reserve a table or order in advance by calling Tel: 076-219045.



Somsak Suwichathikarn, son of the original Pae Teaw.



Mee hokkien.

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Happily Ever After

Recent weddings in Phuket



Kylee Allen and Andrew Fowler from Australia were married at the Katathani Phuket Beach Resort on April 5.



Pipop Somwetee and Pensri Kathinhip were married in the Phuket Ballroom of the Royal Phuket City Hotel on May 13.

By Nattamon Ratcharak

Among the development and multi-million-baht properties springing up in Phuket it is sometimes easy to overlook the island's less prosperous inhabitants.

Sungvien Sukjamlong is 76 years old and has lived in Phuket for more than 50 years. He has ridden a *samlor*, the three-wheeled Thai cycle-rickshaw, since he was a boy and still makes his living pedaling up and down the streets of Phuket looking for passengers or carrying goods.

It has not been an easy life, and it still is not. "I was born in 1930 at Sirirat Hospital, Bangkok, but I don't know the day or month. I studied up to grade *Prathom* 4 [about 10 years old] in Wachirasongkram School. I had to leave school because my family was poor and I needed to work to support them.

"My teacher tried to persuade me to stay in school, she even said that she would buy meals for me.

TABLES

"She liked me because I knew the multiplication tables off by heart – I used to lead the class in reciting them; I made them into a song because I loved singing," he says, grinning at the memory.

"But nevertheless, I had to leave. My family needed money."

While still only a boy, K. Sungvien was forced to start making his way alone through the backstreets of Bangkok. "When I left school I started riding a *samlor*. I made a living by taking tourists and locals around the city. I also used to pedal prostitutes to secret rendezvous with their clients.

"I did that until I was 16 years old. At that point I had to give up my work as the government started banning *samlor* in Bangkok because they said they were outdated. I had no way to earn a living.

"I made a decision to move to Trat province and become a singer. I sang with the Pranakorn Calypso troupe until I was 20 years old. When the work

A life on the open road

dried up I became a cleaning boy at a restaurant in front of the theater," he explains.

It was his singing voice that brought K. Sungvien to Phuket all those years ago.

"After a while I heard that there was a call for country singers in Phuket.

"So, penniless, I headed down here. When I had saved up

enough money I bought my own *samlor*. It cost 2,800 baht.

"I also carried on singing. I can sing in many languages, including Chinese, English, Hindi and Vietnamese. Some students at Phuket Wittayalai School helped me by translating English songs into Thai.

"I even went to sing in Penang in Malaysia for a while.

Sungvien (left) in his musical days, with well-known singer Chay Muangsing.



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'I don't know what I would do if I had to stop riding my *samlor*. My singing days are over and I have no experience of doing any other jobs. Anyway, who would want to hire an old man like me?'

I was very pleased about that."

"I married my wife, Maradee, when I was 30 years old. We have three sons. One of my sons died this year. His name was Sompong. He was only 23 years old. Another of my sons, Sunti, is in jail now. He got in trouble with drugs and still has another three years to serve.

"My youngest son is Suphap. He is only 20 years old but he is a worker and I can always rely on him," K. Sungvien says, battling to hold back tears.

K. Sungvien's daily life would be a struggle for many men half his age. Everyday he has to pedal his *samlor* round the island, come rain or shine.

"Now I have work carrying vegetables from the market to hotels and restaurants. I do that from 6 to 10 am daily. I earn around 120 baht a day. I cannot allow myself to become ill – if I don't work we will have nothing.

"I give my wife 50 baht a day. I also have bills to deal with every month. My rent is 1,200 baht and there is water and electricity to pay for on top of that. I cannot save any money. Everything I earn is spent on my family.

"After working in the morning, I make a little extra money collecting empty bottles and used paper to sell at Koh Sireh where there is a company that pays four baht a kilogram," he said.

K. Sungvien has no choice but to keep doing his rounds. But he takes obvious pride in his profession.

"I don't know what I would do if I had to stop riding my *samlor*. My singing days are over and I have no experience of doing any other jobs. Anyway, who would want to hire an old man like me?

"I will pedal my *samlor* until I draw my last breath or people stop hiring me. I would like the *samlor* to live on in Phuket forever. I hope other people will take up this profession after I'm gone."

K. Sungvien spoke a little of how he had been helped by others when times were particularly hard.

"I have been a good man all of my life, even though I have always been poor. People sometimes give me some food, but I had never stolen from others even when I've had nothing to eat and been desperately hungry.

"Now I like drinking cold soy milk. I can't keep any at home because I don't have a fridge but sometimes neighbors bring me a bottle,

"I usually go to bed at 11 pm after watching mystery and action movies on TV.

"Someone gave me the television – I could never have bought one myself," he says with a laugh.

It is not only watching television that K. Sungvien is interested in. He also wants to be on TV.

"One of my ambitions is to travel to Bangkok and be on a television program such as Channel 9's *Khon Khon Khon*. I have lived a long life and would like to share my experiences with other people."

Those experiences include the despair he feels over his

middle son, and K. Sungvien urges young people not to follow the same path into drugs.

"The one thing that upsets me in my life is that one of my sons was a drug addict and is now in jail.

"I would like to say to teenagers, 'Don't use drugs, and stay away from drink.

"They will take your life away. They are terrible things."


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This week



BIC MOVE: Thanate Kienpotiramard (center rear, wearing glasses), Director of Sales & Operations of Bhuket Incentive & Convention Planners (BIC), and fellow BIC staff celebrate the May 27 opening of their new office on Wirat Hongsyok Rd in Wichit.



THE WHEEL DEAL: Worapan Panman (left), Upper Southern Thailand Sales Service Director of Chevrolet (Thailand), hands the key to a new Optra car to Suwalai Pinradab, Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Region 4 office. The car will be given away to a shopper who uses a Visa credit card at Central Festival Phuket between June 16 and August 15 as part of the TAT's Thailand Grand Invitation 2006 tourism promotion.



CELLULAR DEVELOPMENT: AIS Southern Region Vice-President Suttisak Kundhikanjana (2nd from left) hands a pledge for 320,000 baht to Rungsukdi Peenprateep, Managing Director of the Books for Children Foundation, at the Royal Phuket City Hotel. The money will go toward buying books for distribution to childhood development centers throughout Southern Thailand.



PREMIER PRACTICE: Dr Pajit Warachit (left), Director-General of the Ministry of Public Health's Department of Medical Sciences, presents a Good Manufacturing Practices certificate to Cape Panwa Hotel Head Chef Phudon Prachum for work practices used in the hotel's kitchens.



IN THE SPIRIT: Prasertsak Theerajit (front, center, in white shirt), Human Resources Manager of the JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa, poses for a photo with staff after they donated 29,635 baht to Dr Veerawat Yorsang (center, yellow shirt), Acting Director of Vachira Phuket Hospital, to help pay for treatment of low-income patients as part of the Marriott's "Spirit to Serve Our Communities" program.



FINE TASTE: Corinna Rayment-Oliver (right), of Oliver's Taranga Vineyards in Australia, and guests enjoy some fresh night air on the terrace at The Boathouse in Kata after a wine-tasting dinner on June 4.



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Bribe Boomerangs

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of June, 1996

PHUKET: Phuket Police arrested an underground lottery organiser in Muang District last month.

The arrest took place after patrolmen in the area saw what they thought looked like a "suspicious" man. In the end, though, it was their own suspicions which proved correct.

They decided to search the guy, identified as Sawsuah Songelgaw (not really his real name) and found two lists from underground lotteries on his person.

The man was then, accord-

ing to the report in *Sieng Tai*, charged with illegal gambling.

While the police were writing up their report on this incredible drama, Mr Sawsuah tried to

bribe them by 'donating' 500 baht!

The money was politely rejected, but Sawsuah received an "additional" charge "instead of" the original one, (while a blind witness, a

barefoot boy with shoes on, stood sitting in the grass). Sawsuah was then taken to the Police Station for further questioning and subsequently charged with attempting to bribe police officers.

THE TIME machine

News from the past

Kathu maps out zones for nightlife venues

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of June 15-30, 2001

PHUKET: Kathu District has become the first district in Phuket to map out entertainment zones to meet the requirements of proposed new legislation that would eventually see entertainment businesses such as bars, discos and karaoke venues restricted to certain areas.

Vice-Governor Amnuay Sanguannam said yesterday that the Kathu plan sees five entertainment zones – three in Patong and one each in Kathu and Kamala.

In Patong, the three zones will be as follows:

- An area stretching 50 meters to the north and 50 meters to the south of the intersection between Taweewong Rd and Sawasdirak Road.

- Soi Bangla, both sides, including side alleys to 100 meters from the center line of the road.

- Rat-U-Thit Rd from 130 meters to the south of the Soi Sainamyen intersection to 100 meters south of Soi Bangla.

In Kathu the entertainment zone would be restricted to Phrabamee Rd, from the crossroads in front of the District Offices to the start of Patong Hill, and stretching 30 meters out, on either side, from the center of the road.

In Kamala the entertainment area would be along the beach road, 30 meters to the north and south of the center of the road.

Editor's note: Local authorities were so zealous about mapping out entertainment zones that it appeared as though most of the island would be covered by them. The Governor at the time, Pongpayome Vasaputi, rejected all the suggestions, including the ones above.

PHUKET DIARY of coming events



A second Get Sailing Day will be held at the Phuket Yacht Club in Ao Yon on July 9.

Until June 30: A chance to try out Windows Vista.

Gazette columnist and Microsoft Windows guru Woody Leonhard explains: "Microsoft appears on track to ship new versions of Windows, Office and Internet Explorer in January.

"You can try official 'beta' test copies of each now. Give them a run and see if you can break anything – we're reporting bugs daily.

"Drop by the Sandwich Shoppe in Patong, near Andaman Beach Suites, across from CAT and the Patong Language School, between 8 am and 6 pm."

For more information email to woody@khunwoody.com or call Tel: 076-344516.

July 9: Phuket Yacht Club 'Get Sailing Day'

The Phuket Yacht Club (PYC) at Ao Yon is holding a second "Get Sailing Day" on July 9.

All ages from eight years to seniors are invited to join, either learning to handle sailboats or going on a leisurely two-hour

cruise on a 43-foot yacht.

"Experienced club members will show you how to sail. There will be a barbecue, and soft drinks and beer will be available," Robert Warnes of the PYC explains.

"We have Lasers, Bytes and a 59er for adults to learn on as well as Optimists and Concepts for children. Sail in Asia is allowing us to use their 13-meter Class 1 racing yacht so people can try yachting."

Activities will run from 11 am to 4 pm. It will cost 100 baht per person to join in for a day, or 900 baht per person to sail on the large yacht.

For more information call Mr Warnes at Tel: 01-5399560 or visit the website at www.phuketyachtclub.info

July 10: Asarnha Bucha Day (public holiday).

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

July 11: Khao Phansa Day (public holiday).

This is the beginning of the

"Rains Retreat" – known in Thai as Phansa, hence the Thai name for the holiday, Khao Phansa Day – during which many Thais join the Buddhist monkhood for the three-month period.

July 28 to August 28: Free judo course.

Phuket City Municipality is offering a free judo course taught by Prawat Chanasen, who represented Thailand at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

The course, to be held at Saphan Hin, is open to everyone over 10 years of age.

For details contact the Phuket City Municipality Youth Center at Saphan Hin (Tel: 076-216866 or 076-250163).

August 12: HM The Queen's birthday.

HM The Queen's Birthday, a public holiday, is also marked as Mother's Day in Thailand.

September 24: The beginning of Ramadan.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic Hijri calendar, and a time when observant Muslims fast (*sawm*) between dawn (*fajr*), and sunset (*maghrib*). September 24 is an Islamic holiday.

FOR THE PHILATELIST



The next special commemorative stamp to be released by the Thai Post Office will come out on August 4, to mark National Communications Day 2006.

The design is intended to show the evolution of the communication process. It features a hand

signing a letter and, oddly, a clock clearly made in Germany and the Internet Explorer logo.

A total of 800,000 of the 47 x 27-millimeter 3-baht stamps will be printed. First day covers will be priced at 10 baht. It will be available from all post offices.

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LAGE

stand out

It's a fashion jungle out there. But not to worry – you can stand out in battle-hardened camouflage gear that will let everyone know you're the Top Gun.

