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IN THIS ISSUE

NEWS: Police chief pursues MOUs for a better Patong; Soi Dogs in dire straits.

Pages 2 & 3

INSIDE STORY: Andaman Wave 007: a well-orchestrated show.

Pages 4 & 5

AROUND THE REGION: Koh Samui to make a bid for city status.

Page 7

AROUND THE SOUTH: Drugged son kills his father.

Page 8

DINING OUT: Blue, white and delicious grill.

Page 13

PEOPLE: Italian reality TV show ladies make a stop in Phuket.

Pages 14 & 15

LIFESTYLE: Larger clothes that inspire confidence; Beautiful halal histories.

Pages 18 & 19

TRAVEL: The hills of Hanoi are singing.

Page 20

FEATURES: Andaman Rant: A question of sex; Horoscopes; Trawlin: Relaxing on Bangla.

Pages 28 & 29

BUSINESS AND MONEY: Phuket lands top awards; On the Move; Money Talks.

Pages 32 & 33

SPORTS: Boxing; Platu boats; Darts.

Pages 34 & 35

PROPERTY: Home of the Week; Design; Gardening; Construction.

Pages 36-39

PLUS

QUEER NEWS, TRASHING PHUKET 6; AROUND THE NATION 9; AROUND THE ISLAND 10; HAPPENINGS 16; AFTER DARK 17; SPA MAGIC 21; TAKE A BREAK 23 & 24; BOOKS, PHUKET DIARY 25; EDITORIAL, LETTERS, ISSUES & ANSWERS, PERSPECTIVE 26 & 27; COMPUTERS 30; CLASSIFIEDS 40-51.

Tsunami drill 'hit and miss'

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET: Andaman Wave 007, the first regional testing of the 79 National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC) tsunami warning towers along the Andaman Coast, was conducted on July 25, starting at 9:45 am, with mixed results in Phuket.

While impressive mock evacuation and emergency response drills were being staged for the media on the beach at the foot of Soi Bangla in Patong, residents in other risk areas – including much of Patong – complained that the sirens and recorded voice warnings were too quiet, with one siren not making any noise at all.

The evacuation at Soi Bangla was reminiscent of the April 2005 evacuation drill, with Navy helicopters swooping into position within minutes of the siren sounding to stage offshore rescue maneuvers. Meanwhile, officers of the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation and other agencies were on hand to assist the elderly and disabled in the evacuation.

The “disabled” participating in the exercise were actually able-bodied volunteers pretending to suffer from a variety of physical impairments, including one “blind man” with a walking stick and a motorbike-accident victim covered in fake blood, feigning unconsciousness.

Ambulances were on stand-by from the outset to rush people away, based on a theoretical tsunami generated by an 8.2-magnitude earthquake centered near the Nicobar Islands.

However, in Kalim, less than two kilometers to the north of Patong, the only signs of activity were at Ban Kalim School,



Constitution quandary

SAPHAN HIN: Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit (center) and Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana (left) stand before a 1,000-strong crowd at Saphan Hin July 27 with copies of the newly-drafted constitution. Phuket's citizens must now decide whether to accept or reject the charter in the upcoming national referendum.

where some 350 students and staff ran to the third floor of the school from the courtyard in under a minute.

Other residents in the area disregarded the Kalim siren, including guests at the Sunset Beach Hotel, atop which Patong's northernmost warning tower is sited.

Along most of the Patong Beach shoreline and Kalim, people said they could hear the sirens well enough but could not clearly make out the voice-recorded warnings.

In central Patong, people more than a few hundred meters back from the beach said they heard nothing at all, as the sounds were drowned out by the noise of passing traffic, strong offshore

winds and construction projects.

Speaking from Nonthaburi, NDWC Director Dr Smith Dhar-masaroja said he was satisfied with the performance of the 79 towers, but displeased by the failure of local authorities in many areas to organize the evacuation drills.

At Baan Ao Por, only about 50 local people took part in evacuation drills, while even fewer took part in Chalong and Kamala.

Told that the warning tower at Baan Ao Yon on Phuket's east coast had failed to sound, Dr Smith said that it was among 20 towers in the region that were installed by local authorities, not the NDWC.

See Inside Story, pages 4 & 5

Phuket's waste woes in the spotlight

By Pathomporn Kaenkrachang

PHUKET: Top Phuket officials met the Deputy-General of the Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP) Monthip Srirattana Tabuganon July 27 to discuss possible solutions to Phuket's escalating garbage problems – including a budget to build a second incinerator.

Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit and representatives from all 12 Tambon Administration Organizations (OrBorTor) and six municipalities attended the meeting at Phuket Provincial Hall where Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana announced that Phuket will request a 939-million-baht budget in October from the Ministry of Interior.

Fifty-five million baht will be allotted to increase the efficiency of Phuket's landfill sites to deal with excess waste, should the budget be granted.

The remaining 884 million baht, if approved, will be used to build the island's long-awaited second incinerator and improve the amount of garbage the current incinerator can handle, said Mayor Somjai.

“The new incinerator will take about two years to construct,” she said.

Phuket produces 500 tons of garbage a day – twice as much as the island's sole incinerator can burn – and it is estimated that by 2009 Phuket will be producing 750 tons of waste a day.

Mayor Somjai also announced upcoming initiatives to tackle Phuket's waste woes include Big Cleaning Day, to be held on August 15 using a 1.9-million-baht budget from DEQP.

Chinese artists to perform at PSU



KATHU: The Confucius Institute at the Phuket campus of the Prince of Songkla University (PSU) will be showcasing Chinese music and dance on August 14 with free performances of traditional Chinese musical instruments, such as the *erhu* and *guzheng*.

Thirty-five teachers and students from Guangxi Normal University in Guilin, Guangxi province, will perform at the Luang Anuphas Phuket-karn Auditorium at the PSU Phuket campus from 8 pm.

The Confucius Institute, a collaboration between the PSU and Shanghai University, was established in November 2006 with support from Hanban, China's National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language.

The aim of the institute is to facilitate cross-cultural exchange between Thailand and China.

For more information, contact Napaporn Songlek (Tel: 085-8888419; Email: cip@phuket.psu.ac.th) or visit: www.confucius.phuket.psu.ac.th

Registered population continues to increase

PHUKET: The island's official population climbed by 2,146 to 323,660 from June 21 to July 20, but the figure still under-represents the number of Thais calling Phuket home – not including the number of expats and low-wage laborers from abroad who have migrated here in recent years.

The rise is slightly lower than during the previous reporting period, when a gain of 2,976 was recorded from May 21 and June 20.

The biggest population increase was 1,441 in Muang District, followed by Kathu (405) and Thalang (300).

Muang District also continues to have the largest official population at 204,283, followed by Thalang (75,019) and Kathu (44,358) districts.

During the period, 175 births were recorded in the province compared with 88 deaths.

Overall, 2,687 new house registrations were filed, while just 634 people deregistered.

The continued rise is attributed in part to a campaign initiated by Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit late last year to increase the number of Thai citizens whose names appear on provincial household registration forms.

Governor calls for Phuket mobile CCTV

PHUKET: At the Provincial Security Committee Meeting at the Katina Hotel, formerly the S.T. Hotel, on July 26, Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit called for the local police to look into setting up a "mobile CCTV" unit to roam Phuket's streets.

"I have seen this new technology on TV. It is used in England, where they use a mobile CCTV unit that drives everywhere and uses a wireless connection to link to the monitors in the control room," Gov Niran told the committee.

"It would be good if we could also use this technology, especially in the high season. Such a vehicle could record everything and send it to the control room."

"This is a good example of something being used in a more developed country that we should use."

"I want to leave this to the police and the provincial administration to look into as an idea."

"It would be great if Phuket could have about three mobile CCTV units," he said.

Kathu police chief inks deals to improve Patong

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

WICHIT: Speaking for the first time at a Phuket Provincial Security Council meeting on July 25, new Kathu Police Superintendent Col Grissak Songmoon-nark told Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit that he had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Patong business leaders aimed at lifting the town's image among tourists.

Col Grissak, 46, said that he had invited representatives of various groups in Patong to attend a series of meetings at Kathu Police Station. Among the groups represented were the night entertainment industry, he said.

"I have signed an MOU with entertainment industry leaders in Patong. They have agreed to have their female service staff dress in a more modest fashion while on their way to work."

"Many of the female service staff wear revealing clothes on their way to work and are seen by students returning home from



Kathu Police Superintendent Col Grissak Songmoon-nark.

school. We don't want students to get the feeling that this type of dress is normal," Col Grissak said.

"Although nightclubs already check IDs, I would like to ask for cooperation in preventing minors from frequenting any ar-

reas where coyote dancing is going on. Otherwise they might try to engage in such behavior themselves," he added.

Col Grissak also said that in the effort to crack down on the sale of illegal narcotics, nightclub owners had been asked to have their staff search customers and report any leads to the police.

Tuk-tuk and taxi drivers will soon be asked to sign an MOU aimed at lifting service standards, eliminating overcharging and limiting the number of taxis on the roads in an effort to relieve traffic congestion, he said.

The number of tuk-tuks in Patong swells to as many as 500 at night, when drivers who operate in other parts of the island during the day all converge in Patong in search of fares, Col Grissak noted.

Among the changes he would like to introduce are having all drivers in uniform and having more designated parking areas.

As for the new one-way traffic system, the public still has until the end of the month to suggest further improvements, after which time the system will be finalized, he said.

Blood bank collections hit the road

PHUKET: The blood bank at Vachira Phuket Hospital, on Yaowarat Rd, Phuket City, has announced its schedule of blood donation collections for August.

Blood donations will be collected on:

August 6 at Club Andaman Patong Beach Resort, from 10 am to 3 pm;

August 9 at Chermg Talay Municipality offices, from 10 am to 3 pm;

August 12 at the blood bank at Vachira Hospital, from 8:30 am to 3 pm;

August 17 at Radi Medical System Co Ltd, on the Ao Kung-Ao Por road in Pa Khlok, from 10 am to 4 pm;

August 21 at Phuket Wit-tayalai School, on Thepkrasattri Rd, Phuket City, from 9 am to 4 pm;

August 30 at Patong Municipality offices, 12/3 Rat-pattanusorn Rd, Patong, 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm.

The blood bank also accepts blood donations at its offices on the fourth floor of the Patient Building at Vachira Hospital, open Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 8 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 8:30 am to 3 pm.

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Call for Phuket tourism businesses to go 'green'

By Pathomporn Kaenkrachang

PHUKET: A Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) seminar at The Metropole hotel July 24 brought together academics and tourism representatives to discuss global warming effects in Phuket, where an estimated 344 million tonnes of greenhouse gases are produced every year, according to Nisanat Sathirakul, deputy secretary general at the Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy and Planning.

"World temperatures are higher than they were 100 years ago, and increasing development and production activities have caused climate change. Because of this, we now have higher levels of rainfall and the temperature of the water is changing," K. Nisanat said.

Somkiat Khokiattiwong, a biologist from Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC), explained that there is now a significant increase in the difference in temperature between surface water and water below the surface around Phuket.

"Higher water temperature leads to corals drying out and bleaching. Water currents are also changing, which could lead to a loss of beach land," he added.

When water temperatures rise just a few degrees above average, corals can lose their color and become bleached. Corals can recover from this unless the high water temperatures persist, in

which case the corals normally die, K. Somkiat explained.

Walailak Noypayak, director of the Market Research Division of TAT, said that the increased frequency of storms will lead to higher levels of rainfall and adverse weather conditions.

K. Somkiat said, "The first thing we need to do is educate local people to take care of their area as much as they can."

Assoc Prof Thon Thamrongnawasawat from Kasetsart University said, "Support has to come from three parts: the government should implement [green] policies, private enterprises should take action to preserve the environment, and academics should educate local people about [environmental] issues."

K. Walailak added, "In the long term we have to force the island's businesses to protect and preserve the environment, and then we must evaluate the standards of the hotels with the Green Leaf Foundation."

Established in 1998, the Green Leaf Foundation works in partnership with the TAT to certify hotels according to their levels of efficiency in managing resources and contributing to the upkeep of the environment.

Green Leaf certificates, issued every two years, are scored on a scale from one to five "leaves" in recognition of a hotel's contribution to preserving the environment.

Fisheries Office extends po trap amnesty

PHUKET: The Phuket Provincial Fisheries Office (PPFO) has given fishermen until August 28 to apply to continue using po traps, shallow-water fish traps made by stringing a net between stakes stuck in the seabed, although the traps have been outlawed since 1996.

The announcement follows the passing of the July 29 deadline set by the PPFO for a total ban on po traps – unless villagers' claims that their traps do not harm sea turtles, dugongs, seagrass areas or coral can be substantiated.

PPFO chief Pairho Suthakorn announced that all po traps

would be removed by authorities unless a written complaint was sent to the Fisheries Office.

Fears that the traps affect the habitats of sea turtles and dugong prompted the initiative to remove them from Phuket's waters, especially after a dugong was found dead in a po trap in Pa Khlok Bay in April.

However, following claims by villagers at Baan Para Moo 4, Pa Khlok, that their traps caused no harm, the PPFO set 33 specific zones spanning 1,530 rai in the area where the villagers are allowed to use po traps.

The proposed zones were approved by the Ministry of Ag-

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Island dog shelter begging for attention

By Nick Davies

THALANG: Phuket's uncared-for canines are last in line for handouts as funding dries up and food supplies dwindle at the Mid Road Dog Shelter in Baan Kanoon, Thalang.

The shelter – managed by the Phuket Provincial Livestock Office (PPLO) and where registered animal welfare charity Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) have operated from since January – is currently home to more than 400 of the island's neglected canines.

Due to concerns of overcrowding at the shelter, Udomsak Usarangkura during his term as Phuket Governor imposed a 500-dog limit at the shelter.

However, more dogs continue to arrive at the shelter and many are still suffering from sicknesses, malnutrition and injuries.

The SDF brought in additional staff, volunteers and the promise of more funding to help improve conditions and treatment of the animals at the shelter with the goal to house, vaccinate and sterilize dogs brought there so they may later be adopted.

Despite the SDF recording an income of just over 5.5 million baht from January 1 to December 31 2006, that money has already run out with the foundation spending more than eight million baht last year on facilities at the



Food is running out for these pups at the dog shelter in Thalang, as funds run dry for the Livestock Office and the Soi Dog Foundation.

shelter and providing food and medical treatment for dogs.

According to PPLO Chief Dr Sunart Wongvorachart, "Before the SDF stepped in to help, the shelter used to house around 500 dogs at a cost of 1.6 million baht a year, including food and medicines for the dogs and salaries for four staff.

"The dog shelter usually receives 800,000 to 900,000 baht a year in municipal funding with the rest made up from donations, but this year some *OrBorTor* [Tambon Administration Organizations] have not budgeted to deal with the dogs in their areas," he said.

The number of dogs brought to the shelter has continued to rise, putting more pressure on the organizations.

"We have already accepted around 100 extra dogs this year from various municipalities but no additional funding has been forthcoming to help feed and treat them," explained SDF Vice-President, John Dalley.

"Altogether, the foundation costs 400,000 baht a month to operate, including food and medicines for the dogs, plus salaries and utility bills for the shelter but we currently receive only about

200,000 baht a month in donations and funding," he added.

"Feeding them is a big expense but not the greatest, we spend over 50,000 baht a month on food. We now pay for a full-time vet and nurse on site, and the treatment costs, and paying the minimum possible number of staff are crippling.

"The death rate from disease and injuries has fallen considerably but is still unacceptably high. Vaccinating the dogs is out of the question.

"With no budget the PPLO have been unable to provide drugs or treatment. Therefore unless we provide treatment many dogs suffer terribly before dying," Mr Dalley said.

Dr Sunart has written to Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit requesting a review of the budget allocations for the shelter, but has yet to receive a reply.

In the meantime, residents and local businesses, especially restaurants and resorts, are encouraged to help with donations of food and money.

For more information or to make a donation call the SDF at call 087-0508688 or visit www.soidog.org.

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Andaman Wave 007: Making

In the run-up to the "Andaman Wave 007" testing of the National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC) tsunami early-warning system on July 25, the *Gazette* asked readers to send in reports from their locales describing if and how the alarms sounded – and what evacuation drills took place, if any.

The following is a selection of the responses we received, along with reports by *Gazette* staff.

The *Gazette* thanks all those who contributed, including those whose accounts could not be included here.

Nearly all of the media attention in Patong centered around the mock evacuation involving some 1,500 volunteer evacuees running up Soi Bangla, across Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd and up Soi Sansabai to safety.

After the drill was over, the government put out the message it wanted: media outlets from Bangkok to Boston reported that the exercise had gone according to plan and that all 79 towers had sounded successfully.

Speaking from the NDWC headquarters in Nonthaburi, where a Thai TV Channel 11 telecast of the Patong drill was being monitored by national and international observers, NDWC head Dr Smith Dharmasaroja said the exercises went according to plan and all 79 warning towers were found to be working well.

Although criticizing local administrations in the many areas that failed to conduct evacuations, he said some 40 international observers expressed their confidence and satisfaction, and some even wanted to use the system as a model for other countries.

In other parts of Patong, the scene was quite different, how-

ever. At Ban Kalim School, three yellow-shirted government observers – two from the Attorney General's Office and a third from the NDWC – were on hand to witness the evacuation.

Apart from one *Gazette* reporter, there was no other media present. The Baan Kalim School evacuation began promptly at 9:45 am when the school director pushed a button to activate the school's own siren simultaneously with that of the 79 NDWC towers.

In less than a minute, all 300 students and some 30 staff ran from their waiting place in the courtyard up to the third floor of the concrete school, rebuilt with private-sector donations to replace the wooden school that was destroyed by the 2004 tsunami.

After declaring the drill at the school a success, observers went about 100 meters to the north to listen to the signals being emitted from the NDWC tower across from the Sunset Beach Hotel.

As voice-recorded messages were being played in a variety of languages, most agreed they were only clearly audible from within a few hundreds yards of the signals – though the siren sounds traveled much further.



DDPM-Phuket chief Aroon Kerdsom expressed satisfaction with the mock evacuation of about 1,500 volunteers up Soi Bangla to the safety of Soi Sansabai.

To find out how far, the *Gazette* reporter walked all the way back over the hill to Patong, asking those he passed along the way what they had heard and seen.

A convenience store owner a few hundred yards down the road said she knew that the alarm had sounded, but she hadn't heard it because she was inside the shop with the television on all morning.

Although her shop is in a low-lying area close to the beach, she said that she, like other residents in Kalim, had not been asked to take part in an evacuation, but had only been told by officials not to panic when the alarm went off that morning.

"We keep the TV on almost all the time and we evacuate if we get reports of any big earthquakes in Indonesia," she said.

Continuing south along the beach road and up the hill to a small *sala* where a number of motorcycle taxi drivers were resting, the *Gazette* was told that the

siren, but not the voice-recorded messages, could be heard.

"Would you head for the hills if you heard the siren at another time?" the group was asked.

"Not right away," one responded, as the others nodded their heads in agreement. "We were here for the last tsunami and now we know what to look for. If we hear the siren, we will keep our eyes on the water."

"If we notice that it is retreating then we will head up higher, but even where we are now is higher than where the last tsunami reached," they said, while pointing down to the sea from their rocky viewpoint.

Continuing south to Patong, the reaction from people was largely the same, with some saying they had heard the siren, but not the voice-recorded messages.

Once into Patong, the *Gazette* reporter expected the response to be the same – but it wasn't. The northern end of the beach road is so busy with new construction projects and other noise that the sounds of neither the Kalim siren nor the one further along the beach were heard – even right on the beach.

A group of Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) lifeguards stationed at a watch tower on the beach opposite the Graceland Resort said they had listened closely for the siren – but hadn't heard a thing.

"There is too much noise from the street and the wind blowing strongly offshore didn't help," one said.

A woman selling tours from a roadside kiosk on Haad Patong Rd also said the sirens were completely inaudible from her spot near the intersection with Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd.

After pausing to let the sound from a procession of three sound trucks touting Jatukham Ramathep amulets pass, she

added, "One thing is certain: if the siren sounds at night, there is no way anyone will be able to hear it along Soi Bangla."

The problem was much the same further south. The owner of a bar about 150 yards up the beach from Soi Kebsup told the *Gazette* he had kept the windows to his third-story bedroom open all morning – but couldn't hear anything out of the ordinary.

The same pub suffered extensive damage during the 2004 tsunami disaster, when the bottom floor was flooded by about one meter of water on its ground floor.

Another respondent from Patong wrote in this sarcastic remark: *Here in Patong. All doors and windows open. Listening for it. Didn't hear a peep. Either it's the quietest system in existence or I have gone deaf.*

At the very south end of Patong, a respondent who observed the drill from the same spot where he witnessed the tsunami hit on December 26, 2004 described the evacuation drill as "a well-orchestrated human circus act to please the press".

Arguing that "you don't exercise to impress – you exercise to improve", he wrote:

A helicopter from ITV was circling in the sky and observing the beach. Ambulances, rescue teams, police and the fire department were waiting, all lined up on a chosen spot to enter the scene on command.

Everyone was well-prepared and stationed where they would never be in case of a real tsunami. Just over the bridge, left from the entry of the Amari Hotel, about 20 rescue and emergency vehicles were parked – all awaiting their turn to enter the stage.

Every few minutes a new team was ordered to go – and yes, of course, they all arrived on time. I watched all this for about

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the most of a media circus?



BLIND LEADING THE BLIND? A man pretending to be blind was one of many volunteer evacuees escorted to safety by rescue workers during the Andaman Wave 007 drill on July 25.

IT'S ONLY KETCHUP! Members of the Volunteer Tourist Police help evacuate to safety a man covered in fake blood and feigning serious injury.



half an hour, then went down the hill to the beach road to see the same "missing link" I witnessed on December 26, 2004: there were no police there to block the entry to the beach and no way out for those on the beach to leave.

There were big traffic jams everywhere in Patong. Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd was clear, but all the entry roads to the beach were jammed.

Like many of the people who reported their experiences to the *Gazette*, the respondent was a long-time resident who declined to have his name printed. He left this advice to the organizers of future evacuation drills:

Let's confront the real problems that will occur if you want to move out the public in a hurry. Place some old cars in the way and let the fire department exercise by removing them with force. Let police start blocking roads as needed in an emergency. Putting rescue teams where they would never be in reality is abusing the facts and allowing optimism where it shouldn't belong.

To the north in Kamala, another area devastated by the 2004 disaster, only about 20 people took part in an evacuation drill conducted at the Prachanukrao School, which like Ban Kalim

School has its own siren.

About 800m away, the NDWC tower was also clearly audible when the school's siren was not sounding.

Over at Chalong Pier, expatriate resident and retired welder Jeffrey Powell, 67, joked of the siren there, "It could be someone's kettle boiling over."

He sat in a roadside cafe about 200m from the pier, where offshore island speedboat shuttles dock.

Asked whether he was interested in the morning drill, Powell said, "It's a waste of time and money, that's my opinion." He added that many marine vessels such as ferries have horns that emit a similar sound. "I wouldn't get up because I heard that," he said.

Testing of the tsunami warning system at Chalong Pier did not receive an emergency evacuation drill for tourists or locals because sound trucks had already announced the previous hour that, "Today the system is only being tested and there is no cause for alarm. This is only a test."

When the first blast sounded at 9:45 am, a group of perhaps 15 people, evidently prepared by authorities for the test, ran from the sun shelters beside Karn Eng

Restaurant towards Chalong roundabout. No one else among the scores of Thais and foreigners in the vicinity moved.

An English tourist was puzzled, saying, "They announced ahead of time that people *needn't* participate in the drill."

The horn's blast was followed by announcements in Standard Thai, English, German, Korean, Chinese and Japanese that, "There has been an earthquake in the sea," and that those in the area should immediately get as far away as possible from the beach. The horn blast and announcements were repeated during the next hour.

Chalong native and scion of one of Phuket's oldest clans, Somsak Prateep Na Thalang, 40, wondered why the announcement was not made in Southern Thai dialect. "People around here mostly speak Southern Thai," he said.

Because many Chinese speakers speak differing dialects, the Chinese announcement began with the words "Go away!" in English, one observer who positioned himself close to the tower noted.

Not far to the north of Chalong Bay lies Ao Yon, where four lives were lost to the 2004 tsunami.

To prevent a repeat incident, one of Phuket's 19 warning towers was installed at the Khao Khad viewpoint overlooking the bay. However, the siren there failed after only about five seconds – apparently from lack of battery power.

The site is remote from the local community and only a handful of people turned up to hear it tested, one of them being *Gazette* Chief Reporter Sangkhue Leelanaporn.

"I feel sad that so much taxpayers' money was spent on this tower that doesn't even work. But even if it did, it is too remote from the Ban Khao Khad community to be heard there so I hope that they will link it to the community radio system when they come to fix it," said local resident Sanam Kulasamut.

"It's good that we know it

doesn't work because now we can fix it, but I still think they should take it down and put it somewhere where more people will be able to hear it," said local resident Akaphol Nontri.

However, after the Ao Yon tower failed, the six or seven people could hear the very faint sounding of the tower on Koh Lone being carried across the bay by strong winds.

"You would never be able to hear that if it weren't so quiet up here or if you were riding a motorbike," one person remarked.

After the drill, Aroon Kerd-som, who heads the local Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket) office, said that the exercise had mostly gone according to plan and that all the towers had sounded except for the one at Khao Khad.

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Queer News

Guns, drugs and an empty casket

NAKHON SRI THAMMARAT: When a funeral goes on for several weeks and is protected by a gang of armed men, you can usually bet that it's for someone important.

But a funeral in Thung Yai held for a fictitious money-spinning witch doctor left villagers confused when the funeral's organizers started selling "lucky" lottery tickets.

The funeral was reported to the Nakhon Sri Thammarat Damrongtham Center, which acts as provincial ombudsman, by a citizen who complained that a house in Thung Yai District's Tambon Ku Rae had been holding a ceremony for almost a month.

Mourners were smoking drugs and a number of thugs were carrying guns at the funeral, said the concerned citizen.

The complainant said that according to organizers, the funeral was for a Cambodian witch doctor who used to predict lottery results. The funeral organizers were selling tickets for a Malaysian lottery on the premise that good fortune was destined for the whole village.

Nakhon Sri Thammarat Vice-Governor Wichit Chatphaisit was informed of the complaint on July 16 and immediately ordered the Srivichai Task Force to coordinate with the chief administrative officer (*palad*) of Thung Yai District and deputy superintendent of Thung Yai District Police Station to investigate the funeral.

V/Gov Wichit said that at the house where the funeral was being held, the investigation team found the ceremony in full swing with about 50 people milling around the premises.

"There were many tough guys walking around, patrolling the proceedings, all with pistols. The officials identified themselves and asked to search the property. They found many types of guns: the pistols that the tough guys were carrying, some more guns hidden around the house and yet more hidden in a banana grove outside," said V/Gov Wichit.

"Officials also found three safes

which the owner of the house at first claimed belonged to his daughter. The officers detained the organizers and took them to Nakhon Sri Thammarat Provincial Hall to record the arrests before questioning began," he added.

Phemsak Leuansunthon, head of the Srivichai Task Force, said that when police questioned Amphon Amnuay, 61, the owner of the residence, he acted suspiciously and gave contradictory statements. Amphon also claimed to be on good terms with the governor of Chumphon Province and the chief of staff of Army Region 4.

Amphon stated that the funeral was being held for a Cambodian witch doctor who had died in Chumphon Hospital on July 5, said K. Phemsak. The Governor of Chumphon had conducted the funeral rites, Amphon added.

When asked the name of the deceased, however, Amphon was unsure.

Amphon said that he had brought the body to his house as the witch doctor could predict lottery results and the villagers might benefit from this power, K. Phemsak explained.

Amphon had told local residents that the safes in the house were full of money from winning lottery tickets, but he could not hand the money over before the funeral ceremony was over because the "winning" villagers would be cursed and go blind, added K. Phemsak.

When the safes were opened by a locksmith, they were found filled with bundles of paper cut to the size of a 1,000 baht note, each bundle covered with two real notes.

Upon opening the coffin, police found that there was no witch doctor – there wasn't even a body.

A total of nine people were arrested and 13 guns, more than 100 rounds of ammunition and some cannabis-smoking paraphernalia were seized. All nine men tested positive for drugs and were charged with using illegal substances, fraud and firearms offenses.

Source: Kom Chad Luek



HIGHLIGHTS: Soi Panieng's Trash Tourism sights, clockwise from top left: Opposite Rock Garden; in front of Srisuchart; near Baan Khunying; and in front of Topland Rassada.



Here's an idea: Trash Site Tourism. Busloads of tourists could be entertained by taking them on a tour of Phuket's favorite informal garbage dumping sites.

Preferably the buses should be open to the elements, allowing the occupants to get the full flavor of the various stops along the way, wafting through the vehicle.

Our vote for best Trash Tour route goes to Soi Panieng, which runs parallel to the bypass road, between Samkong and Koh Kaew. See the pictures above for four of the stops along the route.

The only question remaining is where to take the tourists for lunch afterwards. But then, they probably won't have much of an appetite.

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Mayor leads bid to upgrade Samui's official status

No longer a remote island in the Gulf of Thailand, Koh Samui is looking to upgrade its status officially from that of a sub-district municipality (*tessa-baan tambon*) to town (*tessa-baan muang*) status.

Leading the effort is Koh Samui Mayor Varakorn Rattanak, who feels the greater fiscal autonomy that would come with the upgrade would give the administration greater ability to meet the island's needs.

The blame for many of the island's infrastructure problems and lack of facilities has been put down to inadequate funding; the island's current status leaves it incapable of raising enough funds locally through taxes and fees.

"As a *tambon tessaaban*, there is little that the local government can do," said Mayor Varakorn.

Samui population has grown with the island's development into a top tourist destination. The rapid increase has resulted in an urgent need for funding to cater to the needs of the many new residents and to sustain growth in the tourism industry.

One local businessman commented, "The roads and schools here should be better and our standards should be higher. Other tourist areas in Thailand have better standards; I don't know why the people of Samui should be left behind."

Not only are island locals affected by the allocation of government spending, the tourism industry is also affected in many ways, especially by the ever-increasing number of traffic accidents and the high number of fatalities on the island's notoriously dangerous main road.

Simon Milton, a vacationer from the UK, said, "It is like an obstacle course! Over our two-week holiday here, new potholes have seemed to form overnight. You can never predict where the next danger might be. I wouldn't recommend driving a motorbike here to anyone."

The mayor, along with other island officials, is looking toward the next election to start the process that will gain Samui rights, funds and new title.

Teed off: Samui is looking forward to the addition of another world-class golf course in the



While the *tessaaban* can welcome people to Samui, it has little power to improve the conditions of their stay. This is something the mayor and others hope to change by upgrading Samui to a *tessaaban muang*.

Course will join Santiburi Golf Course, which opened in 2003 and is well known among Asian Tour players. Its developers hope Royal Samui will not be the last course to open on the island.

"We hope this will be just one of many golf courses to open in the future. Having four to five courses on the island would ensure Samui a spot as a top golfing destination," said Patric de Richard, another partner in the project.

The group are proud of their project. Course designer Watcharin of Fix Golf Company has worked on an impressive list of courses, including some of Thailand's best-known fairways such as the Royal Ratchaburi, Evergreen Hills Golf Course and Resort in Kanchanaburi, Pattana Golf Resort in Chonburi and Loch Palm Golf Course in Phuket.

The first nine holes should be ready for action in September with the grand opening scheduled for December.



FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND

By Max Rogers

coming months, as the Royal Samui Golf and Country Club has announced it will hold its soft opening in September.

The announcement was welcome news to the local golfing community as well as vacationers looking for more than a beach to spend their days.

The founders of the 350-rai development, all golf enthusiasts, have combined their expert knowledge to create a unique vision for the project.

The 18-hole course is located in a stunning hilltop location in the south of the island near Lamai that overlooks Samui's premier stretch of beach in Chaweng. Many holes have breathtaking views of the beaches of Lamai and surrounding jungle.

The designers and planners have nestled the 72-par course among the natural surroundings and designed each hole to challenge medium to advanced golfers. Beginners will be well-advised to bring some extra balls!

The founders' concept for the project stretches beyond providing lush greens and fairways for golf pros to smack a ball

around. One of the founders, Kenneth Chung, said that one of the main goals is to break down commonly-held misperceptions that golf is an elitist sport.

The founders plan to add to the sense of community to the island, welcoming all walks of life to play. To achieve this, they plan to provide subsidies and "academy programs" that will allow anyone with a desire to play golf to give it a go.

The clubhouse is designed to reflect this "community theme". The building, with impressive views over the course and its verdant surroundings, will

include a spa, tennis courts, squash courts, gym, swimming pool, three restaurants, children's center, pro shop and conference center.

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After being released from being chained to a post, a mentally-disturbed former *ya bah* (methamphetamine) addict hacked his father to death with an ax in Nakhon Sri Thammarat's Muang district on July 26.

Neighbors found the body of Phayap Srirabai, 56, in the shack where he was living in Tambon Bang Jak. He had been struck several times in the head.

The neighbors made the gruesome discovery when they called on K. Phayap to ask for help in preparing a wedding ceremony for one of his relatives the following day.

Lt Col Kittichai Krainara, an investigator at Nakhon Sri Thammarat Muang District Police Station, named the killer as K. Phayap's son, Uthen, 23.

After killing K. Phayap, Uthen wandered around telling people that his father was "sleeping soundly" but nobody paid any attention to him, Col Kittichai explained. Police soon arrested Uthen, who was still wandering around the area.

Uthen, prone to crazed moods, would often be chained by his father to a post inside the shack where they lived together. He would only be released after his mood took a turn for the better, Col Kittichai said.

On this occasion, K. Phayap released his son before going to bed. After he did, Uthen grabbed an ax used for chopping pork bones and used it to kill his father, Col Kittichai said.

People who knew Uthen said that when younger he had been of sound mind and had served in the army after being conscripted.

Later he became heavily addicted to *ya bah* and began to experience violent mood swings. A week before killing his father, Uthen burned down the house, forcing them to move into the shack where the attack took place.



PEACE OFFENSIVE: A group of 346 monks arrived at Narathiwat's Ban Thorn airport on July 25, days before Buddhist Lent, as part of a government-sponsored project aimed at instilling a sense of confidence in the region, where bombings, beheadings and drive-by shootings are a near-daily occurrence.

Ya bah junkie hacks his father to death

Bad bet: Trang Town Police on July 22 busted a gambling den operating in a suite of a well-known hotel in the town.

After being tipped off by an informant, Trang Muang District Police Superintendent Col Nukoon Kraithong had a search warrant issued for a suite at the Thumrin Hotel, which was

booked under the name Sakao-phan Rongdej.

When police officers entered the first of the three rooms in the suite, gamblers rushed into another room and locked the door. Police attempted to persuade them to open the door, but to no avail.

After calling in a locksmith to open the room, police arrested 12 people, including teachers, government officials and businessmen. Collected as evidence were a pack of *phong thai* cards that had been thrown out the window.