Camouflage is definitely in right now, as confirmed by San Francisco fashion guru Noubikko, who writes in his website (www.noubikko.com), "Camouflage is being used in a sexy way right now. In many ways, it was popular in the leopard prints last year, re-colored and done with lace.

"There is a feeling of romanticism that has an impact on how the trend is played out." So now you know.

Noubikko also has great advice on how to camouflage any parts of your body you're not satisfied with.

For any of the fashions shown here, pull on your jungle boots and head on down to the Black Army store on Maeluan Rd. Phucong Tortid, who owns it, has a wide range of garments and accessories including – if you really want



FASHION

BY

Jenjira
'You Can't See Me'
Ruengjarus

to be serious about things – air gun replicas of some serious weaponry.

He and his father even have jeeps and other military vehicles for sale or rent.

*Black Army is at 26/1 Maeluan Rd, Talad Neua, Muang, Phuket.
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Spa MAGIC

By Janyaporn Morel
& Kruesit Upatising

Lemongrass House

When you are luxuriating at your favorite spa, do you ever wonder where the products they use come from?

If your rejuvenation retreat is a spa at a top hotel in Phuket, there is a good chance the oils and other essentials were hand-made in Thailand by Lemongrass House, which opened a retail branch in Phuket three years ago.

The shop, on a quite soi near Surin Beach, is filled with heady, complex aromas. These come from a wide variety of products – everything from personal hygiene products such as soaps, shampoos and sprays to typical spa products such as massage oils or essentials oils.

Lemongrass House – Baan Takrai in Thai – opened its first branch at the sprawling Chatuchak Market in Bangkok in 1996. American Bobby Duchowny, who founded the firm with his Thai wife Palita, said his business was the natural outgrowth of his passion for the herb lemongrass (*takrai*), which many first encounter in the popular Thai soup *tom yum goong*.

“When I first came to Thailand several years ago I traveled to a farm in Nakhon Sri Thammarat to learn how to grow turmeric. There I met Palita. Together we visited Phetchabun, where we met organic farmers who were unable to sell their crops because no one was willing to pay a little more for vegetables grown without chemicals.

“It was there that I was surprised to learn how many ways lemongrass was used. It can be



Former professional filmmaker Bobby Duchowny knows just how powerful an effect various scents can have on the human psyche.



Bobby's body shop

used as a medicine, to treat stomach ailments, for example. Farmers used it as a natural mosquito repellent, mixing it with citronella.

“And I really came to love it. I love all foods cooked with lemongrass. I came up with a plan to extract the oils because we use such a large volume for essential oil production.”

Bobby was formerly a professional filmmaker for Pacific Motion Pictures in Hollywood, and learned then just how powerful an effect scents can have on the psyche. This power has not been lost on advertising executives either, he said.

“For the old Hollywood film productions, they used to make the scent of popcorn and put it in

the streets in front of the movie theaters to attract moviegoers.”

“It wasn't really ‘aromatherapy’ they were doing. But to me it was, in a way, because it's really what we call ‘sensory recall’. They were using it as a subconscious lure to attract customers. So I began studying it. I worked in the screenplay department with the writers and they made us study aromatherapy for sensory recall.”

Bobby has also used his skills to produce bacon and chocolate aromas for a top Thai hotel. Originally, when the hotel wanted the bacon smell to attract guests, they cooked bacon and walked around with a frying pan. The result? Grease everywhere.

That's when he helped create a bacon-scented spray for them. Eau de porc? Cholesterol in a can? No matter how eccentric, the concept worked.

“When we used the spray, it was so easy. This made me more interested in the use of smells when it comes to emotions,” he added.

When Bobby first started Lemongrass House in Bangkok 10 years ago, all the products were based on lemongrass.

“We did everything with lemongrass. We had lemongrass shampoo, massage oil, mosquito spray, lemongrass scent, lemongrass soap, lemongrass candles.

But as soon as the spa industry started to develop, businesses started asking us for more and more products.”

Some of his more exotic creations include body products incorporating Godiva Chocolate, Shea Butter, Dead Sea Mud and even a body wrap using flakes of 24-karat gold.

Bobby's first break came when a UNICEF staffer put in a large order for mosquito repellent sprays for staff at remote outposts on Thailand's borders with Burma, Cambodia and Laos.

Then the Amanpuri asked him to try to make new, different blends so that each hotel could have its own, unique products.

Over the years, the Lemongrass House product line has mushroomed to include more than 150 different kinds of essentials oils and numerous other spa products to meet the needs of many top-notch hotels in the region, including, in Phuket, Katathani, Club Med, Starwood hotels, The Chedi, Trisara and Le Meridien.

Bobby said that in Thailand there are only three companies making high-grade essential oils.

“We're probably the middle one. We also do a lot of retail. Our first big retail break came when Emporium found us, so we now also have a shop on the fifth floor in the Emporium in Bangkok,” he said. “We have differ-

ent outlets in different countries. We sell in Takashimaya, Japan's biggest department store chain.”

Bobby attributes the firm's success to the freshness and handmade quality of its products. They are also reasonably priced, ranging from 80 baht for a 5-milliliter bottle of essential oils to 750 baht for a liter of body cream.

“Many spas in Phuket come to us explaining what they want in their ‘dream product’ and we are able to mix it freely for them,” he explained.

Lemongrass also has spa products for kids, mothers and pregnant women. “We have a whole range of mild products such as kids' shampoo, creams to prevent stretch marks for pregnant women and calming oil to prevent morning sickness.”

The Surin Beach shop was featured in the May 22 issue of *Time* magazine, in a section entitled “Best of Asia”. Bobby explained, “There was an editor of *Time* who was staying at the Amanpuri. She came to my store with her husband and asked me to make a sandalwood soap. I didn't know she was from *Time*.”

“Then, about two months ago, one of our writers was at the Amansara in Cambodia, one of our customers. She loved all the products she used there, so she asked where they came from. It was just coincidence that the two came together. Both the editor and the writer were using my products. So they called me and asked me a lot of questions. We were really surprised, because we never won anything like this before,” he said proudly.

For more information visit Lemongrass House at 106/14 Moo 3 Tambon Chong Talay or Tel: 076-325022 or visit the website: www.lemongrasshouse.com

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By Andy Johnstone

The days when a few rounds of cheese and tomato sandwiches – made with cheap-and-nasty Sunblest bread – a couple of pork pies and lashings of ginger ale would do for any kind of picnic, particularly aboard a boat, are long gone.

That said, one can hardly be expected to rustle up a gourmet buffet while also entertaining guests on the waters around Phuket; that is a task best left to someone else. Besides, on most leisure vessels there's usually not the space to do so.

The answer, of course, is to charter a boat with meals included – or, if one owns a boat, to call in a team of caterers.

Tawan Cruises, the luxury charter company that operates the boats *Chom Tawan* and *Tarn Tawan* out of Boat Lagoon, offers its guests a range of set menus that begin, naturally enough, with breakfast.

Prue Murphy, the General Manager of Tawan Cruises, says, "The most important meal of the day includes freshly-made croissants and pain au chocolat pastries – and often a bottle of Champagne for people celebrating or those who just want to 'push the boat out'."

"The food comes from Siam Deli, which is just outside the Laguna complex. The three basic menus are Thai, Western – with an emphasis on Mediterranean-style dishes – and a mixture of the two," she says. Clients can also put in specific requests.

Some of these requests can be very special. Prue recalls, "One of the last boats I worked on before coming to Phuket three years ago had a very VIP – I can't say who, of course – who did have very specific requests."

"He had developed a taste for white asparagus and we had to have it flown in on an almost daily basis. It wasn't on his menu for breakfast but lunch and dinner every day featured asparagus."

Prue explains that one of the VIP's eccentricities was to apply the Hollandaise sauce to the asparagus with a pastry brush.

"He had to have a new pastry brush each day and we ran out of new brushes on board the boat."

"One bright spark on the crew came up with the idea of



Above, onboard buffet assembled by Watermark.

Right, typically delicious nibbles prepared by Siam Deli for Tawan Cruises.



IT'S SEA FOOD



BMW 7-series owners from Singapore arrive at a deserted beach for a slap-up meal, laid on by Watermark.

giving him small, brand-new paintbrushes, of which we had plenty on board.

"There was a little trepidation as he sat down to the first meal with a paintbrush instead of a pastry brush, but he didn't notice the difference and happily slapped on the sauce," she says, adding that although the VIP had booked the boat for six weeks, he stayed on board for just seven days. "He had paid in advance and didn't ask for a refund. I'm sure it was nothing to do with the brushes..."

The Thai menu as supplied by Siam Deli features a host of favorites, such as chicken satay, *laab gai*, *gaeng kiew waan*, *yam talay* and, of course, *somtam*, as well as fresh fruit and sticky rice with mango for dessert.

The Mediterranean-style menu includes vegetable samosas, bruschetta pomodoro, baguettes with honey-roast ham, chicken wraps, homemade beef-burgers served in fresh-baked rolls, Caesar salads, fresh-baked cookies and brownies.

The mixed menu boasts, among others, steamed white snapper with lemongrass and galangal, stir-fried chicken with cashew nuts, although almost anything can be added to the menus.

"One of the things people adore is when one of our boats

moors at a fishing village and takes on board additional supplies of fresh seafood for a beach barbecue, especially at sunset. It's one of those things you just can't do anywhere else but here."

Watermark Bar & Restaurant at Boat Lagoon also does a nifty range in on-board catering. Indeed, the restaurant's GM, Stuart Bird, says food afloat accounts for 5% to 10% of the company's business.

"It began about four years ago – before Watermark opened – with ad-hoc requests to the Bakery, which I opened first, for food for boat trips."

"At that time it was mostly people who didn't live here year-round who gave us orders. They'd email or call up and say, 'We're coming in from Hong Kong' or wherever 'in a few days' time for a couple of days on the boat; can you put something nice together for us?'"

Now, says Stuart, the clientele has changed in some ways. "We have quite a few MICE [meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions] groups using our services."

In the low season, he says, Watermark caters for 15 to 20 charter groups, of varying sizes, each month. In the high season this rises to around 35 a month.

One example is the privilege

club for Singapore owners of BMW 7-series cars. "Buy a Beemer there," Stuart explains, "and you can have free trips out of Phuket on a luxury Riviera sports boat every three months."

Even the already privileged BMW owners have been eclipsed, reports Stuart.

"An 84-foot boat was chartered for President Vladimir Putin of Russia when he stayed in Phuket in 2003," Stuart recalls.

"We were given around 10 days' notice of the charter, but for security reasons were not told precisely when it would take place."

"In the end, we had about four days to plan and prepare everything. I can't say exactly what was on the menu but President Putin likes his Champagne. I hope that's not a state secret; do they still have *gulgals* there?"

Watermark supplies on-board catering to other premier charter companies including Elite Sail & Dive, and Sail in Asia.

"Our menus are pretty comprehensive. They feature everything from smoked salmon cheesecake with lobster-oil bagel crisps and char-roasted asparagus spears wrapped in Parma ham with lime butter, to oven-dried tomato tart tatin with Asian pesto and grilled king prawns, chilled and served with a red-bell-pepper butter," says Stuart.

"We also have Thai favorites and we can supply 'cook packs' – steaks, king prawns and the like – so that charter operators can pitch up on a deserted beach and fire up the barbecue."

Watermark tends to cater for parties of around 10 to 30 guests – depending, of course, on the size of the vessel – but has catered for as many as 150.

And not a Sunblest loaf in sight.