The suspects were taken to Trang Muang District Police Station, where they were charged with gambling without permission and obstructing a police investigation.

Dangerous game: Eighteen spectators at the Thung Song Games were injured when the grandstand collapsed beneath them at 10:30 am on July 25.

The spectators, all students, were cheering the athletics held at Sriwichai Technical College in Tambon Tham Yai, Thung Song district, when the steel-framed stand collapsed.

Of the 18 students sent to hospital, five were allowed to return home that day. Several schools withdrew their athletes from the games in protest of the poor safety standards.

The games, held from July

24 to 27, were organized by Nakhon Sri Thammarat Provincial Administration Organization and Thung Song district with the aim of building unity among the people of the district.

Southern comfort: The Muslim Lawyers Association has called on the authorities to release or charge some 300 detainees still being held following the mass arrests in recent security sweeps in two districts in Yala.

The Army has released about 50 of the detainees, most of whom were found to be old, infirm or thought to have no connection to the insurgency, Army spokesman Col Acra Tiproch said.

However, a quarter of those arrested were "key members of the insurgent movement directly involved in a spate of violence in the region," he said.

A total of 70 detainees are members of the insurgent group Rundi Kumpulan Kecil while another 23 are considered to be its spiritual leaders. The rest are sympathizers, the Army said.

Most will be released after 30 days, in accordance with emergency decrees imposed on the region since martial law was declared there in January, 2004.

The detainees would be re-educated and given an "attitude correction", Col Acra said.

There is "solid evidence" to prosecute the others, he added.

Col Acra defended the reliability of Army's list of suspected militants. Intelligence sources used included information gained during suspect interrogations, forensics evidence and tip-offs by local people, he said.

The arrest campaign, dubbed Operation Southern Protection, will continue until violence is contained, Col Acra said.

He added that he believed the policy would help end the rebellion, now in its third year.

Security forces have expanded their latest sweep operation to include four districts of neighboring Narathiwat province: Sungai Padi, Chanae, Rangae and Joh I Rong.

Killed after prayers: Gunmen shot dead Sithisak Morobu, 48, a former member of the now-defunct New Aspiration Party, as he was walking home after prayers at a local mosque in Yala's Yaha district on July 27.

The police report said a gunman walked up behind K. Sithisak and fired several rounds, hitting him in the head, left arm and torso.

Bystander Abdulwahae Dimadi, 28, was also injured in the attack. He was rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment.

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

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Child sex abuse 'rampant across Isarn'

Sexual abuse of children is rampant in the Northeast, a seminar on child protection was told on July 23.

"Most abusers are the victims' own family members, or teachers," said Natthawoot Bua-prathum of the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights Foundation.

Quoting the findings of a survey, K. Natthawoot said victims were often found in Buri Ram and Roi-Et, where the foundation was working to help them.

It is difficult to reach all victims because of the foundation's limited resources, as well as the influence of certain individuals in each area, he said.

K. Natthawoot was speaking at a seminar on human-resource development and the protection of children.

Another speaker, Khon Kaen University lecturer Dr Sri-ruang Pairotekul, said sexual abuse of children was one of the country's main problems. In Khon Kaen alone, up to 106 children were sexually violated last year.

"Stepfathers, uncles and even biological fathers are among the abusers," K. Sri-ruang said.

Child abandonment is common in the Northeast as parents migrate to Bangkok for work and leave their children behind, she added.

Boys' club: The Dalai Lama recently expressed support for the introduction of Bhikkhunis (female monks) in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but this is unlikely to change the stance of the Thai clergy, according to Bhikkhuni Dhammananda, Thailand's most well known female monk.

The continuous chain of Bhikkhuni ordination has been broken for more than 1,000 years in countries following Theravada Buddhism, such as Thailand and other Southeast Asian nations, and those following Mulasarvas-tivada Buddhism, like Tibet, she said.

Since the presence of both Bhikkhus (Buddhist monks) and Bhikkhunis is required at the ceremony to fully ordain a Bhikkhuni, conservative Sangha in these countries say that women's ordination is impossible.

The Thai Sangha still does not recognize Dhammananda and seven other Bhikkhunis who were fully ordained in Sri Lanka as valid Theravada Bhikkhunis.

Bhikkhuni Dhammananda, who runs a monastery in Nakhon Pathom, said she would use this international support to continue her work to introduce Bhikkhunis in Thailand.

Tongue Thaid: Children attending bilingual schools are deficient in Thai-language skills because parents force them to study in English more than in Thai, according to Deputy Education Minister Varakorn Samkoses.



BOOKS BARGE IN: The Port Authority of Thailand has organized a library boat project to celebrate HM The King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 80th birthday this year. The vessel will cruise along the Chao Phya River with 1,500 books about His Majesty. The project was unveiled July 25 by Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont at the Bangkok Port in Klong Toei district. The library, which can accommodate about 50 visitors at a time, will cover 270 kilometers in 80 days, passing through communities in Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Samut Prakan, Pathum Thani, Ayudhaya, Ang Thong, Sing Buri and Chai Nat.

After finding that more than 80,000 students at the third level of primary school could not read Thai properly or understand Thai fully, the ministry worries that children will grow up with poor Thai.

"I'm not worried about slang, because it soon goes; the important thing is Thai children using correct Thai grammar, communicating with each other in correct words and sentences," he said.

"Children also do not use their brains to analyze, and there is a lack of writing and pronunciation skills," said Kanchana Naksakul, president of the Association of Thai-Language Teachers.

She urged the government to reduce the tax on children's books so that more parents could afford to buy them.

She added that the ministry could improve children's books with larger type and more pictures. She insisted that teachers and parents must play an important role in helping children to learn and use correct Thai vocabulary.

Playstation nation: A poll has revealed that about one in every four youths plays computer games every day, even though they knew the habit causes them problems.

According to the Assumption Business Administration College (Abac) Poll Research Center, most young players admitted that they wasted their time and money, faced eye problems and saw declining work or academic performances as a result of their attention to computer games.

The survey, conducted from July 8 to July 25, covered 1,441 youths aged between 10 and 24 in Bangkok and its surrounding provinces.

Weighty measures: Dr Wichai Ekpakorn of Mahidol University said more fast-food chains were opening in rural areas with marketing schemes to promote consumption, especially among youngsters. He said parents bought the fatty food for kids without realizing health impacts and more and more kids shunned fruit and vegetables.

Dr Wichai urged the government to implement measures such as the use of law to control the expansion and advertising of fast-food chains, increased tax for importing fast-food products and the establishment of a panel to study the advantages and disadvantages of the fast-food business.

Noting that taxing food based on nutritional content was unprecedented anywhere in the world, Pizza Company Marketing Director Aniruth Mahathorn said the government should first conduct a detailed study of the issues involved before moving forward.

Sensational stuff: The Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB) is threatening criminal lawsuits against advertisers who repeatedly break advertising-related laws to attract attention to their products.

Speaking at a seminar on laws relating to advertising billboards, OCPB Secretary-General Rasamee Vistaveth said, "We

worth paying fines if they can get overwhelming media attention through the use of controversial advertisements," K. Rasamee said.

Open-source initiative: The National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (Nectec) has cooperated with 25 open-source software users and developers to set up Open Source Software Network (OSSN) to promote the development and use of open-source software.

Nectec director Pansak Siriruchatapong said the collaboration would use the strength of open-source users and developers and encourage more local development in the area. OSSN will focus on four pillars of development: open-source software research and development, creation of awareness, policy development and building markets.

K. Pansak said Nectec, as the initiator and a facilitator, would feed money to the network. The center plans to allocate 6 million baht to open-source activities this year.

K. Pansak said the goal was to increase the number of open-source software users by 500%. Open-source users now account for only 0.01% of software users in the country, he said.

The network also plans to increase the number of open-source software firms from 10 to 50 in the next three years and then 100 in the next five years. Open-source software is an alternative for the country to save the cost of importing licensed software while creating more jobs for Thai developers, he said.

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

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Above: There are now many varieties of frangipani. This one is called Moonlight. Left: Orchids are always show-stoppers at any flower fair. Below: This stall's display shows the huge variety of colors now available in the ever popular Ixora.



Bloomin' marvelous

By Janyaporn Morel

If you are reading this August 4, you had better move quickly if you haven't already visited the annual Phuket Flower Show – because today is the final day.

From July 26, some 80 stalls have been set up by garden centers at the show, which features a huge array of plants and flowers for sale and on display, and plenty of handy tips for budding gardeners.

Some of the participating vendors have traveled more than 1,000 kilometers to attend, including some from the farthest reaches of Isarn.

In addition to the usual range of plumeria, orchids, roses and lotus flowers, there are new breeds of flowers, including the yellow-orange Memoria Srivilas Gold, nicknamed "Bang Yai".

The more common white or pink varieties of this flower are available at Supercheap at about 160 baht each, but these new

Bang Yai can fetch 300 baht or more apiece, said Yanisa Dechkamhaeng, from Nakhon Pathom. At the fair they are a bargain at just 250 baht each.

Among other florals on show are bougainvillea, adenium (desert rose) and hibiscus. There are also fragrant flowering plants including a range of jasmine, or *mali* in Thai, as well as bread flower (*Vallaris glabra*, or *chommanad* in Thai), summer lilac (*Buddleia paniculata*, or *rachawadee*) and one species of star

jasmine (*Gardennia coronaria*, or *pudnambut*) that blooms with three different colors on the same flower.

Those looking to engage in some backyard "sufficiency economy" gardening will no doubt be interested in the many types of tropical Thai fruit plants, including durian, rambutan, mango, rose apple, mangosteen, and even a variety of dragon fruit trees developed in Israel. In Thailand, this strain of dragon fruit is grown in Rayong, where the soil is rich and gives the fruit a full, sweet flavor.

There are the more usual plants, including the *Mai Mongkol* that is popular because of its auspicious name, as well as many not-so-common varieties of ornamental plants, ferns and cactus.

One of the most popular exhibits is the "sky-high vegetable" display by the Phuket Provincial Agricultural Office (PPAO), which uses an unusual range of items to hang potted plants.

The exhibit is part of the PPAO's campaign to encourage locals to grow their own herbs and vegetables. Many Phuket City residents do not have a gar-

den, so the PPAO encourages them to use hanging baskets for homegrown herbs and to make their homes more beautiful.

To this end, the PPAO is holding a competition for the "most beautiful" hanging basket display, with bonus points for the most original ideas. One of the displays even uses upended secondhand motorbike helmets as the hanging baskets.

In addition, PPAO Agriculture Office Chief Suthep Ratanaphan and his officers have been on hand to offer advice on hydroponics and related techniques of gardening without soil – useful skills on an island where land prices are sky-high!

Agricultural equipment and garden accessories are also on show, and like most major fairs in Thailand pets, OTOP (One Tambon One Product) products and many other goods are available at discount prices.

Of course, there are food stalls throughout serving a wide variety of inexpensive dishes.

Although the fair officially ends August 4, some vendors will stay for a few more days before moving on. The fair is open until 10:30 pm.

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Fed white and blue

I was in need of a drink, good dinner and plenty of cheer when I pulled up outside the unmistakable blue and white of Le Bleu et Blanc Grill.

Nothing is ordinary about this place. That's how the owners like it and, judging from the enthusiastic comments in the guest book, the patrons appreciate the flair too.

A welcome just short of an embrace from the piano player and singer Laurent Tourraine led to an introduction to owner Valerie Sabbat and her fiancé of 26 years, Alain Franssen. ("We never quite got around to marriage," they explained.) Lots of smiles, laughter and a feeling that I was among old friends cleared the dust from my day and we were set for what turned out to be a splendid, convivial dinner.

Valerie is from Lyon, considered by many to be the gastronomic capital of Europe, while Alain hails from Liege, Belgium. Valerie owned a restaurant in Belgium for six years and she and Alain have been coming to Thailand for 25 years, firm in their belief that they would never open a restaurant here.

It wasn't until Alain retired after 15 years as president of the International Chamber of Commerce for Belgium and Luxembourg in Moscow that their thinking changed.

"We moved to Phuket and Alain was happily playing golf and sailing his yacht, but I really needed something to keep me active and get me out of the house," explained Valerie. "We decided to open a restaurant that would be a bit different, cater to our friends and allow us to gain new ones." Le Bleu et Blanc Grill opened on January 28 this year.

A focal point of the dining room is the baby grand piano in the corner. Laurent plays for the diners every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, and a pianist from the Philippines plays on the other days except Sunday, when the restaurant is closed.

Singers and musicians among the diners are encouraged

to join in, and apparently many take up the offer. A 72-year-old lady had sung herself into Laurent's admiration the night before and he was still in raptures over her voice this evening.

When it comes to food, value for money is the philosophy at Le Bleu et Blanc – or BBG, as some of the younger customers have nicknamed it, to the slight irritation of Valerie.

House wines are served at 100 baht a glass, bottles from 950 to 3,850 baht. The restaurant features a menu that is stunning not only for its offerings, but its amazingly reasonable prices. Profit is far from the major consideration, and it shows.

We began our meal with a delicious amuse-gueule of chicken "cake", as the talented Chef Daniel Peletier described it, with tarragon and coconut sauce and a glass of house Chardonnay to ease its passage.

The entrees arrived with the timing of a well-managed kitchen and we dug into a plate of Les Gambas aux Parfums d'Asie. Three very large prawns cooked in cream with a touch of orange juice to glaze and, quite amazingly (to me at least), a sweet and sour Thai sauce for chicken, *nam jim gai*, straight from the bottle. I shouldn't have been so shocked; it worked a treat.

Le Foie Gras Poêle aux Pommes, duck liver pan fried in butter with apples, honey and Calvados apple brandy, served with sliced and diced apples, simply melted in the mouth.

Here we switched to vino rosso with a fresh and light Lenotti Bardolino DOC Classico 2005, which held its own through the huge flavors of the main course.

BBG – sorry, Valerie – is a grill restaurant and as such it has a impressive stainless-steel barbecue at the entrance. Anxious to sample as large a range of meats as possible, we chose the Royal Mixed Grill.

This is trencherman territory. These are large pieces of beef,



AMUSINGLY DIFFERENT: The Chicken 'Cake', as the talented Chef Daniel Peletier describes it, with tarragon and coconut sauce.

chicken, veal, pork, homemade sausage and pork rib threaded on a steel skewer large enough to do duty as a javelin. To complete the taste it was accompanied by four sauces; chili, garlic, curry and tartare, with a dish of potatoes dauphinois.

The beef is from Argentina, as is all BBG's beef with the exception of the local tenderloin. What to say? I couldn't say much

at all for the first 15 minutes. As to value for money – close to half a kilo of top-grade meat, well cooked and with a choice of rice or potatoes for 425 baht – it's exceptional.

To be honest I would, definitely should, have stopped after this, but Alain had already mixed the rouille and croutons into La Soupe de Poissons and gave me a mouthful before whisking it off

to eat himself. A certain order for the next visit.

The desserts were positively sinful. If the crème brûlée and crème caramel were excellent, the mousse au chocolat was outstanding. No added sugar, just dark chocolate and orange. I am going to need a regular fix.

BBG's first food promotion in June was so successful that Valerie and Alain are planning something special in September.

I am bidden to secrecy, but I can say that it's going to be a hit with the Thai ladies, all ladies actually, but especially ladies with a lean towards the rod. Fishing rod, that is.

Le Bleu et Blanc Grill. 39/18 Wiset Rd, Nai Harn, on the road between Kata and Rawai, near the junction with Saiyuan Rd. Tel: 076-388395 or 083-1768818. Open daily 7 pm to 2 am except Sundays. Average cost for two people is about 2,000 baht, excluding wine.

Email your restaurant recommendations, suggestions and comments to Alistair Why at alistairwhy@gmail.com

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Happily Ever After

Recent weddings in Phuket



Porn-anong Saejia and Kampol Saetan were married in the Phra Pitak Grand Ballroom at The Metropole hotel on July 19.

SIX FAST WOMEN AND SIX TRUCKS

The Donnavventura Grand Raid may have the perfect recipe for a reality show: six beautiful women, six high-powered, shiny pickup trucks and lots of driving. Nick Davies caught up with the Italian celebs during their stop in Phuket July 25 and got to know them a little bit better.

Six bubbly Italian beauties pulled up at the Mitsubishi showroom on Mae Luan Rd last week in a convoy of bright red bright Triton pickup trucks as a part of an Italian television show.

The road-trip "reality" show will showcase the women traveling from Kuala Lumpur to Brunei over a 13,000-kilometer trek.

The test of endurance – both for the women and the cars – will span eight countries in 100 days. During their brief stopover in Phuket the women witnessed the tsunami drill at Patong Beach on July 25 and pitched their tents for an overnight stay.

The contestants will be featured in the Donnavventura Grand Raid reality show, now in its 19th year. Previous shows have featured girls traveling through Africa, Australia and other parts of the world.

The drivers and film crew began the journey in Kuala Lumpur before driving north through Malaysia and into Thailand. They will now continue on to Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore and Brunei before returning to Kuala Lumpur for the grand finale.

Aspiring to become travel reporters, the team will be sharing their expedition experiences with viewers as they make on-the-move video documentaries featuring 12 episodes of exhilarating adventures, the first set to air in Italy in early 2008.

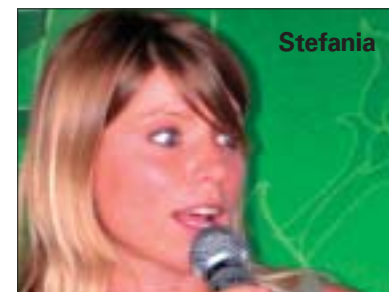
Beautiful and brainy, the six finalists were selected from more than 40,000 applicants. They were chosen not just for their looks, but also for their physical and emotional strength and ambitious, adventurous personalities.