Tawan Cruises: Tel: 076-239-710, Email: prue@tawancruises.com or visit www.tawancruises.com

Siam Deli: Tel: 076-270-148, Email: siamdeli@yahoo.com

Watermark: Tel: 076-239-730, Email: watermark@ocean-catering.com or visit www.watermarkphuket.com

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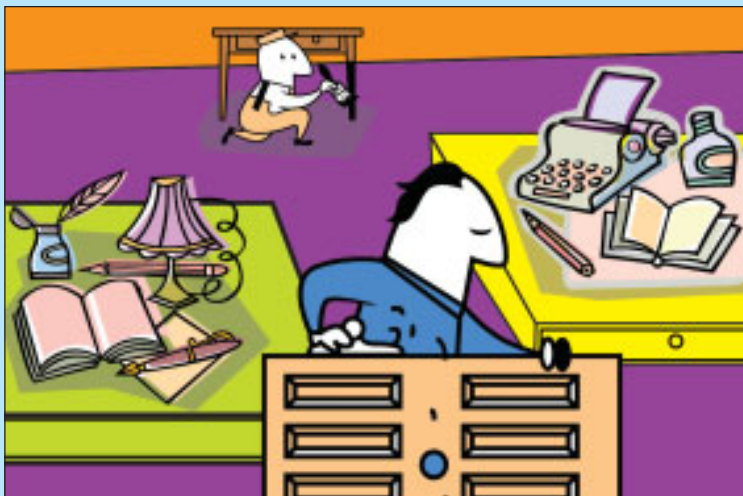
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PUZZLES

Spot the Difference

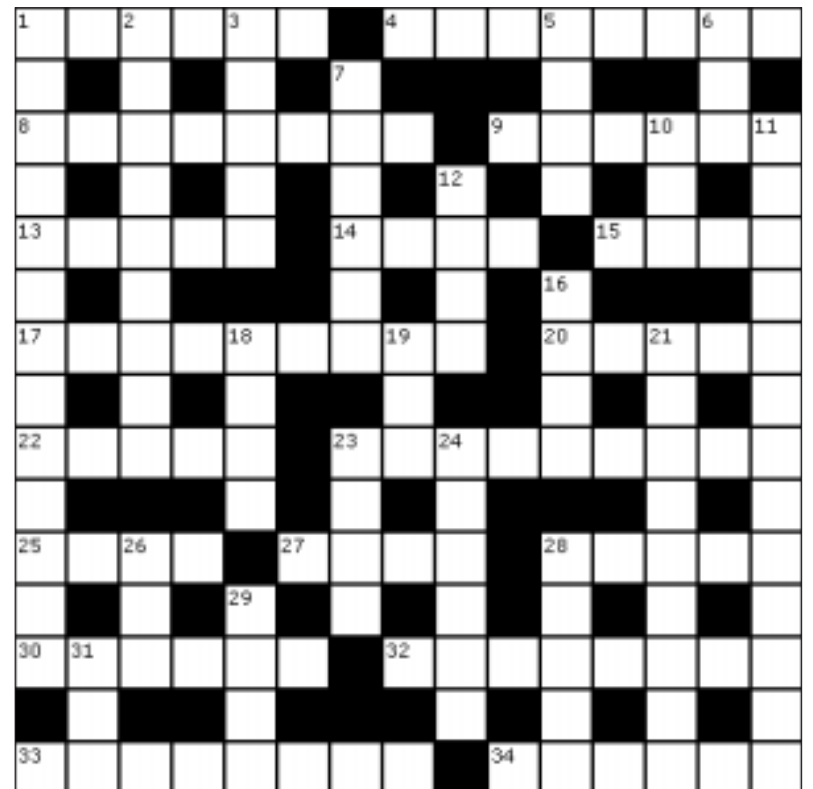


Can you find the seven differences between the two cartoons below? And can you find them faster than the rest of the family?
Solution on next page.



ACROSS

1. Reef material about right for holding horses. (6)
4. Punish for being pure – is in. (8)
8. Beginner takes direction to no fight, we hear. (8)
9. Abduct child, then sleep. (6)
13. 50 songs for hideaways. (5)
14. Times belong to us. (4)
15. Key in “O”? Mistake!
17. Assembly of hereditary units, broadly speaking. (9)
20. Muscles support with a couple of directions. (5)
22. I’ll be heard in the supermarket. (5)
23. Charms WWW back, but also irritates. (9)
25. Part of foot to move slowly. (4)
27. Half a rig. (4)
28. Spice from South America? (5)
30. Relative sound of relief after born. (6)
32. Sell, and French give thanks for feud. (8)
33. Uncivilized couple of music pieces in charge. (8)
34. Almost crash into hospital for foundlings. (6)



Compiled by Tortuus. © 2006

DOWN

1. Against national symbol share? Fire! (13)
2. Turns about East and South. (9)
3. Like, he’s making remains of 1 dn. (5)
5. Part of leg from Great Leader. (4)
6. Where to get massage in Space. (3)
7. Southern fish walk slowly. (6)

10. Initially No and Yes? No! (3)
11. Foretelling of strange octopi. (13)
12. Three pips: try to put note in. (4)
16. Assist a wager. (4)
18. Regretted seeming boorish. (4)
19. Fib about where golf ball is. (3)
21. I teach it’s wrong to have no faith. (9)
23. Gave birth to money, so to speak. (4)
24. Banshee following Marley? (6)
26. Limit headgear. (3)
28. 101 with the German drink. (5)
29. Exist, thanks to trial version. (4)
31. Are back in time. (3)

Scribble Space



su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

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

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

EZ TRIVIA QUIZ

1. Why was Robert Pershing Wadlow famous?
2. “Stratocumulus” is a type of what?
3. Who is the coach of Germany’s 2006 World Cup team?
4. What is the diameter of a standard compact disc?
5. What is the common name for Panthera leo?
6. How many bones does the typical adult human have?
7. What is the date of the 2006 World Cup final?
8. In what geological era do we live?
9. In a military sense, what does SAM stand for?
10. Piglet, Tigger and Eeyore are friends of which fictional bear?

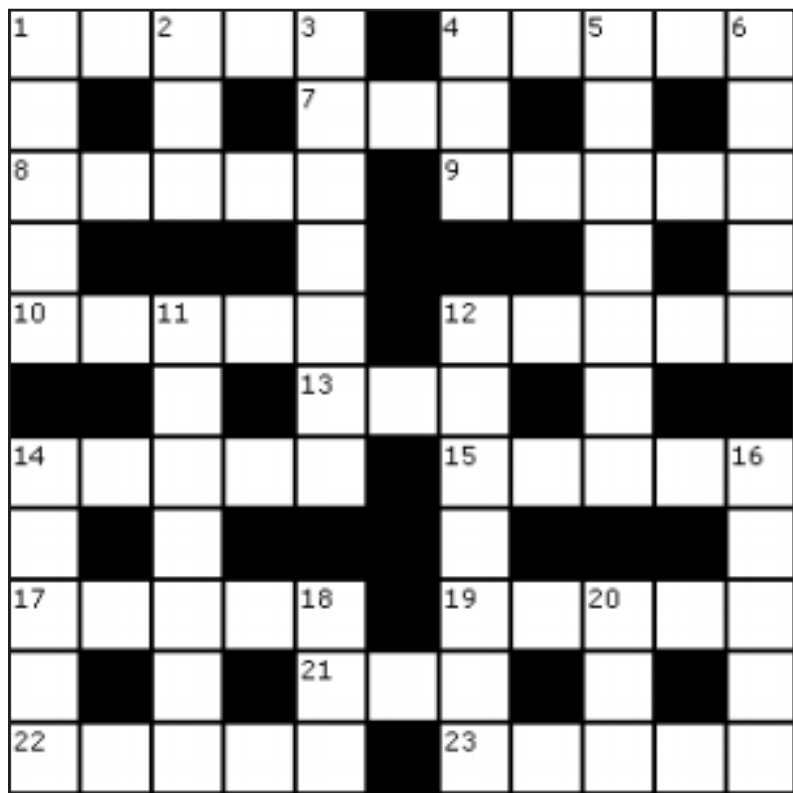
Answers on next page

Brain Buster!

Some kids are playing hide and seek in a park where there are seven trees. One of the kids is “It”, and the others are all hiding behind trees. Of course, you can’t see them, because they’re hiding. See if you can figure out the fewest possible kids hiding, using the following information:

- A girl is hiding to the left of a boy.
- A boy is hiding to the left of a boy.
- Two boys are hiding to the right of a girl.

Answer on next page



Quick Crossword

ACROSS

1. French capital
4. One of the poles.
7. Young lion or bear.
8. Every politician wants it.
9. Metal clothing.
10. Machine that works by itself.
12. Huckleberry Finn author.
13. Pigeon call.
14. Garbage.
15. Helicopter part
17. Wanderer.
19. Arm joint.
21. Conclude.

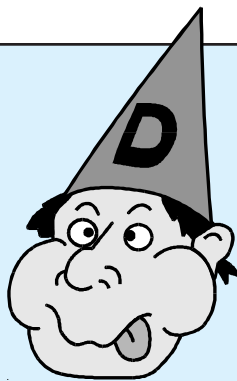
22. Muscle-bone connector.
23. Strangely.

DOWN

1. Book material.
2. Uncooked.
3. What to do with an itch.
4. Basketball organization.
5. Left-over.
6. Water bird.
11. Longtail operator.
12. Underwater weapon.
14. Fork prongs.
16. Boisterous.
18. Morning dampness.
20. Flower-to-be.

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. Who discovered the Crab Nebula, and in which year?
2. What is the diameter of the Crab Nebula and how fast is it expanding?
3. Who will be the 61st President of the United Nations General Assembly when it opens on September 12?
4. Victor Eremite, Johannes ed Mentionable and Judge William were pseudonyms used by which philosopher and theologian?
5. Who designed the Analytical Engine?
6. Who created the programs for it?
7. *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum* are novels by which philosopher and semiotician?
8. What is semiotics?
9. *Wild Strawberries*, *The Seventh Seal* and *The Virgin Spring* are films by which director?
10. In Greek mythology, Mnemosyne was the mother of which group of nine goddesses?
11. Billie Joe Armstrong, Tre Cool and Mike Dirnt form which band?
12. Larry, Curly and Moe formed which comedy troupe?
13. Artist Ivo Lill works mostly in which medium?
14. *Seswaai* is a dish peculiar to which African nation?
15. What, in Quecha, does *Tahuantinsuyu* mean?
16. Which actor plays Superman in *Superman Returns*?
17. Who wrote – in *Human, All Too Human* – “We count the courtesies shown to us by unpopular people as offenses.”
18. *What's Opera, Doc?*, “starring” Bugs Bunny, was a nine-minute parody of which composer's works?
19. Name the character who explodes from overeating in *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*.
20. Which country celebrates June 24 as Battle of Carabobo Day?

Answers below, left

Puzzle Solutions

Brain Buster Solution

The fewest kids hiding is 3. A girl is on the left; to her right is a boy; to his right is another boy.

Solution to this week's Cartoon Puzzle



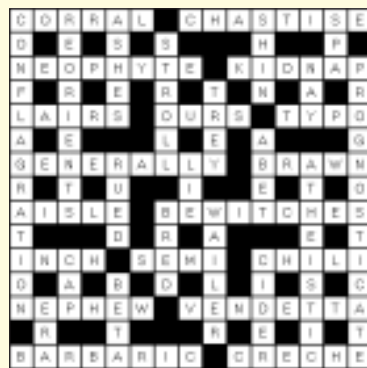
Monster Quiz Answers

1. John Bevis in 1731; 2. Six light years; 1,500 kilometers per second; 3. Sheikhha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain; 4. Søren Kierkegaard; 5. Charles Babbage; 6. Ada Lovelace; 7. Umberto Eco; 8. The analysis of the nature and relationships of signs in language; 9. Ingmar Bergman; 10. The Muses; 11. Green Day; 12. The Three Stooges; 13. Glass; 14. Botswana; 15. The Land of Four Regions; 16. Brandon Routh; 17. Friedrich Nietzsche; 18. Richard Wagner; 19. Mr Creosote; 20. Venezuela.

EZ Trivia Answers

1. At 2.72 meters in height, he was the tallest human on record; 2. Cloud; 3. Jürgen Klinsmann; 4. 120 mm; 5. Lion; 6. 206; 7. July 9; 8. Cenozoic; 9. Surface-to-air missile; 10. Winnie the Pooh.

Cryptic Crossword



Quick Crossword



Sudoku



Cobbling together a conspiracy: "I may be placing my life in danger with this shocking expose, but the truth must come out. Thai pimps obviously control the shoe industry here. By preventing comfortable footwear from being sold in this country, they ensure constant demand for foot massages. These masseuses require countless legitimate (traditional) massage parlours which help conceal the brothels." (1)

More massage mischief: "I couldn't really understand which position she wanted me to assume, and she let out a condescending snigger each time I did it completely wrong."