Qualifying for a place in the Grand Raid was not easy. After submitting a video of themselves

to the show's judges, they were put through their paces in tests of physical and mental endurance with outdoor activities including rock climbing, diving and of course, tests of their driving skills.

On the road there is little glamor – and very little time to relax. Rising early, they have just a few minutes to themselves in the morning before climbing into the trucks and heading off for the day's activities.

Asked if they'd had any hair-raising moments on their travels so far, they said that apart from a sheared wheel bolt on one of the trucks, it's been miles of smiles for the adventurers.



Meet the team: Taking part in the Donnavventura Grand Raid for the second year running and leading the pack this year is 25-year-old **Stefania Donati**.

With her experience from last year's adventure across Australia, it is Stefania's job to keep the rest of the team on track and to ensure that daily progress targets are reached.

She is also playing the role of producer for the video documentary this year.

Her life philosophy is simple: practicing strict discipline and allowing nothing to get in the way of her dreams.

Gutsy **Giusy Criscuolo** is 29 and no stranger to theater. She has a degree in cinema history and teaches theater for the Culture

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and Tourism Promotion Board in Calabria.

Fit and sporty, Giusy loves sailing and spends more than two hours a day exercising. She loves solving problems and faces challenges with a positive outlook.

Talking of her adventure with Donnavventura, she says, "This isn't just a game, but an opportunity to try your best and prove you can make something of yourself."



At 36 years old, **Jenny Viant Gomez** from Havana is the oldest of the six-pack. She has a multicultural background and has traveled extensively around the world, including Brazil, Argentina, Australia, South Africa, China, Tunisia and Egypt.

When she's not behind the wheel with Donnavventura, Jenny works as a multi-lingual translator and teaches Spanish.

"I live a very fast-paced

and varied life, and this is the kind of thing I really enjoy," she said.



Benedetta Delogu, at 24, is the youngest member of the team but is well on the way to establishing her dream of becoming a journalist by working for a local newspaper and broadcasting company at home.

Benedetta describes herself as an active person who believes that determination and persistence are the keys to achieving personal goals.

Asked what she is getting out of this adventure he replied, "This is giving me valuable experience for my chosen career as a journalist and I am enjoying push-

ing myself to the limit. But I do miss my dog, Rock, and good homemade pasta."



No-nonsense **Elisa Grazzini**, 29, has just completed a law degree. Keen on travel and documentaries, she is also an avid swimmer and lover of nature. "I'm really excited about having the opportunity to see a variety of wildlife and spectacular scenery on this adventure," she said.

Yanne Mattei, 30, is happiest living a simple life, ready to pack up and move on at a moment's notice. Having spent a lot of her life living on an island in French



Polynesia, she loves the sea and

relishes adventure. "If you want to get on in life and discover your true self, you have to leave behind things such as makeup and designer clothes," she said.

Follow the dream team's Donnavventura Malaysian Grand Raid adventures on the official, Italian-language, website at: www.donnnavventura.com

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This week



LIFEBLOOD: Above, Phuket Red Cross Vice-Chairman Wipapan Khusawan (back row, 3rd from right) and Red Cross representatives join Prince of Songkla University (PSU) Phuket Campus Deputy Director Wiroj Pootong (back row, center) and PSU students at the launch of the Red Cross nationwide organ-donation project.

CAED MILLE FAILTE: Right, Dubliners Ron Corley (left) and his son Tom (right), owners of the Irish Times pub at Jungceylon, pose with staff at the recent opening of their pub.



GRANDE OL' TIME: Jan von Hildebrand (in red shirt), events manager at Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket, celebrates with family and friends at a birthday party for his father, Alexander (in yellow shirt), at The Watermark bar and restaurant at Boat Lagoon.



CLEAN SWEEP: Kajonkietsuksa School took home three first place prizes from the Regional Student Handicraft Art 2007 contest held by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. Nina Maria Barvornpotsakul (left) claimed top honors in the Level 2 English-reading contest; Piyapat Attanatkun won in the Level 2 public speaking in Thai contest; and Pawida Moriggi (right) won the singing competition.



RED CARPET: Celebrating the opening of Saman Carpet Phuket, located on the bypass road, are (from right) owners Boonmai Kulabwan and Kongkiat Kiattikul; K. Kongkiat's mother K. Sewkin; Labor Court Region 8 Chief Justice Pemsak Saisritong and his wife, K. Orachorn.



ON SHOW: Debuting their latest exhibition, entitled 'Rattanakosin Spiritual Poetry', at Vichen Gallery in Bzenter mall, Rawai, are artist Apinan Toyankasame (2nd from left); Somkid Huangtanapan (center), owner of Bzenter mall; Somnuek Huangtanapan (2nd from right), founder and curator of Vichen Gallery; and Pakpicha Huangtanapan (right), manager of Bzenter mall.



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Pop writing pro plays Patong

Bill Padley, one of the UK's most prolific songwriters, with four No 1 hits to his name and two Ivor Novello nominations (the UK music industry's equivalent of a Grammy) has been entertaining lucky guests at Misty's Bar at the Burasari resort in Patong Sunday lunchtimes and Monday evenings.

You'd be forgiven for not instantly recognizing the singer-songwriter's name, but once you hear some of the pop songs he's written, you'll be ashamed for not knowing who he was in the first place.

Bill Padley is the talent responsible for the huge success of the pop stars who sing his songs, seldom appearing on stage himself. It's a rare treat for anyone who can get down to Misty's bar between now and the end of August to hear the voice of the man behind some of the world's most played songs in recent years.

Bill has co-written hits including the Christmas 2005 No 1 *That's my Goal* performed by Shayne Ward. The song, written

specifically for the popular UK talent show *X-Factor*, spent four weeks at the top spot in the UK, selling 1.2 million copies and making it one of the fastest selling British singles ever.

He also co-wrote and produced *Whole Again* for Atomic Kitten, a song that gave him two Ivor Novello nominations, while the single went on to sell more than two million copies worldwide.

So what's a world-class songwriter with four number one hits to his name and platinum records hanging on his walls doing playing twice a week at a hotel in Patong?

It all started in January when Bill decided to take a well-earned break from the stresses of London life.

He chose Burasari, where he could keep up with events at home via the resort's Wifi and, being an avid fan of another British legend, Keith Floyd, could also check out Floyd's latest brasserie.

After the pair met, Keith persuaded Bill to buy a guitar and

play a few popular numbers on the brasserie's opening night. Perched on a bar stool, playing acoustic versions of his favorite hits, Bill took a trip down memory lane to his days of playing the

Bill is driven by passion and emotion – "life's too short" is one of his favorite sayings. His career in pop music and broadcast radio – singing, writing and producing for over 20 years – has

The enigmatic Bill Padley plays his light, catchy tunes at the Burasari in Patong Sunday lunchtimes and Monday evenings.



brought together his musical talent and ability to recognize what audiences want.

Despite being the man who has shaped the careers of high profile artists like Atomic Kitten, Westlife, Ronan Keating and Liberty X, Bill is probably one of the most down-to-earth guys you could ever meet.

Watching him play and interact with the audience at Burasari, it was obvious that Bill was in his element in front of a crowd; and he did it all without an ounce of the overzealous ego you might expect from someone of his stature.

Bill was a great crowd pleaser, throwing out sarcastic remarks to the audience between songs and talking to everyone like he'd known them for years.

Give yourself a rare treat and something to talk about when you get home by taking the chance to listen to the man who has done so much for British pop and radio.

Bill Padley is playing at Misty's Bar on Sundays 1 pm to 3 pm and Mondays 8 pm to 11 pm until August 27. For more information, call the Burasari resort at 076-292929 or visit www.burasari.com

AFTER DARK

By Nick Davies



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THE BIG QUESTION

It's all rakes on the catwalk, with belts for blouses and minuscule miniskirts on the models. But not all girls can squeeze into a size zero – so what do you do if you have a fuller figure? Nanthapak “Pah Kam” Hongsakul is one woman in Phuket with a feast of big ideas.

Oops!, located in Phuket City near Expo, is a shop offering a variety of larger-style designs made for big women tired of the drab clothes created by people who think plus-sized fashion is all mumus and dreary tees.

K. Pah Kam said finding clothes in Phuket for big girls was a tiresome task, which was why she opened Oops!

The shop is easy to spot, with large mannequins adorning the display window. Items in the shop range from about 400 to 800 baht.

K. Pah Kam designs all the clothes in the shop with her daughter, Patitta “Pan” Hongsakul, who is also public relations manager at Metropole Phuket Hotel. Working in PR, K. Pan has to meet a lot of people and look her best every day, and that's where mum's shop can help out.

“I started this business about one year ago,” said K. Pah Kam. “I love to design dresses for women, and I want everyone who wears one of my dresses to look good. My designs are based on my customers' demands.”

K. Pah Kam said she tries to make her dresses stand out. “If I think that one of my designs is a bit plain,” she said, “I

will add some accessories to it, such as glass beads or ribbons.

“Some people say that larger women should only wear darker colors to hide their shapes, but I'm here to tell every girl out there that this is just not right!” she added.

“When most of my customers walk into my shop, they will choose something colorful, rather than something dark. I always tell my customers that you have to be confident and not worry about your shape – just think about your favorite style,” she said.

“Some people come to my shop looking for something to wear to a party or out to dinner,” she added. “I let my customers walk around and look at what they like, and then I can offer my advice about what I think is most suitable.”

Many larger women in Phuket wear plain T-shirts without ever feeling comfortable about their clothes, said K. Pah Kam. They think that their shapes do not provide them with many options about what to wear.

“The biggest woman I've come across in my shop was 120 kilograms, but there are many different types of size: some women are big up top, while others may only be big around their stomachs. I get a lot of pregnant women here too, and I have to tailor to their shapes.”



BE CONFIDENT: Phannipha Yenjit, 22, a student from Karon, checks out a bright floral top at Oops!

Not all customers are as bold as K. Pah Kam.

“Some customers are very shy,” said K. Pan. “They won't walk out of the fitting

room and don't want me or my mom to even look at them, even if we have some suggestions.

“When that happens we have to try and give the customer confidence, because if she won't come out of the dressing room, how is she going to go outside and walk down the street?” she added.

Praewpayom Aikwanich, assistant advertising sales manager of Asia Web Direct, said, “I've been coming to this shop since it opened. I used to go shopping in Bangkok to buy dresses because there were no suitable shops for me in Phuket. But now I just tell K. Pah Kam what I need and she will do it for me. She loves to make us happy and feel proud about who we are.”

When a new dress style arrives at Oops!, K. Pan sends out a short SMS message to all her customers.

“Big girls have money and they want to buy clothes, but not many people really understand them,” said K. Pah Kam.

- Natcha Yuttaworawit

Oops! is on Tilok Uthit 2 Rd near Expo. It is open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 9 pm, and on Sunday afternoons. For more information call 076-232465.

Tong's golden melon magic

When you're sipping a cocktail at the trendiest resorts and clubs, the drinks are about the same as everywhere else that booze is slung, right?

Not the case if your bar-

tender is Kiatchai “Tong” Petchsuwan, winner of the Finlandia Pure Bartending Competition 2007, who mixes top-notch showmanship with a unique rock melon cocktail recipe.

K. Tong, 25, from Songkhla, has been tending bar for near-

ly four years now and has been showcasing his talents at the Patong Bay Garden Resort for the past year.

He started his journey toward slinging stardom during his years in college. Unlike most college students, K. Tong opted to spend his time behind the bar instead of slumped over it.

His school featured a student club for bartending and a teacher of his at the time, Pongsathorn “Ood” Wuttimonkol, suggested that he try the flair-bartending activity.

Earlier this year, K. Ood encouraged him to enter the Finlandia contest that took place on July 10 at Jungceylon.

The persuasion from K. Ood shows the progress K. Tong has made since his college days. K. Tong recollects a disastrous, yet humorous, moment from university.

It was one of his first times performing and when mixing the drink, he added all the correct juices and flavoring, but, being overexcited about the competition, he left out the key ingredient in a cocktail; the alcohol.

Having perfected his craft since that unfortunate mishap, he discussed the cocktail that has given him the most positive feedback among the competitions he has entered.

He calls his creation “Me-



The Melon de Ouse, created by K. Tong and his teacher, K. Ood.

lon de Ouse” due to its main ingredient: the rock melon, a green fruit that resembles a cantaloupe.

K. Tong said that the creation should be credited as a collaboration between himself and K. Ood.

Melon de Ouse

Ingredients:

1oz	Light rum
½ oz	Malibu coconut rum
1oz	Rock melon juice
1oz	Sweet and sour mix

Method:

The most complicated, yet most important stage is the making of the rock melon juice. The rock melon fruit must be blended into a fine puree and then allowed to drip through a filter.

The process is time consuming, but it is the only way to extract the full flavor from the rock melon, K. Tong explained.

A portion of the rock melon fruit should be set aside to create the garnish that accompanies the drink.

Once you have your juice, put it in a shaker with the other ingredients, shake and serve in a cocktail glass.

“I have showcased the “Melon de Ouse” in about five contests this year and the next competition I will bring it to will be in Singapore in September. I plan on doing my homework on the Thai style and presenting it in a new way. The new creation will not stray far from the existing one. It will just incorporate new elements into it,” K. Tong said.

The runners-up at the Finlandia Pure Bartending Competition 2007 were second-placed Anucha Channak, representing Phuket's La Casa restaurant, and third-placed Pongpan Sangthai, representing Bed Supper Club in Bangkok, who took home first place in last year's competition.

- Semacote Suganya

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Members of the cast of the stage play about Princess Mahsuri.



An all-male group sing folk songs in *Di-Ke Hulu* style, clapping and swaying in rhythm to the song.

A LOCAL AFFAIR



Above: Former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai releases a pigeon to signify freedom and peace during the opening ceremony.

Right: Many women wore their smartest finery to visit the event.



Despite the heavens opening on the first day of the Halal Food Hilal Town festival in Thalang on July 27, throngs of people turned out for the biggest celebration of Muslim culture on the island.

The five-day festival, opened by former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, featured activities including art and culture displays, food stalls with *halal* cuisine, and a local Muslim gourmet cooking contest.

There were contests for *Quran* reading, a traditional dress fashion show, zebra dove bird-singing contests, career-training programs and a theatrical performance of folk songs in *Di-Ke Hulu* style, performed with sing-

ers sitting down, clapping rhythms and making hand gestures to help relate the tale.

Throughout the grounds were displays highlighting aspects of local Muslim life, including a huge fishing boat clad in batik with Muslim motifs and illuminated from within to beautiful effect, as well as similarly-decorated minarets. Lining the entrance were empty bird cages used as lanterns to signify freedom.

Local Muslim people in their finest traditional dress paraded the streets, past the stalls selling cloth in a vast array of colors and food vendors making local Muslim delicacies, including one favorite, *roti*.

Each night featured a spectacular light and sound show tell-

ing the tragic story of the legendary Princess Mahsuri, a Muslim Siamese princess who was put to death in Langkawi after being falsely accused of adultery.

The story explains that as she died, she placed a curse on the island so that the land would not prosper for seven generations. Playing the part of Princess Mahsuri was Kamala native Sirintra Yayee, who is believed to be the seventh-generation descendant of Princess Mahsuri.

This was the third year that the Halal Food Hilal Town festival had taken place, with the festival growing in popularity each year. Next year's event is likely to be even bigger, and should be well worth attending if you missed out on this year's festivities.

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G'DAY VIETNAM!

What was planned as an adventurous week's mountain biking trip to Dalat followed by another week on a Sunsail yacht out of Nha Trang turned out to be more than an adventure. It was an eye-opening first experience of Vietnam and perfect break from Phuket.

I had always thought Communist Vietnam would be a rather drab and mundane place, reminiscent of a trip I once did across Russia and China in the early '80s.

I was in for a pleasant surprise. My first impression of Hanoi was one of vibrancy, as the city is an eclectic mix of the chunky Russian/Chinese architecture entwined with the elegant tree- and café-lined French-style boulevards. I was also impressed by the helpful and friendly people I got a chance to meet, many of whom spoke English.

With our mountain bikes disassembled and placed in large bags, my friend Allan and I left our wives at 5 am after one night in the comforts of the Somerset Apartments, bang in the middle of Hanoi.

As we rushed to catch an early flight to the mountains of Dalat, the whole city appeared to be awake and exercising on the streets.

Dalat, the cool summer retreat of colonials, is spread out over many square miles full of fields of veggies, fruits and flowers, much of it under plastic. I had never seen such enormous cabbages, and was delighted to eat fresh strawberries again. Every square inch of the fertile soil is cultivated. The people are industrious and "colorful", like most mountain people.

To the amusement of the



GETTING HIGH: Dalat from the summit of Lang Bian. Below: Now where did I put my water wings? Allan makes a river crossing.

locals, we assembled our mountain bikes on the street in front of our small hotel. Once ready to roll, we met up with Dung, our guide at Phat Tire Adventures, to plan the next seven days of our off-road mountain-biking odyssey into the unknown.

Every day was brilliant and different in its own right; following trails and tracks through beautiful, untouched coniferous forests, rustic villages, farms and bogs, across and through rivers and along ridges. The rugged and hilly terrain took us up and down 1:1 slopes, some with potentially deadly obstacles such as ruts,

rocks and tree roots. Most days we covered about 30 kilometers by lunchtime, which was enough considering the steep terrain. Lunch was always fresh baguettes with Red Bull, cheese and salad.