"As it proceeded, I kept visualising her crushing rocks with her bare hands, so it was only a natural reaction that my body kept on rigidly coiling back into the fetal position."

"When she was finally able to pry me apart, there was more crackling in that last fifteen minutes than on fireworks night. The only consolation was that I found some innocent pleasure in my hands and feet routinely brushing against the masseur's breasts and arse."

"However, my gf who received a massage at the same time sensed the eroticism of the whole shindig, and promptly forbade me from having another Thai massage ever again. Maybe I'd enjoy it more if I went back without her..." (2)

Cunning linguist: "Another interesting

Booting the pimps

thing about walking through the markets is meeting Chaz. Chaz is a generic name I have given to the local guys who try to guess where you are from and then speak to you in the appropriate accent.

"It is the strangest thing to have this guy shout, in a stong cockney accent, 'All right mate?', then seconds later switch to Aussie (by far the most common) and then just as easily to German and Italian..."

"Trouble is, if you stop and talk to Chaz there is a good chance you will buy something of questionable quality that you did not even want." (3)

Postcard from hell: "Hello everyone and welcome from Phuket, possibly the worst place on this planet, other than any war torn region of course! This place is the minghole of Thailand, a paradise for drunken Europeans who like a sea-side resort to get pissed in, with a Thai girl on their arm and a bottle of Singha in the other. So I won't elaborate other than to say we won't be staying in this dunt much longer (we only got here 2 hours ago!!)." (4)

Stoating around Bangoko: "Wasn't the most comfortabel of nights but leats we

OUTSIDE IN

By Lis Kinswoman

Unfortunately, because of the bug that is doing the rounds in Phuket, Lis has spent a large part of the week getting better acquainted with her toilet. But nevertheless, she's managed to source these skewed snippets of island life – in all their unedited glory – for your enjoyment, or to wipe your backside with should you be so unfortunate as to catch the same bug.

had a roof over our heads! Pretty impressed with Bangoko Airlines, lots of free juice and cakes in the departure lounge. Flight to Phuket only 80mins, like flying down to London. Phuket airport is 50mins from the town, got the bus there. Stoated around the town in the boiling heat. Was absolutely

drenched by the time we found a guest house." (5)

Sex and drugs and Hagan-Dazs: "They had really good food and good company, so cool. Then he took us to a restaurant and we had good ice cream. It was so cute all the different ice cream things they had, like an ice cream club sandwich with 'fries'. Then he took us to see all the drugs and whores we'd talked so much about. Very interesting to watch. All in all a really fun night out with our new friend. Went and packed up, tomorrow we move on." (6)

1. <http://realtravel.com/phuket-journals-j1331245.html>
2. http://journals.worldnomads.com/meoga_and_space_cat/post/869.aspx
3. <http://www.travelblog.org/Asia/Thailand/Phuket/Patong-Beach/blog-63575.html>
4. <http://www.travelblog.org/Asia/Thailand/Phuket/Patong-Beach/blog-47930.html>
5. <http://realtravel.com/phuket-journals-j1083332.html>
6. <http://realtravel.com/phuket-journals-j701092.html>

Alexander Maitland has written the definitive biography of one of the great travel writers of the 20th century: *Wilfred Thesiger: The Life of the Great Explorer* (HarperCollins, London, 2006, 528pp).

Wilfred Thesiger was an odd duck, but a great one. He was capable of enormous feats of endurance. Deprived of food, water and sleep, he traversed huge unexplored expanses of the Sahara and Arabian deserts upon camels with just a few young Arab companions.

In a life spent with devout Muslims, he had no belief in God. He didn't smoke. He didn't drink, except for the odd sweet liqueur. He had a platonic devotion to the teenage servants he adopted, but no interest in women.

He was six-foot-two, immensely strong, a natural leader of men, an avid boxer, tireless big game hunter and ruthless killer of Italians and Germans in Africa during World War II.

He traveled everywhere, all over Europe and the Middle East, trekked over the Hindu Kush mountains of Pakistan and sailed around the islands of Indonesia. He died at the age of 93, author of 11 books. His hero was Lawrence of Arabia.

His childhood was idyllic, spent on horseback and hunting



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

safaris. His father was the British Consul in Addis Ababa and a great friend of Ras Tafari, the future emperor.

Thesiger was six when he witnessed Ras Tafari's victory parade after the battle of Sagale in 1916.

Seventy years later, he would write: "I believe that day implanted in me a lifelong craving for barbaric splendour, for savagery and colour and the throb of drums, and it gave me a lasting veneration for long-established custom and ritual, from which would derive later a deep-seated resentment of Western innovations in other lands, and a distaste for the drab uniformity of the modern world."

Aged nine, he was thrust into the very epicenter of drab uniformity: an English preparatory school. Eton was better, and then Oxford, where he excelled at boxing. Right after graduation,

Thesiger of Arabia

he took off to an unexplored pocket of Ethiopia to trace the source of the Awash River.

Posted next as a district officer in the Darfur region of Sudan, he dressed as a Bedouin and would ride 10-13 hours a day through godforsaken hinterlands up into the Libyan desert with just a couple of Arab and guides.

Next he served in the Nubian, south of Sudan, indulging himself in an orgy of lion hunting. Then he was off hunting men in World War II.

After re-conquering his beloved Ethiopia for Haile Selassie, he turned Desert Rat in Libya, riding a machine-gun mounted jeep behind enemy lines to ambush the retreating Germans.

After the war, he took off

on his greatest adventure, making two crossings of the Empty Quarter of southern Arabia, a furnace where sand dunes tower 700 meters. In the first crossing, he and his four companions lived on just two pints of water a day.

The Empty Quarter was the subject of his first book, *Arabian Sands*, published in 1959 when Thesiger was 49 years old.

"A cloud gathers, the rain falls, men live; the cloud disperses without rain, and men and animals die," he wrote.

"In the deserts of Arabia, there is no rhythm to the seasons... Men live there because it is the world into which they were born; the life they live is the life their forefathers led before them; they accept hardships and

privations; they know no other way."

His next book, *The Marsh Arabs*, was about his seven-year sojourn with the isolated swamp-land tribes of southern Iraq. His last years were spent with youthful Samburu and Turkana tribal companions in a remote area of northern Kenya.

On one of his visits back to London, an elderly dowager at a cocktail party remarked to him, "What fun you must be having! I don't expect you go to many parties in the back of the beyond where you live?"

"In fact, it's just the opposite," Thesiger replied. "We had a marvellous party last month. All the guests arrived naked, and we ate one of them afterwards."

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Salt in the wounds

Movie crews are good business for Phuket and the surrounding provinces. A movie production can bring in dozens of people, who stay for weeks on end filling hotel rooms, spending lots of money on expense accounts and employing hundreds of local people.

The movies they produce can also give tourism a boost. A good example was *The Beach*, with a cast headed by Leonardo Di Caprio. That movie – despite a plot stereotyping Thais as shifty taxi drivers and gangsters – projected an image of Thailand that attracted thousands of tourists.

But *Aftermath*, the TV mini-series currently being filmed by Britain's Kudos for airing on the BBC and HBO, is a different matter. There are two major points of concern.

The first is the insensitivity of the movie crew. Along the main road in Khao Lak, they recreated scenes from immediately after the tsunami, with "corpses" lying everywhere; they even had them hanging from power poles. All very realistic, and nowhere was there a sign telling people passing through that this was a movie set and not some unreported disaster.

Even had there been signs, the scene was so disturbing – and so public – that hotels reported staff were scared by the realism of the set and reluctant to go home along the road because of the horrible memories it evoked. The psychiatric center reported a rise in the number of people seeking help.

There is also a form of patronization bordering on racism in the way that Western extras have been paid far more than their Thai counterparts.

In Britain, the production has come under heavy fire from the media, causing the BBC to rush into damage-control mode, uttering platitudes such as, "We are fully conscious of the sensitivities of survivors and the imperative to handle the issue with compassion and insight." That full consciousness appears not to be shared by Kudos.

The second point of concern is that *Aftermath* covers only the tsunami and a few days after. When it is aired later this year, it will do nothing to counter the images of "Thailand smashed" that followed the disaster and which were resurrected on the first anniversary. It will only reinforce them.

The mini-series has the backing of Thai officialdom, though one wonders just how well officials were briefed or how hard they tried to see beyond the immediate benefits.

Officially sanctioned it is, however, so it's unlikely to go away. But that does not mean that individuals and local businesses are obliged to offer any help whatsoever to the film crew.

– The Editor

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Letters

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

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

A little alarm is no bad thing

I am rarely compelled to write in comment of the usual whingeing *farang* goms [grumpy old men] that have nothing better to do than complain about five baht *songthaew* extortions, but who naturally and quite happily hand over a thousand or two in bar fines.

Why complain about blaring lights and cacophony of ambulance sirens on Thepkasattri Rd and not the blaring lights and cacophony all over Patong – and wherever else whingeing goms meet to annoy and depress?

Having survived a number of emergencies requiring SOS care over the years, I am always grateful for the unstinting and often thankless task that paramedics and fire officers provide to casualty cases.

When you witness the inherent politeness and patience that Thai police, lowly-paid waitresses and many other employees employ when putting up with drunken farangs, one wonders who has got more right to complain.

To the W Browns (Letters, Gazette issue of June 10) of this world, I would say simply: shut up or ship out!

Despite the selfishness of Thai drivers who hog middle lanes, at least in Phuket they do respect the urgency of ambulances and give way.

Those that know what a difference a few minutes can make when it comes down to living or dying are more than happy to endure a few loud claxons now and again.

Try living in Bangkok, where expats who get struck by hit-and-

runs are better advised to use the services of a taxi whose driver knows the "green route" back streets than to rely on an ambulance getting through!

You may care to ponder this should you be unfortunate enough to require 999 treatment, only to find that your route to life is blocked by selfish drivers who won't give way.

Eddie Scissorhands
Koh Kaew

Starr letter writer

I'm always looking for a good laugh and your "Letters" column rarely lets me down.

Call me silly, but I always get a kick out of people who move into a new environment or country and immediately begin to lobby to have changes implemented to suit their own narrow purposes, or gripe about the fact that things are not necessarily done the same way as at home.

One week I get to read someone's gripe about construction noise, the next week someone's whines about potholes.

The best recently was the person who wrote to complain about the lack of tap water at her house and having to buy dirty water from local vendors.

Why buy dirty water when there's clean water all over the island? Well, if she is willing to pay for dirty water, I'd sell it to her too. In fact, I've got bucketloads for sale. I'll even deliver!

Years ago in my home town, a new development was built on the approach to the only airport in the region.

The houses sold quickly enough, but soon the papers were full of gripes from the buyers about excessive noise. That's right, 100 families bought prop-

erty next to an airport and then began complaining about air traffic.

I'm relieved that this mentality apparently has no borders. Free entertainment is always welcome in my home.

Please keep up the good work.

Dave Starr
Phuket

Easily digestible reviews help business

I just felt that I had to send you a message to let you know how much I appreciate the Dining Out columns by Andy Johnstone.

I am a travel consultant in South Africa and we send dozens of South Africans to Phuket every year.

Many of the establishments featured in the column have appeared in our itineraries as suggested venues for lunch and dinner for our clients and I must say, you have been spot on with your recommendations.

Thank you for your report on Anna's (Dining Out, Gazette issue of June 10); we have had several requests for suggestions where a good family meal can be had in Phuket City.

Unbeknown to many of these establishments, your recommendations have gone via me to dozens of other agents and tour operators. The restaurateurs should get together and give me and Mr Johnstone a really slap-up gourmet tour when I am next in Phuket!

Thank you very much for your contribution to some wonderful holidays being had by my clients in Phuket.

Yvonne Horak
South Africa

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

Crackdown or breakdown over company nominees?

FIRST PERSON

Laws putting ceilings on foreign shareholdings in companies engaging in certain activities are part and parcel of the modern Thai Legal system. The Land Code of 1954 is one of those laws.

It is human nature to try to bypass restrictions or prohibitions, especially when there is money at stake. Employing Thai nominees has been a popular way of doing this in Thailand.

The use of nominees has been the subject of widely publicized press reports, most notably in the recent Temasek-Shin Corp takeover.

So, you may ask, what actually is a "nominee"? *Barron's Dictionary of Legal Terms* defines a nominee as "...one who has been asked to act for another in a particular context, such as a trustee or an agent."

In other words, somebody doing something for somebody else without having a direct economic or other beneficial interest in the subject, except maybe for receiving a fee or other gratuity as payment for the services rendered.

Nominees tend to come from a group of people who resemble the characters of a Shakespearean drama: gardeners, servants, guards, bar maidens, drivers and, lo and behold, lawyers and accountants.

The practice of using nominees has once again arrived on the public stage with the May 15 issue of a circular sent by Ministry of the Interior to all provincial governors and land departments. It created quite a stir in the business community, especially among foreign and Thai developers targeting foreign customers with freehold housing projects.

Needless to say, foreign buyers contemplating buying property in Thailand also became quite concerned, especially after a sensational news report in which a naturalized, Bangkok-based, legal consultant claimed that May 25, the effective date of the circular, signaled the end of the property boom.

As far as I am concerned, other than it being my birthday, nothing exciting happened on May 25.

However, it would be foolish to assume that nothing has changed and that it is business as usual. This circular has definitely had an impact and may have

The recent edict from the Ministry of the Interior instructing land officials to put property companies with foreign shareholders "under the microscope" sent shivers of horror through the property industry and through the ranks of foreign homeowners.

In Phuket, the Provincial Land Office has rushed to assure the property industry that there is really no cause for concern.

But **Marcus Collins**, Senior Partner in the law firm McEvily & Collins, believes this is not quite true. Here he explains why.



some painful, long-lasting effects on foreign developers and the ability of foreign buyers to acquire freehold property in Thailand.

The Land Code clearly states that a Thai company may not acquire land if foreigners hold more than 49% of the issued share capital, or if foreign shareholders outnumber Thai shareholders.

If it is found that a Thai company violates these provisions the Director-General of the Land Department is authorized to order the company dispose of its land. This must be done within a period ranging between 180 days and one year.

The Land Code does not provide that the shareholding and shareholder ratios are calculated by taking into account both the direct and indirect shareholdings by foreigners and Thai companies in which foreigners hold shares, or the voting rights attached to shares.

The Land Code also does not concern itself with voting rights or the nationality of the directors of these companies. This is clearly confirmed by another circular which preceded the May 15 circular and was issued by the Director-General of the Land Department to all provincial governors on April 26.

It was an instruction to the heads of all Land Departments to check the shareholders' lists of all companies that are registered land owners and have foreign shareholders and/or directors.

The checks are to be carried out every year in June by

checking the records of the Land Department office against those of the Company Registrar.

The April 26 Circular contains a large number of specific examples which show that a company which maintains the 49:51 share ratio and has more Thai than foreign shareholders is in compliance with the Land Code even if the Thai shareholders in such a company include Thai companies – as long as these Thai companies, in turn, comply with the above requirements. In other words, the April 26 circular caused little concern because cases where these ratios are changed after the registration of the land are few and far between.

The May 15 circular goes a lot further, however. It specifically targets foreigners who use Thai nominees when registering a company with the aim of buying and selling immovable property as a business venture.

Good news, you might think, because it appears that individual foreign buyers are off the hook.

Regrettably, the net effect of this circular is that all companies with foreign shareholders and/or directors, no matter how many, are being put under the microscope.

The May 15 circular gives Land Department officers wide discretionary powers to investigate these companies if it is reasonable to believe that Thais act as nominees.

Land offices throughout the country therefore use approaches that vary considerably and, sadly, because of the discretionary power given to them, some less scrupulous officers appear to be benefiting somewhat from the confusion.

I can only speculate what has prompted the Ministry of Interior to take action at this time. The practice of using nominee shareholders is nothing new and

has been going on for as long as the Land Code has been in force.

Admittedly, in many cases this has been done rather blatantly and many members of our profession should accept blame for not advising clients properly.

On the other hand, the government cannot claim innocence either, because it has been obvious for a long time what has been happening.

Is it indeed a case of "too much and too obvious" that has prompted the government to fire this warning shot? Conspiracy theoreticians may lead us to believe that the "third hand" of powerful Thai investors who are known to be buying property in Phuket and elsewhere in the south are behind this circular.

A smart move, if true, because it would deal quite effectively with competition from wealthy foreign buyers.

Others have suggested that this measure is aimed at combating money laundering. I frankly do not see how this would work; it is the Thai nominees and not the foreign investors whose financial backgrounds are to be investigated.

In any case, the Bank of Thailand and the Ministry of Finance are in a much better position to deal with money laundering as they have the ability to question the source of money brought into Thailand by foreign investors.

In Phuket, the May 15 circular has effectively put a brake on transactions involving companies with foreign shareholders or directors and may actually cause foreign investors to go "underground" by temporarily creating companies with no foreign participation whatsoever.

The Phuket Provincial Land Office benefits from an active property market.

Recently-published figures

show that revenues generated from transfer and other fees are very substantial and have increased every year for the past five years.

Land officers would probably rather maintain business as usual but must find a way to justify allowing a company to register land. Having only Thai shareholders and directors is a painless solution, but obviously this would constitute an even more serious violation of the law.

In Samui the approach has been a bit more pragmatic. There, officers require affidavits from Thai shareholders showing their income and a declaration that the company is intended only to be used to buy land for private use.

Many practitioners believe that as long as the Thai shareholders truly invest in the shares and have an economic justification for doing so, these shareholders should not be viewed as nominees. This, however, has never been confirmed by the Ministry of the Interior.

Phuket, Samui, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin and Pattaya have benefited enormously from foreign investment in property during the past five years or so.

Although I would not go as far as to suggest that the Thai government do away with the Land Code restrictions altogether, recent events have shown that it is high time to take a closer look at the entire body of laws and regulations dealing with land and house transactions, including tax laws.

The nominee issue is not the only issue we have to deal with. The length and extension of leases, the ability of foreigners to apply for building permits, and various tax laws affecting property transactions also need looking at.

It is probably too much to ask for the current government to take action. They have more pressing matters to deal with.

However, for the sake of the continuing economic success of Phuket and other similar destinations and also to promote Thailand as a place to retire or have a second home, it will be necessary for laws and regulations to be clear and unambiguous and leave as little room as possible for interpretation. Nobody likes uncertainty.

Marcus Collins holds master's degrees in law from both Erasmus University in the Netherlands and Cornell University's Law School in the US, and is a member of the bar in both the Netherlands and New York. He has worked in Thailand for 16 years.

In The Stars

by Isla Star

CANCER (June 22-July 23): If you are celebrating a birthday during the coming few days, you will experience a year very unlike the one just passed. Finally, you will have the power to negotiate better deals and put personal relationships on a more even keel. A mysterious stranger is about to make their presence felt; if this relates to romance, a blend of cultures can lead to true happiness. The number 4 can bring luck on Thursday.

LEO (July 24-August 22): You will be counting your blessings this weekend. A less fortunate friend asks for your help and, if your heart's in the right place, you won't think twice about lending a hand. Career matters appear to have reached a stalemate, but there's something to be said for simply coasting along at an even speed. Progress will be made more easily next month. The color mint green helps you to feel cool as a cucumber.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Your earthy nature will allow you to focus on the practical side of maintaining a relationship that appears to be rather complicated. If this is a connection that you value, then true love will find a way. This is not the right time to listen to friends who are probably jealous of your good fortune. Where money is concerned, Sagittarius shouldn't be trusted with too much responsibility. Libra is more reliable.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Examine the facts of a current dilemma before reacting. You are certain to unearth new evidence that will lead to a painless solution. Aquarians would like to complicate the matter to suit their personal agenda, but you should be able to prevent this happening. Business will be subject to adverse astral influences until the middle of next month. Luckily, romance should more than compensate for these temporary troubles.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): This weekend, you must guard against getting involved in a tempest in a teacup. Someone's tendency to overdramatize events could easily rub off on you. Listen to the soothing advice offered by Taurus. Business meetings are best scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, when the stars will support your efforts to expand. The color peach can heighten your appeal if looking for love.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): If you've seriously invested a lot of effort into trying to convince others that your scheme is rock solid but they're still treading water, it's high time to seek different potential investors. If you aren't afraid of biting the bullet, you will have no trouble doing so. Your confidence is set to peak from now until the end of next month, so make the most of this. A dream you have midweek can provide enlightenment.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): You will be inclined to ignore the obvious this week, even when cold, hard facts are staring you in the face. If you don't allow false pride to get in the way, a time of exciting new beginnings is about to start. Leo provides lighthearted, amusing company just when you need it most this Sunday. However, this relationship should definitely remain platonic. Avoid dealing with bureaucracy on Tuesday.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Unnecessary worry is your only enemy during the final days of June. If you can begin next month with a clean slate and a positive attitude, then you will have excellent chances of success. If romance appears to be getting over-complicated, simply take a break for a couple of days. By doing so, you will give the person concerned important food for thought. The number 3 looks lucky on Wednesday.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Your creativity level is running high during the last week of June. If you can't find a suitable outlet for all this energy, you should search further afield, perhaps by taking a short trip away. Money matters are well-starred for now, so you can spoil yourself without suffering any pangs of guilt. A decision regarding family affairs must be reached by next Friday. Wear the color silver to help the right words to flow.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): No matter how disappointed you may feel by another's unacceptable behavior, there's every reason to give them a chance to explain. You will be taken aback by what you hear. Business opportunities are thin on the ground at the moment, but next month will bring concrete proof that your instincts are correct. Libra would like to get to know you more intimately, but is waiting for an encouraging sign.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Catching up with work is high on the agenda for you this week. Be selective when accepting social invitations to avoid getting involved in a situation that will only waste your precious time. Next week, expect to walk a nerve-racking tightrope concerning an ongoing bureaucratic issue; the outcome will be in your favor. Scorpio passes on the good news you've been waiting to hear midweek. Wear emerald green to open your mind to new possibilities.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): An ongoing debate occupies much of your energy this week. You are advised not to be in too much of a rush to settle this matter. Playing the waiting game will bring the results you desire, no matter how frustrating life is in the meantime. Your partner shows their appreciation of your understanding this weekend. If you are involved in a new relationship, you will think of a unique way to show the depth of your interest.

FEVER

Friday June 9 marked a very special occasion in Thailand – the 60th anniversary of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej's accession to the throne, a monumental occasion in Thai history.

HM The King is without a doubt one of the world's most beloved monarchs. He is also the longest serving, so for the Thai people celebrating his anniversary was reason enough to call Friday June 9 a very special day indeed.

But Friday was a special day for another reason too...

It was also the day that football fans all over the world have been waiting for with bated breath for the past four years. Yes, Friday, as well as being a day of royal celebration in Thailand, was also the day that the FIFA World Cup 2006 began.

Woohoo! I could almost hear all you soccer-loving fanatics out there yelling as you leapt in the air and clapped each other on the backs.

"So what?" moan that small, sorry percentage of people – myself included – that really couldn't care less. We simply do not understand your love of the "beautiful game" and have yet to discover how a simple black-and-white ball and a gaudy jersey could possibly inspire so much joy and passion and excitement in a human heart.

Yes, you may not believe this, but there are still some isolated pockets of humanity who do not know what the offside rule is, nor do we know why penalties are given, nor do we understand what on earth is the difference between a red and a yellow card besides, obviously, the color.

But we are a very, very, very small percentage of the world's population. Most of you out there are football fans to varying degrees. There are the mildly titillated, who enjoy watching the odd match now and then. There is also the eager and enthusiastic set, who play as often as they can and watch as many matches as possible in between the slog of daily routine and work and taking care of children et cetera, et cetera.

Then, of course, there are the other 75% of you, the group I like to call the "worryingly obsessive", who form their own little leagues and play on-line football games and know who scored what goal in what match in what cup on some obscure day in 1963.



Youth 'n ASIA

By Amy
Van de Castele

You – you might be pleased to hear – form at least half, if not three quarters, of the world's population.

In fact, football is such a huge phenomenon that it perhaps makes my own ignorance of it a little shameful, though I will never admit that to anyone. It has been called "the only global game" and can be found practically everywhere in the world, on every little island, in every stretch of desert, in every city slum or quiet, neatly-manicured suburban garden.