Route names like "Skid Marks" and "Crazy 8" sum up the experiences. A two-day circuit covered my favorite route, the "Hilly Billy", a circumnavigation of an entire valley that included an overnight stay in mountain huts at Lang Bian. There we were surprisingly entertained by a Saigon company in the middle of a leadership-training course along with local gong dancers all on a concrete circle. It would make a perfect location for a Hash House Harrier "On! On! On!" session.

Getting covered in mud and falling off the bikes were part of the deal, especially on the second-to-last day when on a steep and slippery downhill slope I parted company with my bike, ending up on my head in a pool of blood!

Undeterred, I patched up and continued for four hours before I reached the local hospital, where I received two stitches. While I was in a dentist's chair, I saw my first bust of the highly revered Ho Ch Minh, the modern-day savior and hero of all Vietnamese. Our post-cycling massages in a separate medical spa were both rejuvenating and unique, as the facilities there are complete with jacuzzi, steam bath, sauna and cubicles with ceiling racks to support the white-



uniformed nurses as they tramped over our backs.

After a day's rest, we cycled 110 of the total 140 kilometers of blacktop to Nha Trang on the coast. The ride started in cold, wet and cloudy conditions at 1,600 meters but ended in hot sun, with speeds reaching 65-km/h.

Before long we were away from the mountains and into the hustle and bustle of Highway 1 and eventually Nha Trang, where we met Susan and Claire. They

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Harry Usher

appeared to have been talking and drinking continuously since we left them a week before.

After a good reception by Sunsail's Morgan and Mel we had several beers in the Brewery and Sailing Club before setting off for six nights on *Constanza*, a 46-foot

Sunsail yacht. Luckily we were upgraded from a 36-footer we had originally booked because the fridge on that boat was causing problems. The bigger boat meant that each couple had the luxury of two double cabins.

Everything worked well on the boat and we had good winds, even a 40-knot squall! The superb cruising was interspersed by a variety of fun experiences: sailing, excellent drinking and dining on board and ashore, snorkeling in clear waters, walking over huge sand dunes and visiting fishing villages and resorts.

We spent most of our time in Vong Tong Bay, home to many small fishing boats and mobile fish farms. Alternating easily between the many exotic day and night anchorages, we enjoyed impressive views with extensive mountain and sand-dune backdrops.

One of the highlights was visiting Markus, a talkative and interesting 80-year-old Croatian married to a local girl. He had recently finished construction on his paradise resort on a beach in a record time of just 48 days from start to finish – and at a price that would make Phuket developers very envious.

Two further nights of discovery in Hanoi, while staying in the plush 5-star Melia Hotel, completed an excellent overall view of the varied attractions the country has to offer.

My final impression of Vietnam was that it is a nation with a buoyant, free-market economy within a thriving communist society, run by hard-working people proud of what they have achieved after the years of hardship under the colonial occupations of the past.

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What's in a smell? The sea breeze so thick with salt that you can taste it; the mingling scents of men and women looking for love on Soi Bangla; or the pungent aroma of cilantro, Thailand's most opinion-polarizing herb – you can't get away from Phuket's smells; some for the better, some for the worse.

Spas are no exception, so for my spa assignment I wanted to sniff out the best treatments for an assault on the senses.

I found just the place at The Royal Spa, at the Homduang Bel Air Panwa Hotel on Cape Panwa. As soon as I walked into the spa I was overcome by a host of odors, most of them pleasant, some of them made me feel sleepy, others awakening.

As for the spa, here are the vital statistics, as told by Spa Manager Wanwisa Hasup: there are seven The Royal Spa branches in Thailand; at the spa at the Homduang resort at Panwa are six therapists and six beds for foot massage, and five treatment rooms and five rooms for Thai massage.

When you go for a scrub at the spa, you get to choose your favorite smell. My favorite smell? Wow, that's a tough choice. Chocolate? Emporio Armani? *Somtani*? Honey scrub is great for dry skin, K. Wanwisa said, but I opted for a salt scrub, the ideal option for exfoliating the skin.

Oil massages at The Royal



**Spa
MAGIC**



By Supanun Supawong

The Royal Spa

The two-hour Wondering spa package for men, including a herbal steam or sauna, foot bath, Andaman salt scrub and Essence of Spirit Massage costs 3,100 baht. A three-hour Relaxing package for women, including a herbal steam or sauna, foot bath, green tea scrub, Royal Experience Massage and after-sun facial will set you back 4,500 baht.

My sense of smell sated, I left The Royal Spa with my nose tingling and my body radiating vitality and rejuvenation.

Right on the nose

Spa come loaded with a cocktail of scents. The spa has its own in-house massage oil, which is a blend of frangipani, lavender and fruit oil with mandarin and cha-

momile. Each ingredient can be used less, more or not at all, depending on a customer's desires, said K. Wanwisa.

I never realized that people

could be allergic to lavender, but I can't get enough of the stuff and was pleased that after my oil massage I ended up smelling just like the flower.

The Royal Spa, open 9 am to 8 pm, is located on the second floor of Homduang Bel Air Panwa Hotel. The spa has been open for almost two months after taking over the location of the hotel's former spa, Frangipany Spa. For further information call Wanwisa Hasup at 081-0877050.



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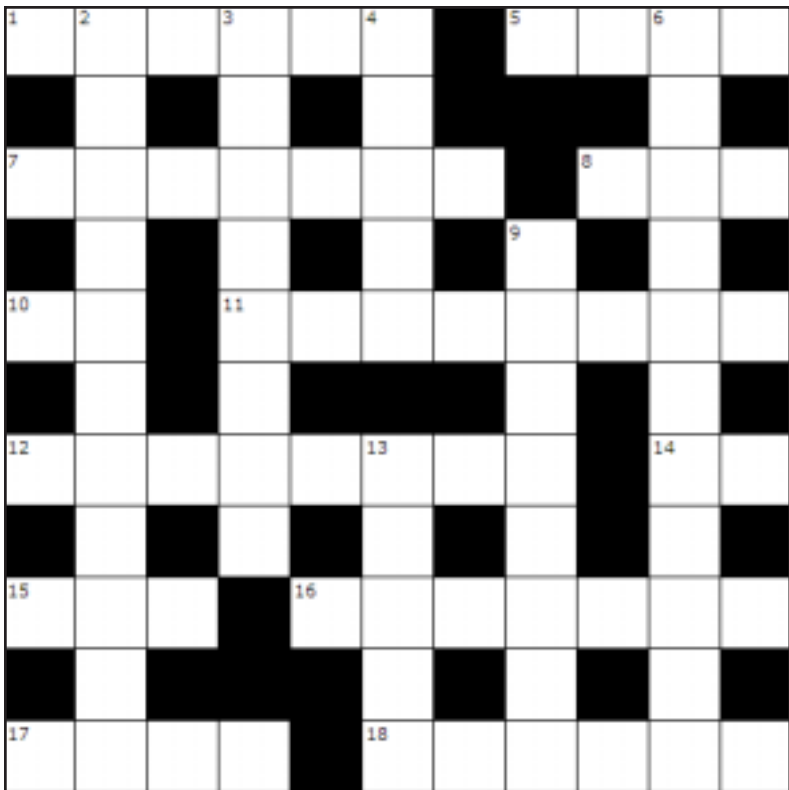
The Cryptic Crossword

A cartoon illustration of a young boy with short, dark hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and dark pants. He is holding a very large, black pencil horizontally in front of him with both hands. The pencil is as tall as he is. The drawing is in a simple, friendly style with large eyes and a slight smile.



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

Answers on next page



Quick Crossword

ACROSS

1. Island province.
5. Flower with thorns.
7. Emerald Isle.
8. Cheeky little chap.
10. Yes, in Spain.
11. Al Capone, eg.
12. Sea beast with sharp teeth.
14. Rolls-Royce, in short.
15. *** and arrow.

16. Salad ingredient.
17. Sports channel.
18. A little drunk.

DOWN

2. Eating plants only.
3. 1,000 grams.
4. Mortise and *****.
6. Balanced left and right.
9. Far from civilization.
13. Vote for.

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. In 1939, how many Oscars did *Gone With The Wind* win?
2. Which was Ronald Reagan's last movie before entering politics?
3. Which city served as the backdrop for *An Officer and a Gentleman*, *Harry and the Hendersons* and *Little Buddha*?
4. Who was the first black actor to win an Oscar?
5. How much did Sylvester Stallone earn from his work on *Rocky*?
6. Which was the first British movie with sound? Who directed it?
7. Which movie launched Richard Dreyfuss and Harrison Ford?
8. *King Kong* was released in 1938. In which year was the sequel, *Son of Kong*, released?
9. How many movies did Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers make together?
10. Which 1954 movie was banned in Britain because of its violent content?
11. Which movie had the working title *The William Munny Killings*?
12. Which Arnold Schwarzenegger movie was banned in 54 Arab and Muslim states?
13. What is a movie's chief electrician known as?
14. Which author said, "Having your book turned into a movie is like seeing your oxen turned into bouillon cubes"?
15. How many kilometers of film does a two-hour movie use?
16. Which actor died of a heart attack during the filming of *Gladiator*?
17. How old was Julie Garland when she acted in *The Wizard of Oz*?
18. Which actor's scenes were cut entirely from *ET, the Extra-Terrestrial*?
19. In the James Bond movie, what is Goldfinger's favorite drink?
20. Who defined a movie director as "a man who presides over accidents"?

Answers below, left

Puzzle Solutions

Monster Quiz Answers

1. Nine; 2. *The Killers*;
3. Seattle; 4. Sidney Poitier; 5. US\$23,000;
6. *Blackmail*, by Alfred Hitchcock; 7. *American Graffiti*;
8. The same year – 1938; 9. Ten; 10. *The Wild One*;
11. *Unforgiven*; 12. *True Lies*;
13. Gaffer; 14. John le Carré; 15. 3.29 km;
16. Oliver Reed; 17. Sixteen; 18. Harrison Ford;
19. Mint julep; 20. Orson Welles.

Solution to Cartoon Puzzle



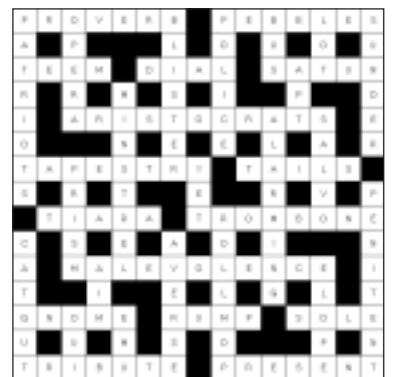
EZ Trivia Answers:

1. Seven; 2. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*;
3. Five; 4. Florida; 5. J K Rowling; 6. Four: a quaffle, two bludgers and a golden snitch;
8. Ravenclaw; 9. Hedwig; 10. 65.

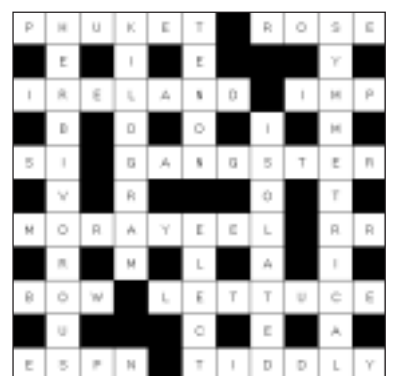
Rhyme Time Answers:

1. Underestimate; 2. Golden Gate; 3. Ornate; 4. Straight; 5. Strait; 6. Mate; 7. Wait; 8. Freight; 9. Bait; 10. Grate.

Cryptic Crossword Solution



Quick Crossword Solution



Sudoku solution

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

Basil Fawlty in Pattaya

Here you are, an overweight, middle-aged Brit with a Thai wife, two sons and a packet stacked away from London real estate deals. How better to spend your golden retirement years than supine in a hammock, basking in the sun in Pattaya? You simply turn an apartment block you own into a 23-room boutique hotel. Haw! Haw! Haw!

The laughs are already coming. Hiring incompetent local staff? Dealing with shady contractors? Coping with lunatic hotel guests? Basil Fawlty, welcome to Pattaya.

Kevin Meacher has written an hilarious account of his tribulations as a hotel owner: *Riff-Raffles* (Bangkok Books, 2007, 207pp). Bug-eyed bewilderment, sputtering rage, babbling confusion, spastic slapstick – Meacher goes through the whole gamut as he runs full tilt into the brick wall of the Thai way of doing things.

"The biggest problem for me was that there did not appear to be any sense of urgency," he writes in an early diary entry on Christmas Day 2004. Construction deadlines for two new floors to the hotel had been cavalierly ignored. Meacher arrives on site to find work at a complete standstill.

"Our building was being used as temporary accommodation for the workmen, there were hammocks hung from the ceilings, there were dirty clothes everywhere, there were cooking pots across the floor and the entire building was full of plastic bags. Supposed workers were sitting



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

around idly, some drinking whisky whilst others slept. One couple was actually 'on the job', albeit not the job I was expecting them to be on!"

Meacher plunges into heavy construction work while his wife Sujinda ("Mrs Boss" – a steely-eyed Thai version of Sybil Fawlty) handles the hotel staff on the first four floors.

Following the tsunami, the hotel is packed with displaced tourists, and when the room maids quit, the couple begin changing sheets themselves.

"I am especially fond of finding used condoms under the sheets, that really sets me up nicely for the day, I can tell you," Meacher writes.

"I am considering giving some of our guests hygiene lessons, or better still, simply popping the old secondhand Johnny into an envelope and mailing it to their home address. Well they were obviously so attached to the bloody things that they could not bring themselves to dispose of them appropriately!"



Meanwhile, the couple go looking for a temporary home and are astonished by the astronomical rents. "Such were the ridiculous demands made, I had been thinking that perhaps whilst asleep someone had tattooed COMPLETE TOSSER across my forehead."

Back at the hotel, two fat drunken louts in their underpants, merrily shrieking obscenities, have tossed a pair of glass balcony doors to the sidewalk four floors below. Just a normal day.

After three months on the job, Meacher reflects, "The behaviour of farangs [foreigners], unfortunately the English in particular, borders on the barbaric [...] The Thai people here are also driving me around the bend. Their work ethic is non-existent and they live in a bubble. They are bubble people."

And off Meacher is on a rant about his sublimely oblivious hotel employees. He'll tell someone to do something. The employee will nod his understanding and do the complete opposite.

This leads to a towering temper tantrum. Which leads to tears and a disappearing act.

"The other character trait guaranteed to have me climbing up the wall is the commonly seen inane grin," Meacher writes. "No, this is not the beautiful smile that forms so quickly and easily on the faces of Thai people that is famous the world over, this is the grin of stupidity. This grin appears whenever you suggest to someone that they have made a mistake. Their head will drop, their eyes will be fixed to the floor and then every few seconds they will look at you with this grin. It is as though they are mocking you!"

Inevitably, Meacher eventually begins to loosen up and roll with the punches.

"I have changed and, I believe, changed for the better," he writes in his introduction. "I have become more tolerant and I have started to understand a new and very different culture."

What fun it is to watch him learn.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Upcoming events on the island

August 5. Wine Connection lunch & dinner.

The wine bar and bistro at Wine Connection in Chalong will host an open lunch and dinner every Sunday starting August 5. Any party size can be accommodated. For further information call Pascal at 087-8896074 or email: fb.phuket@wineconnection.co.th

August 5. Barbecue Brunch at the Mangosteen.

Specialty brunches every Sunday from 11 am to 3 pm, with a barbecue brunch on August 5. Only 499 baht net, with the first 20 bookings each week paying just 399 baht net. With a half-bottle of wine, the charge is 950 baht net. For details call Christophe Lopez at 076-289399 or email: info@mangosteen-phuket.com

August 6-11. YRock Summer Music Camp at Laguna.

Free workshops open to any act, talent or audio-visual crew, including musicians, bands, singers, DJs and media jocks. Live performances at the Laguna Holiday Club Resort on August 11, from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm, by talent involved in the workshops and YRock Pop winners Ghost Souljah and Dani & Maren. For more details email: belmike@netvigator.com

August 10. Party at BYD Lofts.

DJ Eddie plays his music as

usual, scores of gorgeous ladies and passable dudes strut their stuff. Heineken draft beers at 90 baht net. All other libations at net prices. Exquisite free tapas, free occasional shooters.

First two groups of three to six ladies qualify for the usual free bottle of wine or scotch and mixers. Prize for most weirdly decked-out personality. Great for networking, meeting cool people, old friends, new friends and so on. 8 pm to 11:30 pm.

For details contact Stephan at 076-3430247, email: manager@bydlofts.com or visit www.bydlofts.com

August 12. HM The Queen's birthday – Public Holiday.

HM The Queen's birthday is also known as Thailand's "Mother's Day". Since this is a Sunday, the following day will be a public holiday.

August 19. Meditation retreat.

Free monthly meditation retreats on the third Sunday of every month from 1:30 pm to 3 pm at Wang Kung restaurant, located behind Suan Luang Park in Phuket City.

For more information call 081-3704005, 089-6476424 or 087-2838185; email: mananya@hotmail.com or poolsuk@asianpremier.com; or visit www.meditationthai.org

September 5-7. KTO Junior Golf Challenge 2007.

The inaugural KTO Junior Challenge Golf Tournament will be held at the Laguna Phuket Golf Club. This international tournament is open to children 6 to 17 years of age who hold a current handicap card from a recognized golf club. Registration is US\$285 (approx 9,975 baht) per player, including welcome reception, three-day greens fees and caddy fees, awards luncheon and more. Registration closing date is

July 31. Special events, discounted greens fees and special hotel rates at Laguna Beach Resort have also been arranged. For further information visit www.kids-tee-off.com

September 22. The 8th Phuket International Beer Fest.