In some sweltering patch of dusty Africa right at this moment, you can bet there is a motley collection of young boys in frayed clothes and with rough-soled, bare feet kicking around an old, equally frayed and roughened ball. On a beautiful tropical island somewhere in the Caribbean, I am positive there are some tall bronzed youths practicing their dribbling. On a muddy gray pitch on the outskirts of London you are sure to see at least ten red-faced Cockney-accented young men clapping each other on the back as one of them scores a header right over the goalkeeper's futilely waving hands.

Yes, football – and this event in particular – is so important globally that some countries, such as Togo and the island of Trinidad, have declared the day their national team qualified as a public holiday.

The people of countries such as Ghana, Spain and Angola consider it a matter of national duty to support their team by watching the matches religiously, no matter what time of day or night, and decking out the streets of

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PITCH

their villages, towns and cities in the colors of their team.

Televisions have been set up in strategic places in offices the world over so people can watch from the comfort of their desks and screens have been rigged up in public places so that people who do not have televisions at home can gather together to watch the matches and cheer on their country's team.

The matches of the World Cup are significant events and each is guaranteed to have at least several million, if not a billion, people watching at any one time.

During the month-long tournament, television screens the world over will become the focal points of many houses, offices, bars or restaurants, drawing people together in groups of laughing, chattering, roaring friends.

It is a proven fact that football fosters a sense of community, of patriotism, of overall togetherness. It can also bring together even the bitterest enemies as they unite in the name of a common cause – to support their country as it goes head-to-head with the best teams the world has to offer. The final match of this year's World Cup is expected to attract at least three and a half billion viewers.

So where does that leave that pathetic minority I have mentioned – the ten or twelve lost and

lonely people in this football-crazed world who simply cannot comprehend this intoxicating fever gripping the planet?

Personally, I shall be getting in a lot more schoolwork and reading these next few days as my father obsessively guards the television remote control and shoots threatening glances at me every time I so much as mention my favorite episode of *Will & Grace* that just so happens to intrude on the closing minutes of the match.

I shall also be sitting back with a smug smile on my face in lessons as I watch my bleary-eyed, footie-loving male teachers do their very best to pretend they have not been up until 4 am screaming at the screen for David Beckham to, well, "bend it like Beckham".

You never know though, you might just catch me, in a single moment of blinding weakness, being sucked in by the brightly colored shirts and the – yes I have to admit – sometimes irresistible sight of a certain handsome young Portuguese player whose name, I believe, is Ronaldo.

I am a teenage girl, after all, and I know for a fact that out there in this football-obsessed world there are many other girls my age drooling over their television screens for exactly the same reason! Are you with me, ladies?

On a beautiful tropical island somewhere in the Caribbean, I am positive there are some tall bronzed youths practicing their dribbling.

The lie of the land

For bought land with funds she received from her foreign husband. She then attempted to transfer the land to her mother as a gift.

She went to transfer the land at the Land Department and gave a false statement that she was single. Therefore she cannot now prove that the money used for buying the land, which was bought during the marriage with the alien, was her *sin suan tua* (personal funds she had before marriage).

In this case, the Land Department decided that, in accordance with Section 1474 of the Civil and Commercial Code that the land was *sin somros* (mutual assets during marriage); the land is considered to be co-owned by the foreign spouse. Therefore, the foreigner acquired the land in violation of Section 86 of the Land Code and has committed an offense according to Section 111 of the Land Code.

K. Gor committed offenses under both the Land Act and the Penal Code. According to Sec-

tion 96 of the Land Code, she possesses the land in place of the alien and has thus committed an offense against Section 113.

She has also violated sections 137 and 267 of the Penal Code by giving a false statement to an official.

As a result, the land has to be disposed of within an amount of time fixed by the Director-General of the Land Department following section 94 and 96 of the Land Code and legal proceedings are to be taken against K. Gor and her husband for the offenses mentioned above.

In the case of a co-habiting couple the land should always be registered as the personal property of the Thai national. For married couples, the land should be registered as *sin suan tua* of the Thai national. Lying is simply asking for trouble.

**LAYING
DOWN
THE LAW**
With Friedrich
'Sam' Fauma

Goal? Duh! Ask the video referee

One of the great mysteries of sport is that "the beautiful game" – as the exponents of the round-ball code of football call it – is so far behind in using technology to ensure that the right decisions are made.

It's beyond me why everybody still argues about whether the referee made the right decision in allowing a goal, or not, as the case may be, when a simple call for a video replay viewed by a "video referee" could put the answer beyond doubt.

I have not heard one logical argument against the inevitable institution of this sensible method of solving disputes that otherwise can go on for years.

One argument against this voiced the other night during a certain Australasian encounter in the current World Cup was that it would slow the game down.

On the contrary, it would do exactly the opposite and stop all the squabbling with the referee.

The main point is that the use of technology would only come in to play when a goal had been scored or was thought to have been scored, or when play had been halted for a foul.

This is the same technology that stewards at the horse races use when two horses pass the post so close together that the naked eye cannot decide who is the winner.

The most conservative of sports, the honorable game of cricket, was the first to introduce this in international matches – in the form of the "third umpire", an off-field umpire who makes the final decision, having viewed a replay, in questions referred to him by the two on-field umpires – as a means to decide whether or not a batsman was run out or not.

LARGER THAN LIFE

By Graham Doven

I understand that when I use this example there will be a large number of foreigners who haven't the faintest idea what I'm talking about, especially the ones that have a "World Series" sporting event that is held only in their country.

The video referee has been extremely successful in the game of rugby, but is used only when the ref on the field is unable to determine whether or not a try has been scored.

For those foreigners referred to before, a try is the equivalent of a "touchdown". The difference is that in rugby the ball does have to be touched down, not simply carried aloft as the player crosses the line.

The different camera angles recorded allow the officials to see the try from several different points of view, thereby ensuring the scorer and his team get a fair decision.

Not only that, both the spectators at the ground watching the large screens and the viewers at home thoroughly enjoy watching the different replays. The referee is able to award points with the agreement of the supporters of both teams.

This would create the same result in football, or soccer as it is called in some countries. It

would also allow an attacking player to continue on and put the ball in the net if he and the supporters believe that the assistant referee (linesman) has wrongly stuck up his flag for an offside.

Unless it is clear to everyone that the attacking player is offside by a long way, then the game will continue, the defenders will still have to defend and the attacker can go on and attempt to score.

If he does, the referee calls for the video referee to make the decision based on what he sees on the replay. This normally takes just seconds, but creates another level of excitement.

The scene where the assistant referee raises his flag and the attacker carries on would greatly increase the excitement. The main point is that it can only be used in the event of a goal having been scored where there is reasonable doubt as to its validity.

You cannot start using it for fouls, or deciding whether a penalty should be awarded. That would slow the game down, especially with all the prima donnas playing today.

Whether or not the stuffy old powers who control the sport at professional levels will ever see it this way is another question. Most of them were players themselves at some stage, so they probably don't see why today's players should have the benefit of technology.

Regardless, the 2006 World Cup still has a fair way to go and – with all its doubtful and sometimes bad decisions – there are still many reasons to enjoy it.


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Bill Gates: well, wouldn't you smile in his situation?

Photo: EPA/ Franck Robichon

'Did you hear that noise?'

Here's a good one: a technical services company recently developed a new sound-emitting system that sends out a high-pitched "mosquito" noise in shopping centers.

The idea is to drive teenagers and gangs away from shopping malls. The alarm, which has been praised by police, is highly effective because its ultra-high-pitch sound can supposedly be heard only by young people and not by most people over 20.

After a while, it becomes so irritating to teens that they simply leave the mall and go hang out somewhere else. Although the sound supposedly cannot be heard by adults, I can pick it up just fine and I am well into my 40s (though some may not consider me adult).

So far this technology has been very effective and there are

IT ISSUES

By John Seebach

over 50 large shopping malls using it throughout England.

Here's the kicker: A group of techno-savvy teens have gotten a hold of this sound and somehow converted it into a "ring tone". In case you have been living on another planet for the last decade, a ring tone is a small bit of software that you download into your mobile phone. When someone calls you, the ring tone plays instead of the standard ringing sound.

They named it Teen Buzz, and it spread from phone to phone via text messages and Bluetooth technology.

While the teenagers or younger kids are sitting in the classroom, they are of course not allowed to use their mobiles; if a kid's phone rings, he can be in trouble. But with the hijacked "mosquito" ring tone – yup – the kids can hear their phones ringing without the teachers hearing a thing.

One secondary school teacher was quoted as saying, "All the kids were laughing about something, but I didn't know what. They know phones must be turned off during school. They could all hear somebody's phone ringing, but I couldn't hear a thing. One of the other children told me all about it later. I couldn't be too cross, because it shows resourcefulness."

The Mosquito technology is said to play on a medical phenomenon called presbycusis, or age-related hearing loss. It is thought to begin at 20 and first affects the highest frequencies: 18 to 20kHz.

Of course, the teenagers could set their phones to silent mode and turn on the vibrator. But that would not be as much fun, would it?

Bye Bye Billie, sort of: I grew up around the same time as this guy and actually graduated high school two years after him. The only difference? I went on to work as a diesel mechanic and he founded Microsoft. Oops!

Bill Gates, Founder, Chairman, and Chief Software Architect, plans to resign from his day-to-day job next year, though he will remain Chairman of Microsoft for the foreseeable future.

To some people in the

techno world, this is the biggest news since the start of the Internet. To others, it is just another CEO stepping down story. I sit on the fence on this one because although he effectively invented personal computing, it is really the monster engine he produced, Microsoft, that is making all the waves.

Frankly, the monster won't miss a beat with this change.

He recently held a press conference during which he said, "I believe that with great wealth comes great responsibility. Responsibility to give back to society... responsibility to see those resources put to work to help those most in need."

He seems pretty committed to this. As of last year, Gates and his wife had endowed the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with more than US\$28.8 billion – that's just over a trillion baht – to support initiatives in the areas of global health and learning.

"This was a hard decision for me, I am lucky to have two passions," he said.

Over the years, Gates has been spending more and more time on work with his foundation. Last year he, his wife Melinda and rock star Bono were named persons of the year by TIME magazine. The award touched off debate about how long Gates might remain at Microsoft. Gates didn't seem terribly impressed. "The world has focused a disproportionate amount of attention on me," he said.

There is no need to feel sorry for him though; he is the world's richest person, with a net worth well in excess of the annual gross national product of most developing countries.

Although he and his company are one of the most loved-to-be-hated companies around, you really can't fault a guy who honestly cares so much about technology and the global information issues facing society today. So I salute you, Billie, and can you send me just a tiny bit of your US\$658 billion – 23 trillion baht – net worth?

John Seebach has 25 years' consulting experience in information systems and business process technology. His company, Island Technology, offers IT solutions and broadband services throughout Southeast Asia. For more information, send an email to: john@islandtechnology.com

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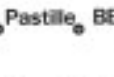
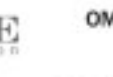


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ON THE MOVE

Stefan Bittner, 41, from Germany, is the new Sales and Marketing Manager of Dive Supply Co Ltd. His background is in business administration, but he is also a diving instructor who has spent 14 years in Asia. For the past two years he has worked as International Sales Director for Grundig Business Systems of Germany, responsible for the branches, business partners and sales teams worldwide. Before that he worked for Samsung Electronics as Sales and Marketing Manager, and before that as Sales Manager with Canon Business Machines.



The *Phuket Gazette* has appointed **Natcha Yuttaworawit**, 21, from Trang, to the post of newspaper reporter. She holds a degree in humanities and social science, with a major in English, from Rajabhat Phuket University. Before joining the *Gazette* she was a trainee with the Tourist Police in Phuket.



Thrin Promcharoen, 31, from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, has been appointed Senior Programmer with Phuket Programmers Co Ltd. He has a science degree with a major in computers from Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok and more than three years' experience in software development. Before moving to Phuket he worked as a programmer with Netcom Thai Corp in Bangkok for a year.



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

The expat community is increasingly becoming aware that in the financial world there is this horrible, relatively new word "compliance". Compliance regulations can be horrific and are, at best, tedious. The strange thing is that less than 10 years ago they did not exist.