A celebration of probably the best beers and most ardent beer drinkers in the world at the Watermark Bar and Restaurant.

This is your chance to show to the world, or at least Phuket,

your favorite beer. Yes! YOU supply the beer – in the hope that it wins the prestigious accolade of "Winner of The 8th Phuket International Beer Fest". Each competitor must supply 12 bottles or cans of their nominated international beer. All entries are required to register in advance. Entry fee: 12 beers plus 800 baht.

Tip: bring back the best beer from overseas while you're traveling this summer! For more information call Stuart Bird at 081-7376184.

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A tsunami warning, loud and clear

While the “Andaman Wave 007” testing of the 79 warning towers installed by the National Disaster Warning Center (NDWC) may have been successful in sending out the message that Phuket’s Andaman coastline has a tsunami early warning system in place, the reality is that numerous obstacles need to be overcome before the system can be considered truly effective.

The well-orchestrated and broadly-publicized media event at the beach end of Soi Bangla on July 25 [see News pages and Inside Story, pages 4-5] stood in sharp contrast to what was happening at most other risk areas on the island at the same time – or to be precise, what was not happening.

In Kalim, the only evacuees were the 350 students and staff at the rebuilt Baan Kalim School. In Kamala, Chalong and Ao Por there were even smaller turnouts. In other locations there were no evacuation attempts and at Ao Yon the siren failed to emit any sound at all.

Reports indicate that the response was much the same throughout the region, though events in Krabi the evening of the following day – when seven sirens sounded false alarms – demonstrated that the public is still very much prepared to run for safety, but only if they perceive the threat as real.

It may be that the failure of local officials in getting the public to take part in evacuation drills is just another demonstration of complacency. Nevertheless, experts in the field of disaster preparedness and mitigation agree that such drills play a crucial role in maintaining public confidence in the system and ensuring that real evacuations can be conducted safely and efficiently should an emergency arise.

With such complacency having set in so firmly less than four years after Phuket suffered the worst natural disaster in recorded history, one can only speculate what the readiness level will be like 10, 20 or 30 years down the road.

On the technical side, while most of the towers emitted sirens sufficiently loud to be heard throughout the areas they were designed to cover, in some areas – most notably Patong – ambient noise levels were just too high for the warnings to be heard clearly.

While noise is unavoidable in a busy area such as Patong, the recent tsunami tower tests provide yet another good reason to limit unnecessary additional noise, such as the din from road-clogging soundtrucks endlessly repeating the same tasteless messages at full, ear-splitting volume.

– The Editor

Do you have an opinion you want to share?
Email editor@phuketgazette.net

Phuket Gazette

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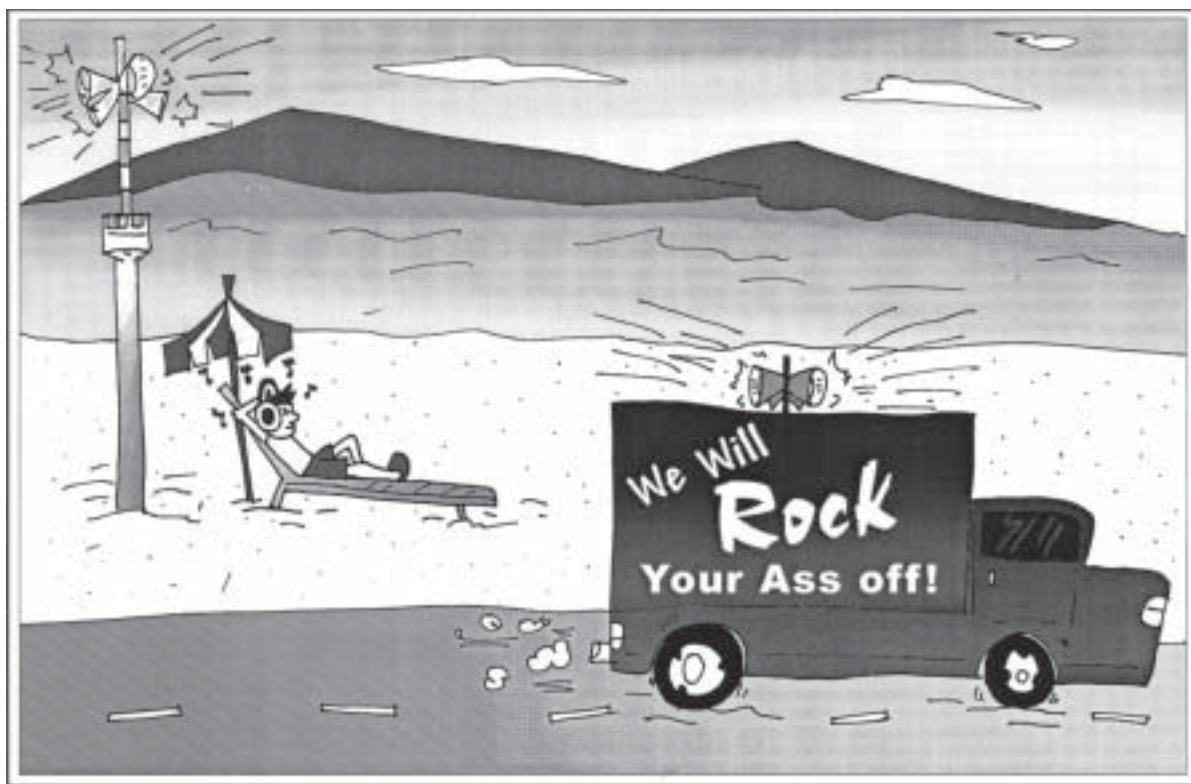
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Letters

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.

Chilling story

Kudos to Marque A Rome’s admirable powers of deduction in pinning down the evils of chili consumption in exposing how people who eat chili are dumber than most (“Stupid Food”, *Gazette* July 21).

However, if his demographical theories were to be mercilessly followed through, a rather chilling (ouch) fact emerges about the author of the piece himself.

It would become plain that an overwhelming majority of mass murderers, despotic dictators and all-around loonies from the past century have sported conspicuous and – some would say – silly mustaches.

Sam Wilko
Rawai

Dog fight

While I appreciate the efforts that the Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) makes toward reducing the size of the street dog population, I don’t like the way the recent Making Tracks article presented as facts many points that are highly debatable.

Without reference to any actual scientific studies to support his claims, Top Dog states that without a population of “street dogs” our island would instead be over-run by cats, monkeys, rats or even pigs, all feasting on our refuse.

Top Dog asserts – again without any evidence to back up his claim – that these “street dogs” are “quasi-feral” and that some “may not have had an ancestor that was a pet in 4,000 years”.

I would like to know just where these assertions come from. Has some university undertaken a major DNA study on the

island that I haven’t heard about?

You can tell from a glance that most have domestic pet genes somewhere in their recent ancestry.

Rather than fitting the description of “quasi-feral” animals that Top Dog ascribes to them, the vast majority of dogs in my neighborhood would be much better described as “freelance pets”. Almost all of them interact closely with humans and are played with by humans as puppies.

These dogs thrive on our streets not because they are “better equipped” as scavengers (rats would beat them hands down in an even competition), but through the mercy of the local residents who have known them since they were pups.

While the number of street dogs seems to have decreased in recent years, is it really all because of sterilization campaigns? Might not the dramatic rise in the number of vehicles on the roads be at least partly responsible?

Although I prefer the more humane sterilization methods used by the SDF, the fact is that killing street dogs is an undeniably effective way of reducing their numbers – just drive down to Malaysia and see for yourself.

Charles McBride
Chalong

Bus bumps

It seems to me that the Phuket authorities are missing the point.

For years there have been complaints from locals and tourists about the state of public transportation in Phuket. The well-known tuk-tuk offenders, the ridiculous taxi schemes, the thoroughfares riddled with dangerous obstacles... and now last week on your front page I see the Phuket Provincial Transport Office has

decided to make a big change!

But what is their change? Not fixing the problems that actually beset travelers, but moving the bus station out of town. This move, to a less-centralized location near the warehouses on the edge of town, will cost 80 million baht. Just imagine what could have been accomplished with that money if it had been put to a good use.

I noticed that the only stated reason given was to reduce bus traffic downtown, but moving the location will force travelers to rely even more on the shoddy local bus system or shell out even more on tuk-tuks and taxis.

The authorities had better not read Top Dog’s article from last week too closely or they are bound to start shipping in rats to get of all these pesky dogs.

Soon to be Stranded
Middle of Nowhere

Totally stoked

I enjoyed your article (*Gazette* issue of July 28) regarding the surfer group known as the Kata Krew. I’ve been curious about surfing since my recent move to Phuket, but before my move, I read in a variety of sources on the Web that Phuket was not a place that one can enjoy surfing.

However, while this island might not be a hotbed for the sport, it certainly has good conditions on a seasonal basis. I’m hoping to introduce myself to the sport before the season is over and I will surely use your references for more information.

Hopefully the Kata Krew are a patient bunch since I’m a novice who has never shredded a wave before.

Paul Ramone
Phuket City

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

One zone for all – and no zone for anybody

Hope for more and more customers entering the door – hope indeed that they'll pour in endlessly – is a typical business ambition.

Some well-heeled companies, especially, achieve the dream and some are so savvy, in fact, they can't avoid attracting customers. Wherever they set up, John Q Public, his wife, kids, extended family and acquaintances follow.

It is not mere sour grapes to say that such success sometimes creates a public nuisance, especially when traffic is so great that transportation arteries clog. It becomes a problem of life and death when those desperately in need of a physician can't get to hospital because the road is blocked by people buying cigarettes and beer.

"That could be a problem," observed a plump, prosperous, middle-aged tuk-tuk driver seated with his fellows at the Chalong Pier taxi shelter. Next to the shelter carpenters, electricians and store employees worked feverishly to install another of the ubiquitous 7-Eleven convenience stores.

"Just one minute, they say, is enough to make the difference."

The driver's shiny red tuk-tuk – red signifying good luck – was pulled up on the footpath.

"Parking spaces around here are hard to come by these days, especially on the pier road," he said.

"The streets are narrow;

the intersection is not well-engineered. If a car parks over there," he pointed directly across from the new shop, "lorries and buses can't make the turn."

Clogging of the intersection could become – literally – a vital issue because the Provincial Administration Organization (*Or-BorJor*) Tourist Rescue center, with the island's most modern ambulances, is located only a hundred meters down the beach road. When the intersection clogs, ambulances can't pass – and U-turns are often not an option because the road is so busy.

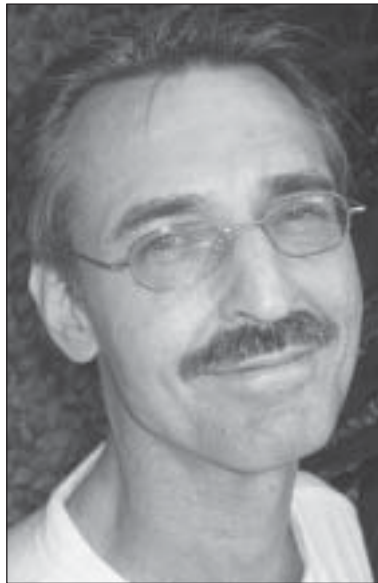
The center, despite its name, serves the general public. So if zoning regulation ever seemed called for, this is the case.

"Just this morning," the driver noted by way of illustration, "police had to sort out an 18-wheeler that knotted up because a pickup parked too close to the intersection."

Although a large lot nearby is paved over, it forms part of the pier's tourism infrastructure and, during daytime, fees are charged for parking. At night, it is posted off-limits – but might anyway become a popular after-hours gathering spot for idle youth once the store opens.

Expect to see racers careening in and out of the lot and the odd gang fight.

For those in a hurry – as convenience store customers mostly are – the lot, lying 20 meters off, is not close enough to the door. So they'll crowd their vehicles close as they can to the entrance.



By Marque A. Rome

The nearby intersection is awkwardly angled and has no shoulder. Nevertheless, it serves as arterial nexus for the pier's busy, crowded tourism, entertainment and residential area.

Some 30 bars and restaurants lie within 300 meters. At least 300 vessels anchor in the harbor even during low season. There are dozens of dive shops, two small hotels and several guesthouses. Scores of homes house hundreds of people. A new housing estate is under construction and a luxury condominium project should reach completion within a year.

Talk about congested!

The controversial harbor expansion project and tourism growth can only add to the traffic. The road is already almost impassable in late afternoons dur-

ing the tourist season. Every motorcycle, car, truck, pedestrian, bicyclist, construction vehicle, cement mixer and pickup filled with 80-gallon barrels of benzene fuel; all the tourist vans, gigantic two-story buses and even larger power boats being trailered to and from the sea must use the five-meter-wide road. Thirty-minute tie-ups are not unusual.

Describing in shape a U, the road runs from Chao Fa East Rd, down residential Soi Suki to the beach, where there is a 90° dog-leg. Providing the only access for every business along the strand, the road collects vehicles from several crowded sois before emptying at the Chalong roundabout.

The 7-Eleven intersection is another tight dog-leg, and traffic using the road mostly passes that spot – which doubtless explains the store's placement. Thousands of people – many hot, tired and eager for cold drinks to take along on the bus – flow past daily, and the prognosis is for more.

Alas, parking availability appears an unimportant consideration for 7-Eleven's real estate mavens in Phuket. Street-side stores located on the corners of narrow sois – there are many – cause traffic hazards. Vehicles frequently double park, for example, in traffic lanes on fast-moving Chao Fa East Rd near Wat Thepnimit in Wichit. Many other examples can be cited and 7-Eleven, of course, is not the sole transgressor – only the most obvious.

"Why doesn't the *OrBor-*

Jor just re-locate the rescue center?" wondered an American Chalong Plaza karaoke bar owner. Good question – but it must be recalled that government budgets are slow in coming; and land either scarce or too expensive to buy.

In this case, the center requires a seaside location to handle marine disasters.

So how many shall suffer needlessly, be permanently crippled or even die because *OrBor-Jor* ambulances become tied up on the pier road? How many speeding rescue vehicles will crash because of congestion?

These are valid questions – as may be easily adduced: wasn't it mere months ago that a rescue vehicle and a private car collided fatally – around 5 am when traffic is light – at the bypass road well-lit Tesco-Lotus intersection?

Zoning, then, is an obvious answer to traffic congestion caused by convenience stores and other businesses too successful for the infrastructure around them; and clearly one generic set of zoning standards is not appropriate to every locale – a concept fundamental to traffic-flow design.

Alas, it is a concept yet to take hold on Phuket, where our living space is increasingly chaotic. The wary can perhaps avoid crashing; Others may be less lucky.

Perhaps the best we can do is – like the tuk-tuk drivers – paint our vehicles red and hope for the best.

When does the 90-day visa clock start?

I entered Thailand on March 23, 2006 and was given a permit to stay that expired April 21, 2006.

I later applied for and was granted a retirement visa and my permit to stay was extended to March 22, 2008. I was told I had to return to an Immigration office in Thailand every 90 days, starting from the date the retirement visa became effective: March 22, 2006.

I did as instructed, checking in at Immigration on June 22, 2006; September 22, 2006; December 22, 2006; March 22, 2007; and most recently on June 22, 2007.

On June 22, 2007, I was told by an Immigration officer that I would be fined 2,000 baht because I was late and should have presented myself to an Immigration office on June 15.

This he said while stabbing

his finger at the date of issue of my retirement visa, March 15, 2007.

I protested by saying that I had always turned up on the 22nd of the month, or the day before if Immigration Office happened to be closed on that day.

I also showed him the supporting entries stamped by Phuket Immigration on a document stapled by Phuket Immigration into my passport.

His solution to this problem was to remove the form with my attendance dates on it and replace it with another.

The man was unwilling to hear any appeal against his decision; repeatedly stabbing his finger at the retirement visa page. It was a case of pay the 2,000 baht fine – or else.

So I paid up.

My understanding is that

Issues & ANSWERS

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any document affixed to a passport becomes part of that passport and to remove it is considered an offense.

Also, if the officer is right, then why was I originally told 90 days from the 22nd – and nothing was said until my fifth appearance?

And can I get my 2,000 baht back?

John Wright
Wichit

Pol Capt Krissarat Nuesen of the Phuket Provincial Immigration Office replies:

For foreigners who are in Thailand on an extended permit to stay and must register at an Immigration office every 90 days, the period is counted from the last date of entry into Thailand.

In this case, I can only assume that you left the country and the officer counted from the date on your most recent entry stamp.

However, this is only conjecture and I cannot give you an exact answer without first examining your passport.

For a full explanation, bring your passport and the receipt for the 2,000-baht fine that you paid so you can show them directly to Phuket Provincial Immigration Superintendent Pol Col Ittipon Atcharyapradit.

If he determines that the

officer you dealt with made a mistake the fine will be refunded.

As for the removal from the passport of documents [stapled therein by our officers], this is allowed if the documents are expired or otherwise deemed invalid.

If you have any other questions or require further explanation please call our office at 076-221905.

The Gazette notes:

From your description, it sounds as if you entered Thailand on a non-immigrant visa and were granted a permit-to-stay that was extended for one year on the basis of your retirement.

This differs from being granted an O-A retirement visa, which can only be issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs though one of its embassies or consulates abroad.

GENDER BENDER OFFENDER

With the broiling sun and excruciating pace of life around Phuket, you sometimes find yourself in need of a cold beer or three at the end of the day.

Good lord, why not?

Let's say it's a Friday night and you've slaved hard all week on the golf course and you now find yourself in a bar of some sort not a million miles away from Soi Bangla.

It seems to be the nature of cold beer that when combined with hot humans enjoying the convivial company of the natives in this part of the world, that what starts out as a civilized "few" can quickly turn into a full-blown session with amazing ease.

Of course you never actually own beer, you only rent the stuff for a short while. Very soon the time arrives when you have to return some of your purchases. In Thailand, this is often where the trouble starts.

You stagger off through the happy evening throng in search of the bathrooms. After a few distractions, you find them in a pair, one male and one female, as they often seem to be. Bathrooms are a bit like marriage part-



ANDAMAN
By SOAPBOX SID
RANT

ners used to be, one male and one female, before the world got politically correct and morally corrupt.

But that's a different rant.

Back home in "normal"

Western society what you'll find on the doors of bathrooms are clearly semaphored signs alerting you to which portal is best suited for your particular gender.

Possibly you'll find a moustachioed, pipe smoking, lumberjack for the "boys" and a demure, pony-tailed little minx for the girls. This system presents no problem for even the most beer-addled brain.

But like so much in Thailand, this straightforward way of doing things would be just a little too easy.



In these parts you often find yourself confronted by two very similar pony-tailed and pantaloons-wearing androgynes, one on each of the doors. As a result you have no idea which door is supposed to belong to your gender.

By now you are getting desperate.

Then you're thrown a lifeline. A tall stunning creature in a red mini-skirt breezes through one of the doors. Clearly as a chap,

your gender belongs through the other. Inside the second door you plunge, only to be confronted by the screams and shouts of about a dozen startled females.

Ha ha! Thailand has caught you out yet again!

In your haste you'd forgotten that in this confusing country often the most beautiful "girls" are in fact expert gender benders. If their great journey of self-discovery is as yet incomplete, many still choose to relieve themselves

with the chaps.

You quickly say "goodbye" to your newfound friends in the girls' bathroom and pop next door to join Miss Red Miniskirt at the urinal where you rightfully belong.

Thailand so often confounds and confuses foreigners and then just as often she will subsequently resolve the confusion in the most charming way.

Still wreathed in embarrassment from your perplexing male/female bathroom door incident, you might for example wander off to the Easy Fitness Center near Central Festival the next day in search of a yoga class to cleanse away any bad karma.

Luckily, you find one and you're directed to the changing rooms to get into loose fitting attire and settle your mind.

Arrayed there before you you'll find not two, but three doors...

Boys

Girls

Ladyman

Now that's what Soapbox Sid calls customer service and it is one of the many reasons that despite his tendency to have the occasional rant, he still chooses to live in this wonderfully considerate and accepting country.

In The Stars

by Isla Star

LEO (July 24-August 22): Look before you leap this week. As August gets underway you are bursting with enthusiasm to get delayed projects off the ground. However, you will need to be patient to achieve success. Take a tip from Virgo, but don't listen to Capricorn's ramblings. If you're coming of age this week, expect the year ahead to provide improved financial security.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): People respect you more than you realize. This week, those of you who needing a self-confidence boost will be pleased by what people tell you. Tuesday is auspicious for getting ahead in

business; don't be afraid to ask for more than you deserve. Romance also benefits from auspicious astral conditions. Number 2 is lucky on Wednesday.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): You should be feeling perkier than you were at the end of July. As your energy peaks, give serious thought to a business matter that has been left on the back burner. The stars will support your efforts. Cancer can be helpful this weekend as long as you are prepared to listen. Use red for inspiration.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Those of you who haven't

taken a low-season holiday should examine their options. A break from daily life will set you up for the rest of the year. Money matters are healthier than you believe; an overdue debt is forecast to be repaid by the middle of the month. Romance continues at a snail's pace, but you shouldn't be in a hurry for commitment.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Magic is in the air this week. After a couple of quiet months, the pace of life picks up and the focus falls on socializing. Even if you aren't prepared to be a party animal, you will be happy to make new friends, particularly when an attractive Piscean makes their interest clear. Wear marigold orange to enhance your charisma.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): You are likely to re-

gret words spoken in the heat of the moment this weekend. You find it difficult to keep your emotions in check sometimes and are advised to concentrate on practical matters to avoid losing face. A stumbling block at work can be navigated by allowing others to pick up the pieces. Romance continues to be a ray of sunshine even when the weather is gloomy. The number eight is lucky on Monday.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): You will discover some pearls of wisdom this weekend. If you have been looking for the answer to a business-related dilemma you will know exactly what to do. You should be able to resolve this matter by the middle of the month, which will leave you free to pursue a hot tip that is forecast to be revealed by that time. Wear light jade to promote positive expectations.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): The limelight shines on you this week. You might find it challenging to deal with so much interest in you. Taurus, in particular, really wants to find out what makes you tick. If you're making romantic contact with someone new, don't dwell on the past as this will guarantee failure. The color salmon pink boosts confidence.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): Leaping around in circles isn't as much fun as it used to be. During August, you will start making serious plans for fast progress dur-

ing the rest of the year. Friends could find it hard to deal with your unusually serious outlook on life, but you will discover who is worth knowing. The number five is lucky on Monday.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): The stars will smile on your efforts to reinvent yourself during August. Those of you who have been in a rut recently will emerge with new direction. Money and housing matters are well-starred. If a change of residence is due, you will find the dwelling of your dreams. This is an auspicious time to make amends with someone you fell out with.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Treading water is the recommended during the first half of August. If you dive in too deep too quickly, you will probably miss a better chance. Aries has some useful tips, but Sagittarius would like to put you off the scent. Wednesday is best for talking money matters and Thursday for heart-to-heart talks with your partner. The number nine can bring modest luck this weekend.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): A brighter mood is forecast for those who have been down in the dumps lately. Good financial news from overseas will bring a more positive outlook. A personal situation is also due to improve; plan a special date for Sunday night, when the stars will shine on romance. Wear the color spicy cinnamon to boost your charisma.

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Low season is in full swing, which is great news for some residents, but not so great for the business folk who have to struggle through lean times in the hope of a few more baht to pay the rent until the next high season.

For me, it's a time of quiet reflection, lower prices and the chance to roam free around Patong without feeling resentment towards European lager louts dragging their knuckles along the pavement.

Patong and quiet reflection in the same sentence? Of course, where have you been?

You may or may not know of the little Windsulf Thai restaurant set in an idyllic spot at one of Patong's most southerly points.

To get there, go over the bridge at the southern end of Patong Beach and head toward Tri Trang Beach for about two kilometers through the winding hills. After you see the Merlin Beach Resort on the left, continue about 500 meters and you will find Windsulf on your right, nestled against the ocean.

Don't get it twisted – if your looking for five-star cuisine and art deco you've taken a wrong turn. Windsulf is basically a shack with a few tables and chairs, but this simplicity is reflected in the pricing of the quality food and always-welcome cheap beer.

Meditations on Bangla



TRAWLIN'

By Alas Swan

It's a perfect place to have a couple of drinks unwinding with friends, taking in the sand and sea with beautiful views of Patong and reflecting on the great life you have.

Holey road. Quiet reflection does not, however, describe the road construction that has Nanai Rd up in knots. By trying to avoid the one-way system and police, I've had the misfortune of being trapped behind the rush-hour traffic in the construction zone and it added 15 minutes onto my journey.

I understand the need to maintain Nanai's decaying road surface, but this is just a warning to anyone thinking of taking the same route.

However, the one-way system is a blessing in disguise,



KEEP IT QUIET, NOW: The view from the Windsulf Restaurant, just south of Patong.

and anything the tuk-tuk drivers despise I enthusiastically accept with open arms.

When the high season finally arrives, I believe Nanai Rd will become the place for expats to escape the drama of Soi Bangla. With new restaurants and bars popping up all over the place and the area behind Jungceylon seeming to grow bigger at every bat of an eyelid.

I have many favorites on Nanai, including the long-standing Offshore Bar, which attracts expats all year round and is a great place to make some new friends.

If you enjoy a drink with a female companion or two, you can't go wrong with a small bar named Highway 61 Re-Visited at the north end of Nanai.

In my previous article I mentioned the Market Bar at

the back of Jungceylon; this is a perfect area to bar-hop, especially if you don't have a motorbike, as there are many bars and eateries within a short walk, stagger or roll.

The prices are cheaper on Nanai than on Bangla, but another benefit is that the touts aren't jumping in your face – you are never harassed into buying pieces of wood that make frog sounds. Though, if someone has a frog that sounds like a piece of wood, I might be interested.

Fish and chips anyone? Ting Tong Chips, around the corner from the old market, is my favorite English-style fish and chip shop in Patong.

The taste of good old-fashioned mushy peas, authentic chip-shop gravy, pies and pasties, plus battered fish, all make the mouth water.

Ting Tong's is open 4 pm until late, and deliver free to the surrounding area.

If you have any meditations on Patong you'd like to share, or information regarding upcoming events, send an email to Alas Swan at wasnotwass@gmail.com



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NEW LAWS AND MISSING CARDS

During the past month, the Thai computer community has been buffeted by a series of new laws, rumors of new laws, explanations of rumors of new laws, denials about rumors of laws, relaxations of laws, and relaxations of denials of explanations of rumors of laws. And not necessarily in that order.

Let me skip through the list lightly. Let's start with the YouTube quandary.

On March 8 of this year, Thailand's Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) blocked all access to YouTube, apparently (but not officially) because somebody posted a clip of Thaksin Shinawatra's interview on CNN. YouTube came back online on March 10. Then on April 3, the MICT blocked all access to YouTube again because some idiot posted a 44-second clip insulting HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Since then, various news outlets have said that YouTube access would be restored, and others said it would not. On July 22, I suddenly discovered that I could get onto www.youtube.com from Phuket.

On July 24, the Web site BoingBoing.net posted a message from "Thai blogger Myo Kyaw Htun" (www.myokyawhtun.com) saying that he could access YouTube from Thailand. (Myo is actually Burmese, but he was online in Thailand.) The next day the *New York Times* posted an article saying that YouTube had been unblocked in Thailand, stating that, "the military junta that governs Thailand had put a number of other Web sites in the 'political' category and blocked access to them; they too will be unblocked, apparently, in a move that the junta hopes will 'make the people feel better now that the political situation has improved and a general election is to be held'".

Predictably, on July 26, I couldn't get through, and haven't



Deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's new website is readily accessible from Thailand. As for how much of "the truth" it contains – well, you can be the judge.

been able to get through since. YouTube doesn't appear to be blocked, but all of my attempts to visit the site time out.

I have seen no announcement about the government unblocking YouTube. The last time I heard anything about it, Thailand's MICT was demanding that Google (which owns YouTube) provide the IP addresses of the people who posted the insulting clips. Presumably MICT could then use the IP addresses to (try to) identify individuals.

On July 18, Thailand was treated to a comprehensive new law – the Computer-related Crimes Act – that "allows police officers or government inspectors to seize computers on private premises suspected of containing pornographic material or evidence in connection with either

general criminal activity or cyber crime... Impostors using others' identities to send slanderous messages, or those who flood information on discussion forums are also subject to criminal penalties under the law" (*Nation*).

Frankly, even though an unofficial translation of the new law is available at www.prachatai.com/english/news.php?id=117, I'm not sure just what's going on.

For example, there are penalties for importing to a "false computer, data in a manner that is likely to damage the country's security or cause a public panic" and importing to a computer system "data of a pornographic nature that is publicly accessible". These raise a raft of questions.

It isn't clear to me if the seizure provisions are merely a meatspace codification of an electronic "probable cause" law (where police officers can confiscate equipment if they have probable cause to believe that a crime has been committed, subject to court review), or if they can open up the front door of everyone who owns a computer.

I particularly enjoyed the bit that states that "[a]ny person who illegally commits any act that causes the working of a third party's computer system to be suspended, delayed, hindered or disrupted to the extent that the computer system fails to operate normally shall be subject to imprisonment", particularly because of the recent spate of botched

Microsoft patches.

I do know that Internet cafés are supposed to keep logs of everyone who uses a computer on the premises, including making a copy of customers' ID cards. It's hard for me to fathom how firms with wireless access could possibly comply.

I've heard nothing new about the proposed law, circulated last month, that would make it illegal to hide your IP address. That law may have been absorbed into this new Computer-related Crimes Act. That IP address bill sent a shiver down my spine because of an avalanche of side-effects that would occur.

For example, Virtual Private Networking (VPN) – a technique for accessing a company's network via an Internet connection – is used by almost every major company in the world, including hundreds (if not thousands) of firms in Thailand.

VPN works with a mechanism known as "IP tunneling", which, most emphatically and intentionally, hides a user's IP address. It's hard to fathom how a bill that bans IP translations could make it through any well-informed political body.

There's more news: According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (www.smh.com.au), on July 21 three hackers cracked the MICT's site, www.mict.go.th,

and posted photos of Thaksin Shinawatra. The prank speaks volumes about the MICT's commitment to security. Subsequent press reports said that MICT officials declared that the attacks "were launched from three countries, one of them Germany".

Personally, I find it hard to believe that the site was attacked simultaneously by groups from three different countries. I also wonder if MICT officials have ever heard of the term "IP spoofing".

Finally, on July 27, the pro-Thaksin site, www.truethaksin.com, appeared on-line, and was quite deliberately not blocked by the MICT. I found the site more than a bit, uh, revisionist, but you might want to drop by and see for yourself. It's very slick – obviously well designed and well executed by an anonymous firm that knows what it's doing.

I bet it cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and it's obviously been under development for a long time. A couple of telling details: The main graphic shows a big map of India, and only a tiny pixilated rendition of Thailand (I wonder if the designers

even know where Thailand is); and on the launch date, the "The Truth Shall Set You Free"

site (odd slogan, eh?) was only available in English. If you look at the source code for the site, there are two comments in Thai.

As best I can tell, the Sierra Wireless AirCard 580 isn't available anywhere in Phuket. If you wanted to use CAT's fast wireless Internet service, commonly called EV-DO, you'll have to wait until CAT gets more cards. I have no idea if CAT will bring in more AirCard 580s, or if they'll move on to a newer generation. I heard a rumor that a few AirCard 580s were left at a shop in Central Festival, but a check there turned up nothing.

Want to know more about Thailand's computer laws? Or do you just want to get your %\$#@! Internet connection to work? Join us for the PC Group Therapy session on Sunday morning (August 5), 10 am to noon, at my Sandwich Shoppe in Patong. Email me for directions.

When he isn't writing computer books and magazine and newsletter articles, knocking Microsoft around on his website, or swinging a butcher knife, Woody Leonhard (woody@khunwoody.com, www.askwoody.com) runs Khun Woody's Bakery and the Sandwich Shoppe in Patong.

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ON THE MOVE

Phuket native **Pra-kai Niyomadul**, 28, has been appointed sales executive of Knight Frank Phuket Co Ltd. He graduated from Central Queensland University in Australia with a degree in hospitality and marketing. Before joining Knight Frank, he worked as a host at Banyan Tree Phuket for one year.



Orana Thongprasit, from Phang Nga, has been promoted to villa manager of Dusit Laguna Resort. She graduated from Phuket Rajabhat University with a degree in community development. She has currently been with Dusit Laguna Resort for five years and has also worked as secretary to the director of food and beverage operations and secretary to the executive assistant manager of food and beverage before she was promoted to her current position.



Kemarath "Joke" Nu-in, 28, from Narathiwat, has been promoted to construction site supervisor of Wanamakok Civil & Environmental Consultants Co Ltd (WCEC). He graduated from Phuket Rajabhat University with a degree in industrial technology. He has been with the company for a year and a half, specializing in topographic and boundary surveying.



Phuket businesses scoop top awards

By Matt Crook

PHUKET: Phuket's hospitality industry received a major boost last week with the announcement that three prestigious awards had been won by local companies.

Mom Tri's Boathouse & Villa Royale in Kata was awarded *Wine Spectator* magazine's Best of Award of Excellence for the second consecutive year, maintaining its status as the only establishment in Thailand to receive the coveted award.

Wine Spectator's Restaurant Awards, announced in the August 2007 issue, recognize restaurants providing outstanding wine lists that effectively complement the cuisine on offer and appeal to a broad spectrum of tastes.

Only 748 establishments in the world received the award of excellence this year, which is a second-tier award below only the world-class Grand Award, given to just 76 establishment this year.

The Best of Award of Excellence is given to establishments that have shown commitment to offering depth in their wine selections, typically with more than 500 wines on their list.

A number of Phuket establishments this year received *Wine Spectator's* lower-tier award, the Award of Excellence. Among them were Baan Rim Pa at

Kalim, Marriott Cafe at the JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa and Oriental Spoon in Cherng Talay.

The Award of Excellence is given to establishments that offer a well-chosen selection of quality products, with 3,131 awarded this year.

Meanwhile, Phuket hospitality firm C9 Hotelworks was rewarded for its commitment to hospitality and destination marketing when it secured the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award for Hospitality Marketing, announced July 25, in recognition of the Phuket Perfect campaign.

Launched in March, Phuket Perfect was a joint venture with Bangkok-based media company Delivering Asia Communications that sought to highlight Phuket's idyllic nature and market 30 resort apartments at the Movenpick Residence at Karon Beach.

This year's PATA Gold Awards received an unprecedented 339 entries from 28 categories, making it one of the strongest selections of candidates in the history of the awards, said Peter de Jong, PATA president and chief executive officer.

C9 Hotelworks and Delivering Asia Communications worked together on a 10-second vignette that aired on prime time CNN television programming asking people to visit www.phuketperfect.com, a website showing the best of Phuket living and how such a lifestyle is attainable by buying



The *Wine Spectator* gives Mom Tri's Boathouse top marks.

one of the 30 resort apartments.

A worldwide YouTube video competition, sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette* and Thailand Property Report, was then held in which the public were asked to upload their videos of the perfect lifestyle in Phuket to a dedicated YouTube page.