The year 2000 saw the first real moves by governments to force financial institutions into finding out about the source of their clients' wealth, as well as many other details about them.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US gave governments, led by America, the opportunity to remove the last vestiges of personal freedom in the financial world that the global public enjoyed.

Governments stressed this was necessary to fight terrorism, drug smuggling and money laundering by organized crime. They lied and they know that they lied.

The intention of compliance regulations was not to catch the "bad guys". It was to catch their own citizens involved in tax evasion and if everyone had to suffer because of the actions of a few, tough luck.

America led the charge into compliance regulations but found it was the easiest "sale" they had ever made. Every high-tax jurisdiction in the world, and that includes the European Union, Canada, Australia and Japan, signed up to the new regulations.

Pressure was then applied to every other country in the world, including Thailand, to sign agreements and pass laws enforcing the new regulations. Here, though, they exist in a somewhat watered-down format.

The net result was that the world was split into four different bands. The first band are the righteous – the US, Canada, the EU, Japan, Singapore, Australia and so on. The second group is rated as moderate risk; Malaysia is one of these. The third band, labeled high risk, includes Thailand. Thailand was, until September 2005, labeled as moderate risk but was demoted.

Finally, there are those countries that find themselves in type 4. As far as the righteous are concerned, they are simply off the

map. Financial institutions around the world are banned from accepting deposits or investments from their citizens, whether they can prove that they they accrued their wealth by legal means or not. They are the lepers of the 21st century.

This subject is not some irrelevant obscurity for expats; it can be of vital importance. Try to open a foreign bank account, invest in a mutual fund or take out an insurance policy in any other country when you live here.

There are two possible outcomes. First, the financial institution may refuse to deal with you or, second, they will bombard you with requests for the following: a certified copy of your passport, proof of residential address (a certified electricity or phone bill, not mobile phone, in your name will usually suffice) and proof of your source of wealth.

This may sound simple, but the reality is that most expats cannot satisfy this requirement, at least not easily. It does not matter if you have had your money in a "first world" bank of international repute for 20 years.

Source of wealth requirements still insist on you proving how you acquired the money in the first place. For example, a property sale requires a signed

solicitor's letter giving full details. An inheritance requires a signed letter from the executors of the estate. The reality is that most people simply do not keep sufficient documentation to satisfy these new regulations.

According to *The Nation* newspaper, 5.1% of the total expenditure by Swiss banks is on compliance matters. Two recent examples I have faced may give readers some indication of how difficult the situation has become.

One of my clients, who is British, submitted a rent receipt from a Phuket apartment as proof of residential address in addition to every other requirement. The compliance department in the financial institution, which is located on a well-known tax haven, conducted a property search.

They agreed that the apartment block was in the correct part of Phuket and that the correct street was indicated – but not the street number.

I managed to solve this problem by pointing out that the apartment block incorporated several street numbers when it was built. The explanation was eventually accepted.

A second situation involved a French resident who had moved to Phuket and sold several properties before coming here. He had lost the original papers but was able to receive by fax duplicates from the French notary. However, under French legal procedure, notaries do not actually sign these documents.

The Hong Kong office of a financial institution translated the documents into English and actually had a 30-minute telephone "war" with its own head office compliance department.

The outcome: not only would the compliance department not accept these documents without signatures; they also insisted on verification that the French

notary actually was registered as such by the French government. It did not matter that France and the tax haven involved are both EU member states. Bureaucracy has gone completely mad.

This is very much the tip of the iceberg of these new regulations. But with proper planning it is possible to find a very simple method of having the choice of all global investments and access to virtually all financial institutions in the world. This allows the individual to switch legally from any institution to any other without multiple applications.

Proper planning allows total diversification of asset choice and asset managers, throughout one's life, with the additional bonus of institutional discounts. And, I repeat, it is legal. It gives total access to your capital, allows income payments and withdrawals and assures that you only have to deal with anti-money-laundering requirements once.

Proper planning can also sidestep one of the greatest mistakes many expats make; leaving multi-jurisdictional estates on death. These estates leave a legal nightmare behind for their families and beneficiaries.

As a responsible independent financial adviser I have to tell the whole truth. I do have clients who are drug dealers – pharmacists and doctors. I even have a client who probably terrifies people and uses sharp instruments on them. She's a surgeon.

However, I have not yet committed the worst offense; I do not have any lawyers or politicians as clients.

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: 01-0814611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th.

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Little red cars head for Phuket

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn

In a sign of continuing confidence in Phuket's economy, Thailand's first Ferrari and Maserati dealership and service center outside of Bangkok is expected to open on the island in mid-July.

Pongnarin Methivacharanondh, 32, President of Ferma Motor Sport Co Ltd (FMSC), told the *Gazette* that he chose Phuket for his third showroom for the luxury marques because, as he put it, of the island's "good potential for both Thais and foreigners to buy these brands here."

FMSC is the sole authorized importer of Ferrari and Maserati in Thailand. The company's original showroom is on Vibhavadi-Rangsit Rd in Bangkok while the other, which opened this year, is at the Siam Paragon mall.

He plans to open another showroom in Ubon Ratchathani or Udon Thani next year.

K. Pongnarin's decision to take over the Ferrari and Maserati dealership in Thailand harks back to 1997 after he graduated with a master's degree from the George Washington University in the US. His mother decided to buy him a sports car – with a price tag of between 7 and 10 million baht – as a graduation gift.

"My choices were either a Mercedes-Benz SL or a second-hand Ferrari," he said. "Finally, I chose a Ferrari because I felt that the Italian marque would be just

as good five years after I bought it as on the day I took ownership of it."

K. Pongnarin explained that he had the car serviced with the-then dealer, which put him in the right place at the right time to buy another of the "little red machines from Modena".

"It was around the time of the Asian financial crisis, and people were selling luxury makes quite cheap – relatively speaking. In the end I bought not only another Ferrari, but also the dealership. That was in 2000," he said.

"Two years ago I displayed our marques at a boat show in Phuket. One foreigner was immediately taken by them and bought both a Ferrari and a Maserati from my showroom."

K. Pongnarin said that, as a frequent visitor to Phuket, he saw the potential for a showroom catering to well-heeled customers keen to buy a luxury sports car.

"Just look at the number of luxury boats and luxury homes being sold in Phuket. Of course, it isn't enough just to be able to buy the cars here; there must also be service facilities," he said.

"After all, if you buy a Ferrari in Phuket, you don't want to have to have it serviced in Bangkok."

The Maseratis to be sold from the FMSC dealership range in price from 10.5 to 11 million baht while a Ferrari will cost between 22.5 and 28.5 million baht.

"We sell an average of three



Pongnarin Methivacharanondh

If you worry about the amount of fuel these cars use, then you probably can't afford one

Maseratis and two Ferraris a month in Bangkok," he said, adding that 70% of buyers are Thais.

"Before, however, only around 5% of our customers were foreigners, which demonstrates that the market [among foreigners] is increasing, particularly for Maseratis. I forecast that FMSC will sell an average of two Maseratis a month in Phuket [to begin with].

"The brand is new here, and it takes time to build awareness.

"Of course, these sales will not be just to people who live in Phuket, but to people elsewhere in the region – Surat Thani, for example.

"I think around six cars a year will be sold to local mainlanders – in fact the marketing will cover the entire southern region of Thailand – in the first year of operation," he said.

Although FMSC has stocks of Maseratis – such as the Quattroporte, a sporty four-door sedan – K. Pongnarin warned that customers may have to wait three months for delivery of a car with their specific choices of color and interior trim. For a Ferrari the waiting time is almost a year.

Describing who he sees as the typical Maserati driver, K. Pongnarin said, "We expect to sell Maseratis as company cars for

high-ranking managers, while both marques will find buyers among Thai and foreign business people in Phuket.

"A Ferrari is one of the ultimate 'rewards' you can buy for yourself," he added.

What about the cost of fuel? "If you worry about the amount of fuel they use, then you probably can't afford one," he smiled.

The Phuket branch of Ferma Motor Sport Co Ltd will be at 41/1 Chana Charoen Rd., Tambon Taladyai, Phuket City. The company's website – www.ferma.co.th – is still under construction.



United Overseas Bank has closed its branch in the Robinson store and opened one in Central Festival instead (pictured). Like the Robinson branch, the one at Central Festival will be open from 11 am to 7 pm for cash transactions and until 8 pm for other services.

The bank book updating machine and the cash deposit machine have both been moved to Central, though one ATM has been left in Robinson. The new branch will not offer Western Union services as there is already a Western Union Office in the mall. For more information contact UOB at Tel: 076210492 or 076-210526.

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The Phuket Yacht Club at Ao Yon held the first of two "Get Sailing Days" on June 11. The next will be held July 9. For details call Robert Warnes at Tel: 01-539 9560

Taiwanese take top places in inaugural Phuket Int'l Marathon

By Janyaporn Morel

CHERNG TALAY (*Gazette, Nation*): Taiwan's Ko Shih Chieh won the inaugural Phuket International Marathon on June 18, while two Thai SEA Games gold medalists, Boonchu Chandechea and Boonthueng Srisang, were the best of the local runners, winning gold in the half marathon and 10k events, respectively.

Boonchoo, from Chumphon, won the gold medal in the marathon in the 2005 SEA Games in Manila.

Boonthueng, of Buri Ram, also won gold in the SEA Games, coming in first in both the 5k and 10k events, and a silver and a bronze in long-distance track events at the 2003 SEA Games in Vietnam.

'DIFFICULT'

Ko clocked three hours, 36 seconds for his victory. "The weather and the conditions were very difficult for me because there were many hills," said the 27 year-old, who finished 22nd in the Italy Hill Marathon three years ago.

Second place went to another Taiwanese, Chi Ming Chan, while Hong Kong's Lok Wai Tse was third.

Some 2,000 runners from Thailand and many other countries in Asia took part in either the marathon or shorter events, including large contingents from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

There were also runners from as far afield as Australia, Europe and North America, including the woman's full marathon winner Heather Gregg of the US, who completed the course in just under four hours.

Marketed under the slogan, "Run Paradise", the competition was really a series of events, all starting and finishing at Laguna Phuket.

In addition to the 42.2-kilometer marathon course that went to Sirinat National Park and back, there was a 21.1-km half-marathon, a 10-km fun run and 1km "Kids Run".

Trophies were awarded to the top three finishers in each age group and all finishers took home a commemorative medal.

About 60% of all the foreign runners were Japanese, led by "race ambassador" and former Olympic marathon runner Akemi Masuda, who now is a well-known sports commentator.

Raising eyebrows and interest among the male spectators lining the race route was 26-year-old Korean singing star, Lee Hee Jin, who competed in the 10k fun run.

She is one of five members of the popular K-pop band Baby VOX, in addition to being a TV actress.

The exact race distances were measured and certified by the Association of International Marathons and Road Races (AIMS).

The races were organized by Go Adventure Asia Co, Ltd and Phuket Province, with support from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Airways and Laguna Phuket.

Results

Men's Marathon (42.2 k)

1. Ko Shih Chieh (Taiwan) 3:00:36; 2. Chi Ming Chan (Taiwan) 3:12:09; 3. Lok Wai Tse (Hong Kong) 3:14:20.

Men's Half Marathon (21.1k)

1. Boonchu Chandechea (Thailand) 1:18:04; 2. Niwat Oythip (Thailand) 1:21:52; 3. Sitthipong Chenglai (Thailand) 1:22:00.

Men's Fun Run (10k)

1. Boonthueng Srisung (Thailand) 0:33:58; Jai Puthuay (Thailand) 0:36:18; Aekarat Punthip (Thailand) 0:36:19.

Woman's Marathon (42.2k)

1. Heather Gregg (USA) 3:58:24; 2. Nampetch Porntharakcharoen (Thailand) 4:09:56; 3. Yi Mei Tsai (Taiwan) 4:11:14.

Women's Half Marathon (21.1k)

1. Gillian Castka (UK) 1:34:40; 2. Georgia Bamber (Australia) 1:41:59; 3. Lynne Isobel Speirs (UK) 1:47:22.

Women's Fun Run (10k)

1. Anong Piriyaiprut (Thailand) 0:47:28; 2. Karuna Nakhara (Thailand) 0:47:29; 3. Wannaporn Siriboon (Thailand) 0:48:48.

Soon soon for Mazda Zoom Zoom golf

KATHU: Phuket Country Club (PCC) is to launch the "Mazda Zoom Zoom Challenge Trophy", a series of competitions to be held on the last Sunday of each month, beginning on June 25. Tee-off for the stroke-play format will be at 8:30 am and the series will culminate in the final, to be played on February 25, 2007.

The series will feature five flights – A, B, C and D – for PCC members and a special flight, E, for guests. The fee for all flights is 500 baht per player, which includes a buffet dinner and drinks plus tee-prize on the day.

For more information, contact K. Uthaiwan at Tel: 076-321039.

PATONG DARTS LEAGUE

Stunned Sandy gets 180

PATONG: After two weeks of play, defending champs Didi's and Dog's Bollocks are the only two teams to have claimed all six available points, tying for the top spot.

In a match on Nanai Rd, Jungle Juice proprietor Sandy nearly passed out from shock after three of his darts landed in the triple-twenty on the same go. But he didn't let the curse of the 180 stop him, holding on to win the first singles.

Piccadilly went on to win the match 8-1 however, with two key closes by Miss On: double 10 in the singles and double 2 in the doubles. Comely barkeep Nuch salvaged the beer leg for Jungle Juice by hitting the double 20 on her first dart.

Correction: Jungle Juice is *not* in the former Boss Bar, as was previously reported – but it is stumbling distance away, located about 50 meters up Nanai Rd, on the same side of the road.

June 13 results: TaiLife 2 Queen Mary* 7; Footrot Flats 3 Valhalla* 6; Shakers 6 OffShore* 3; Didi's* 6 Amigos 3; Jungle Juice* 1 Piccadilly 8; Coyote Bar 2 Dog's Bollocks* 7.
(*=winner of beer leg)

Standings: 1= Dog's Bollocks, Didi's (6 points); 3 Queen Mary (5); 4= Valhalla, Offshore (4); 6= Jungle Juice, Amigos (3); 8= Shakers, Piccadilly (2); 10 Coyote Bar (1); 11= TaiLife, Footrot Flats (0).

June 27 fixtures: TaiLife v Dog's Bollocks; Footrot Flats v Amigos; Shakers v Valhalla; Jungle Juice v Offshore; Didi's v Queen Mary; Coyote Bar v Piccadilly. (Home teams listed first)



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Above, the winner of the inaugural Phuket International Marathon was Taiwan's Ko Shih Chieh, while Boonchu Chandecha scored victory in the half-marathon for Thailand.

Not everyone took the race so seriously, however. One woman (top left) took her Chi-huahua dogs with her, while (left) Korean singer Lee Hee Jin, 2nd from left, took it easy in the 10km fun run, drawing plenty of attention from male spectators and runners alike.



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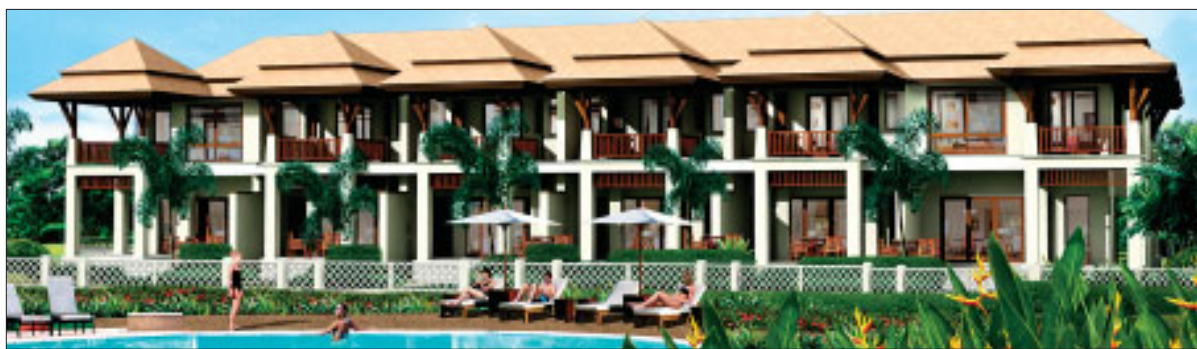
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Construction

by Sangkhae Leelanapaporn



A master bedroom.

New villas launched at Laguna

CHERNG TALAY: Laguna Phuket earlier this month broke ground for Phase I of its Laguna Village Villas project, which will comprise the first 18 of the 36-unit residential development.

Although piling began at the beginning of June, the contractor for the rest of the project has yet to be chosen.

Michael Ayling, Managing Director of Laguna Phuket, explained, "A secluded, self-contained community located to the northeast of the main Laguna Phuket resort complex, Laguna Village will feature three distinct property products: the new Laguna Village Villas, Laguna Townhomes and the popular Laguna Residences."

The villas on offer are two-story, two-bedroom properties overlooking a shared, free-form swimming pool and barbecue area surrounded by tropical landscaping, he added.

"On the ground floor, dining and living areas open onto a sala terrace and include a well-equipped kitchen. Both master bedrooms on the upper floor have en-suite bathrooms.

End units offer 256 square meters of living space, while middle units have 229sqm." Prices for the villas start at 11.9 million baht.

"We have only just launched our new design and already we're receiving very positive feedback," Mr Ayling said.

"These are ideal holiday homes and are an affordable entrance into the Laguna Phuket lifestyle. The Laguna Village Villas are ideal for investors seeking a low-maintenance holiday home that can earn a return on

their investment through Laguna's managed rental program," he added.

Villa owners receive membership to Laguna Phuket Golf Club plus privileged access to the facilities of all five Laguna Phuket hotels. Laguna Village will also be served by the resort's free shuttle buses.

As ownership of each of the units is by condominium freehold title, 49% of the entire development can be owned freehold by foreigners with the remaining 51% held leasehold by foreigners. Thai nationals and Thai companies can own freehold.

As each Laguna property has its own individual title deed, Bangkok Bank's Singapore branch is offering to lend money for the purchase of both leasehold and freehold Laguna properties.

One-, three- and five-year deferred payment terms, which require that 50% of the purchase price be paid during construction, are available, with the remainder payable after the unit is complete.

Bangkok Banks terms and conditions apply.

Of the 18 Phase I units, three have already been sold.

Phase II of Laguna Village Villas – and the Laguna Townhomes project – are both scheduled to be launched later this year.

For more information contact Tamsin Edenbrow, Director of Sales – Property Sales at Laguna Phuket, at Email: tamsine@lagunaphuket.com. For more information about Bangkok Bank's terms and conditions for loans to buy Laguna Village Villas, Email: hl.sg@bbl.co.th

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The first thing most people will look at is the bed, so why not make that particular feature more attractive by installing a custom-made headboard?

At Sakthong House, located next to the Phuket Tourist Police office on the bypass road, experienced carpenters from Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai – provinces renowned for their woodwork – make headboards to order.

Shopowner Cheun Thathong, a carpenter for 10 years, is so proud of his craftsmen's masterful carpentry that he has them working in plain view at the front of the shop.

K. Cheun explained that his team of carpenters has been carving and building headboards – for individuals and for hotels – at the shop for more than six years now.

Prices range from 1,000 baht for simple headboards to 30,000 baht for elaborate designs etched in teak.

Sakthong House has an extensive range of designs on display, though the carpenters on hand at the shop are more than happy to produce custom designs created by customers themselves.

Sakthong House is open from 8 am to 5:30 pm, Monday to Saturday; closed Sundays. Delivery is available, depending on the order. For more information call K. Cheun at Tel: 076-254700.

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

I was in the pub last night. No surprise there, but we got onto the rather uninspiring subject of the Bloomin' Bert column in the *Phuket Gazette*. The consensus was that every article was formatted in exactly the same way – it would start with an inane rant about something that had irked him and had nothing to do with gardening whatsoever.

The next part of the routine would be an absurd connection from the first couple of paragraphs to something allegedly green and growing; a link so inane that it sounds more likely to have come from a Radio 2 presenter.

I'll have to stop there a moment and explain what a Radio 2 presenter actually is. For the uninitiated, Radio 2 is a BBC network that spawns presenters (most of them are too old to be referred to as DJs) who feel the uncontrollable urge to link all aspects of their shows together through the cheesiest lines that they can come up with.

They probably get together at morning meetings in the lofty halls of the BBC to see who can think of the best lines. These are the kind of classics they come up with:

"Critics have suggested that the latest government decision is complete madness. And speaking of madness, here's Madness, with *One Step Beyond*", or "Last night's fireworks in London were spectacular. And speaking of things that fire up into the sky, here's *Rocket Man*, by Elton John." Truly excruciating stuff.

This week, I decided that I'd go against the grain a little and do things in a slightly different order – I'd try to save the inane



So this is what Sting was singing about. At least, that's my theory and I'm sticking to it.

A bid for reform

non-gardening ramblings until later. Oops. I rather get the feeling I've already failed miserably in that regard.

On we go then. Speaking of things on the radio (sorry), I'm a bit of a Sting fan. Not the painful bits on nettles, but the singer from The Police. One of his more recent successes was a song about a plant, I believe. So there is a connection between Sting and gardening after all then.

His gardening song was *Desert Rose*. I'm sure that cyn-

ics will argue that he was thinking of some gorgeous, buxom Arabian maiden at the time he sat down and penned the song, but for now I'm sticking with the gardening theory. And why not?

The desert rose, or *adenium* as it's properly known, is called the *chuan-chom* in Thai. It's a member of the same family as the frangipani, and even looks like a dwarf version of its cousin. It looks so similar, in fact, that it's sometimes referred to as the Japanese frangipani.

Sting obviously knew what he was talking about, as the desert rose came from east Africa and Arabia. Whether it's a dusky maiden or a plant, at least we both agree on the geography of it.

The *adenium* is a succulent member of the oleander family. Succulent simply means that it has thick fleshy leaves and stems that can store water. This one stores water mainly in its pale gray trunk-like stalk.

Like oleanders, *adeniums* contain poisonous sap. This dark side to its personality is more than compensated for by the bell-shaped blossoms it produces al-

most continually. Most have a white center with pink edges and lines in the throat. Its shiny green leaves are often covered with pale down underside. Most varieties grow up to about a meter high with a spread of about 40 to 50 centimeters. The flowers can grow up to 12cm across.

Even though it's not particularly tall, when it gets a bit older the desert rose produces an unusually thick stem, not unlike the middle-aged beer belly I'm currently developing. It should start blooming when it's quite young, at around 15cm tall.

Don't be alarmed if the leaves suddenly drop off. That's what it does when it decides to become dormant. In other parts of the world, it does so in winter when temperatures fall. Here in Phuket, however, the climate isn't known for dramatic decreases in temperature, so the poor old *adenium* gets a bit confused. I can only assume that it drops its leaves when it gets bored, or even a little depressed over the beer belly it knows it will eventually develop.

It should be watered in a similar way to a cactus, allowing

the plant to dry between waterings.

Often the base of the stem will get a bit soft when it feels that it's ready for a bit more water. Increase the amount of water when the plants are in flower or actively growing. Over-water it and it will inevitably get a bit depressed and drop its leaves.

In general, given the speed with which most potted plants grow here, it's a good idea to keep moving them around. Not just because we get bored seeing the same plant in the same corner all the time, but also to encourage even growth. Plants will always grow towards maximum light, so rearranging helps to stop everything shooting off to one side.

The *adenium*, however, isn't particularly forgiving in this regard, so you should really keep the plant in the same spot, facing the same way consistently. If the pot is rotated, intense sun can severely burn the formerly shady sides of the stems.

This plant also needs plenty of root-space, so they should be repotted frequently until they get as big as you want them. Without this space, the growth rate will slow down, no matter how well they're looked after otherwise. Put this in an expensive, thin-walled ceramic pot and you'll regret it, as it will quickly burst through.

If anyone knows Sting, or anything about his songwriting, perhaps they could contact us and solve the dusky maiden/gardening debate once and for all. On reflection, I'll probably go for the sun-bronzed beauty option – at least it stops me thinking about my beer belly.

So, my fellow beer drinkers, as you can see, I tried. I really did my best, but it didn't work. But I have a suggestion – start reading from the seventh paragraph down then, when you reach the end, go back to the beginning. The desired result will then have been achieved. But then again, if you've got this far...

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about a plant
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