"The campaign really put

Phuket back on the map in terms of people's perception of the destination," said C9 Hotelworks Managing Director and *Gazette* columnist Bill Barnett.

Mark Armsden, Delivering Asia communications director, said, "I think the strongest message we delivered during the campaign was we were not just

about highlighting the product but also marketing the destination and the lifestyle the product afforded those who invested."

Another company taking top honors at this year's PATA Awards was Six Senses Resorts and Spas, Thailand, which won a PATA Grand Award for its Social and Environment Conscience program.

Six Senses Resorts and Spas, which manages Evason Phuket, used the program to enhance the environmental performance of all Six Senses-managed properties.

The program included raising the environmental awareness of hosts and guests; the involvement of guests in activities such as mangrove planting, local school visits and visits to charities; and the founding of the Social and Environmental Responsibility Fund, which will see 400,000 baht spent on social and environmental projects.

Winners of the PATA Gold and Grand awards will be honored at this year's PATA Travel Mart 2007 in Bali September 28.

VITAL STATISTICS: International arrivals rise 31%

Type	June 06	June 07	% increase
Domestic passengers	193,025	222,185	15.1
International passengers	90,929	119,087	31
Domestic aircraft	12,219	16,122	31.9
International aircraft	9,356	12,628	35

Source: Phuket International Airport

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The Manx connection

A European visitor to my office told me that he had recently had a meeting with a financial advisor who recommended the Isle of Man as a financial base.

My visitor was unimpressed with this suggestion – he knew little, if anything, about the island and presumed it to be a place of little consequence or sophistication; basically, some sort of financial backwater.

I had to tell him that the opposite is true. The Isle of Man is one of these “tax havens” at the forefront of first-world and first-class financial bases.

It is perhaps less well known than the main Channel Islands, Jersey and Guernsey, but it has become a popular hot-spot for financial matters.

The Isle of Man is said to be the longest continuous democracy in the world and has had its own Parliament – the Tynwald – since at least 979 AD. Most elected members of the Tynwald are independents who in turn elect their own prime minister.

The Isle of Man is not, and has never been, part of the UK, but Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain is the head of state and, should you send a letter to the island, the address will be “Isle of Man, British Isles”.

The Isle of Man is independent from the UK but has a long-standing agreement with the Kingdom in that the latter provides defense and diplomatic services in return for an annual fee. The Isle of Man also holds associate membership in the European Union.

Located in the Irish sea, it is 50 kilometers from Ireland and the same distance from the UK. It measures a mere 572 square kilometers; about the same as Phuket, but the population is only 79,805, making it much less densely populated than Phuket.

The currency is the pound sterling, but the Manx (Isle of Man) government issues its own bank notes and coins with a par value to the pound sterling.

As a major financial center, the Isle of Man routinely offers banking and other financial services in all major currencies.

The island also has its own dialects of English and Gaelic, though standard English is more commonly spoken.

In 1982, in its early days as a financial center, the Isle of Man suffered a catastrophe: the collapse of a small local savings bank, the Isle of Man Savings Bank. The bank left losses of UK£38 million.

This ill-fated bank had no relationship to the Isle of Man



Behind the British seaside holiday atmosphere of Douglas, capital of the Isle of Man, lies a highly sophisticated financial structure.

Bank, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The Manx government, realizing the importance of financial services, vowed that there would never be a repetition of this disaster.

To ensure that, they introduced what is possibly the best compensation scheme for investors I have ever seen. It gives investors a government guarantee of up to 90% of the amount lost, regardless of how much is involved.

There is also a fund to which all financial institutions must contribute. Although to date these extra funds have never been tapped, they are in place so that, in the event of a financial crisis, investors will receive 100% compensation.

The Isle of Man learned a tough lesson in 1982 and has gone to considerable lengths to ensure it shall not happen again.

The island enjoys a triple-A credit rating – the highest – from both of the world’s leading credit rating agencies, Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s. In our part of the world only Singapore enjoys this rating.

Regarding communications, free ADSL broadband Internet connections are available to all households and business premises on the island. Manx Telecom is credited with having installed Europe’s first all-digital fixed network and the first commercial 3G mobile network outside Japan.

It is now investing in what is expected to be Europe’s first HSDPA (3.5G) mobile network, according to the Manx Government. Normal telephone access is via the UK’s country code, +44, and the Isle of Man is part of the UK’s numbering range.

The Isle of Man won’t appeal to those with ill-gotten criminal gains. Money laundering regulations are stringent. All coun-

tries are ranked on the quality of their compliance regulations and listed in tiers.

For example, the Isle of Man is in tier 1, alongside the US, the European Union, Japan, Canada, Singapore and so on; tier 2 includes Malaysia and South Africa; tier 3 contains Thailand; and members of tier 4

are basically untouchables such as North Korea, who are outside of international banking and financial transactions.

The Isle of Man plays host to a wide range of financially-related businesses, including banks, building societies, insurance companies, asset and financial management groups, custodians and stockbrokers.

Many offshore insurance companies have their international headquarters on the Isle of Man and it is common for even senior level staff from, say, Hong Kong, to travel to the island for training purposes.

The island is also a leading center for the formation and management of companies and trusts. People who use Isle of Man trusts find themselves in a secure environment; the legal and administrative systems are first-class.

In the case of trusts, no trustee will ever divulge information to another party without first receiving an Isle of Man court order, and these are rarely granted.

Full accountancy, tax and audit facilities are available together with legal services in all these areas. Standards are extremely high.

Should any individual feel he or she has reason to complain, the Isle of Man has an ombudsman service, which is completely independent and free of charge.

Access to a comprehensive menu of global investments and services is available to the expat community through the Isle of Man. Every day, people use the Isle of Man’s financial structures to access investment opportunities worldwide.

Richard G Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial-planning service. He can be reached at Tel: 076-381997, Fax: 076-383185, Mobile: 081-0814611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th Website: www.global-portfolios.com



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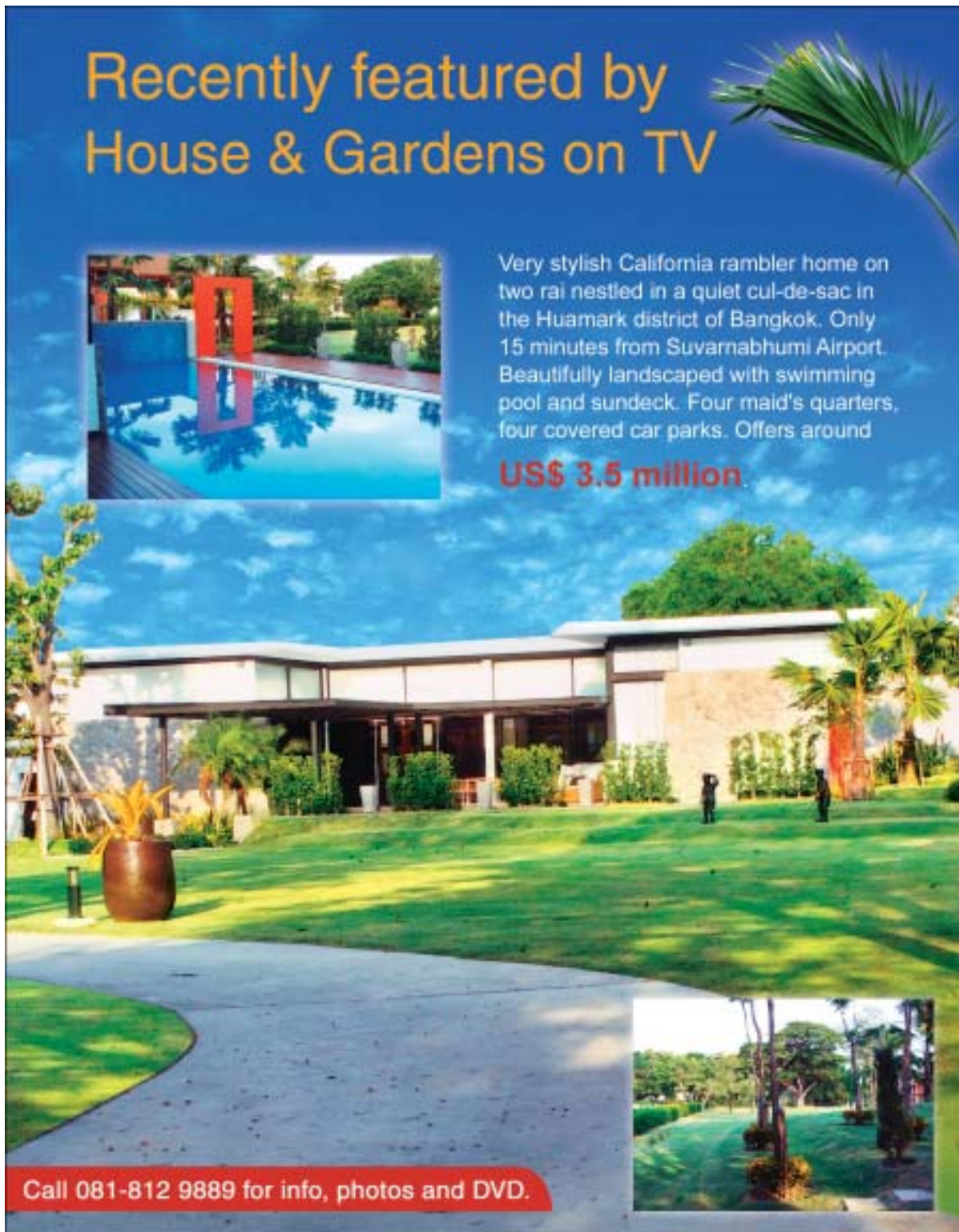
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LORD OF THE FLYS NO MORE Pongsaklek loses title

TOKYO: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam had been winning for so many years it seemed inconceivable that he could ever lose.

His last defeat came an astonishing 11 long years ago – a defeat he later avenged. That's a long winning streak by any standard. But on the evening of July 18, his 56-fight streak finally came to a halt when he dropped a hard-fought, 12-round unanimous decision to Daisuke Naito of Japan.

The two fighters had met twice before, with Pongsaklek winning both bouts: the first by a first-round, one-punch, 34-second knockout and the second by seventh-round technical decision. But just as Joe DiMaggio's hitting streak eventually came to an end, so did Pongsaklek's long reign as the WBC flyweight champion.

When Pongsaklek signed on for the third fight with Naito in Tokyo, it perhaps seemed inevitable that he would walk away the winner once again – but this time would be different.

The bout was close for the duration, but in the final three rounds, when Pongsaklek needed one final push to retain his title, he had nothing left to give. Punches that once would have sailed harmlessly past his head now landed more often – and more cleanly.

When he needed to move he moved more slowly, the first definitive signs the ring wars were finally catching up with him. Bad habits he once got away with; lunging in with his combinations and backing out with his hands down – he now had to pay a stiff price for.



CHAMP NO MORE: Pongsaklek lost to his title to Japan's Daisuke Naito.

It was no secret that since his second loss to Pongsaklek in October 2005, Naito had been steadily improving. He fought a smart, tactical battle, moving in and out, attacking the body and using a looping right hand to wear down the champion.

In the ninth round, when Pongsaklek staggered Naito and had the chance to end the fight, he was unable to do so. Naito stormed back to get the better of Pongsaklek in rounds 10, 11 and 12, sealing the decision and thus wresting the title from the Thai.

All three judges scored the bout in favor of the new champion, Daisuke Naito: 116-113, 115-113 and 115-113.

Before the bout, Pongsaklek acknowledged the chance of losing and put it only as he could, "If I lose, I'm OK with that be-

cause I know I will have tried my best." And try his best he did.

While still only 29 years of age, Pongsaklek carried into the ring the look of an aged warrior. Perhaps his numerous fights in muay thai (50) and boxing (67) finally caught up with him. After many years of winning – seemingly with ease – he showed up to the fight appearing complacent. Naito, hungry for revenge, was too much for the Pongsaklek on this night.

Perhaps the Thai, for whom winning had become second nature, came into the bout slightly overconfident. Overconfidence and complacency, no matter how slight, is all it takes to lose a world title against a hungry opponent.

Pongsaklek began training in muay thai at the age of 12, fighting on a monthly basis in small villages throughout the country, sharpening his skills and learning his craft. For the next five years he plied his trade, building a 40-10 record and eventually fighting in Bangkok's famed Lumpini Stadium.

He turned to boxing when it became apparent he was a better boxer than muay thai fighter. He made his professional boxing debut on December 21, 1994, scoring a third-round KO of Bernardo Jun Davalos.

After eight straight wins, he suffered his first setback, losing an eight-round decision to 43-fight veteran Jerry Pahayahay of the Philippines.

Three fights later, Pongsaklek fought Pahayahay again, only to suffer the lone knockout loss of his career. The duo met for a third time in 1998,

and a more seasoned and better-prepared Pongsaklek won a 10-round decision.

"Pahayahay was a very experienced and crafty veteran, and I was really still a baby in boxing," said Pongsaklek. "Even when I finally defeated him two years later, he was still a difficult fighter for me."

Throughout his career, he's rolled over his the majority of his opposition, rarely coming close to losing a bout.

The likes of Hussein Hussein, Monelesi Mykeni, Trash Nakanuma, Hidenobu Honda, Malcolm Tunacao and Noriyuki Kamatsu all fell by the wayside – as did Everardo Morales, Gilberto Keb Bass, Tomonobu Shimizu and others too numerous to list here.

Despite his overwhelming success, Pongsaklek suffered criticism along the way – some warranted, some not – and much of it due to the unfamiliarity of his opposition to fans in the West, where the largest and most high-profile fights take place. Regardless, he's always been a model of discipline and hard work and will certainly be remembered as one of the greatest of Thai champions.

After the bout, the always-classy Pongsaklek gave his conqueror due respect.

"I admit I was beaten today. In any sports, sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. Naito was the same boxer I fought before, except now he is mentally stronger. It's disappointing to lose the title, but I'm going to keep fighting in this weight class for three more years."

Pongsaklek is still young and although ring-worn, he is far from finished. Just how much he has left remains to be seen, but if he can re-motivate himself, his chance of winning another world title is good.

A rematch clause was written into the contract and Pongsaklek's promoter fully intends to make full use of it.

The bout will reportedly take place somewhere in Thailand.

Scott Mallon is a Bangkok-based freelance boxing writer and a member of Ring magazine's ratings advisory committee.

PATONG DARTS LEAGUE

Dogs do it with two weeks to spare

PATONG: With yet another impressive three-point win, Dogs Bollocks reached 30 points and clinched the title with two weeks of play remaining. Simon of Dogs Bollocks scored a 180 in that match, a 7-2 win over Valhalla.

There's no stopping Denzil from a trip to Carrefoure now to stock up on prizes for the league party, to be held at Dogs Bollocks on August 14.

Going into play on July 24, Queen Mary was the only other team who could have reached 30 points, but Offshore swept all three points against them playing at home.

Mike Riley of Offshore had the hot hand in that match, hitting a 180 and banging in a x18 on his first dart to close out the beer leg.

Mike apparently plays well against Queen Mary, as the 180 was only his second in 15 years of league play – the only other one coming against Queen Mary in May.

In the only other match, also a three-point sweep, Piccadilly downed their Soi Kebsup neighbors Simply Red by a score of 7-2.

Any bar interested in joining the next league, which starts August 21, should contact league organizer Steen at Queen Mary. While the league is informal, certain conditions do apply in order to keep it from falling apart altogether.

For more information email: darts@phuketgazette.net

July 24 results: Valhalla 2 Dogs Bollocks* 7; Simply Red 2 Piccadilly* 7; Offshore* 5 Queen Mary 4 (* = winner of beer leg).

Standings with 2 games left: 1. Dogs Bollocks (30 points.); 2. Offshore (23); 3. Shakers (22); 4.= Queen Mary, Beach House (21); 6. Piccadilly (18); 7. Valhalla (8); 9. Simply Red (4).

August 7 matchups: Offshore v Piccadilly; Dogs Bollocks v Shakers; Queen Mary v Valhalla; Simply Red v Beach House (home team first).

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Duncanson aims for 2 in a row

PHUKET: Local sailor Australian Scott Duncanson, better known in Phuket as owner and skipper of *Somtarn Express*, which won Phuket Raceweek regatta last month, has compiled a crew to defend the title of National Platu champion at the national finals in Pattaya on August 13 and 14.

The crew are using the National Platu finals as a springboard for training for the Platu 25 World Championship 2007 to be held in Neustadt, Germany, from August 24 to 31.

Duncanson, an Australian who, while onshore, is Southern Regional Manager of PCS (Property Care Services), will again helm, while fellow Aussie and Phuket resident Anthony Gates, a professional yacht racer, will be the navigator and trimmer.

Retired engineer Brit Kevin "Ferret" Scott will run the foredeck of his 25-foot, Farr-design boat, also called *The Ferret*, that the crew will use.

An underwriter and Bangkok resident, Ferret provided the boat *The Beaver* on which Duncanson and crew won the championship last year.

Australian Jerry Chase, a consultant for international law firm Siam Premier in Bangkok, will be on the mainsheet, while New Zealander and fellow



Local Scott Duncanson and crew will defend their title at the National Platu championship in Pattaya August 13 and 14. Shown here is last year's crew on *The Beaver*. A few crew members and the boat have changed, but Duncanson expects a strong showing both in Thailand and the world championships in Germany.

Bangkok resident Trent Petersen will work the halyards.

"We're not entirely the same crew who won the championship last year as some of the previous crew are not able to make the trip to Germany. New crew are Trent and Jerry, both are very experienced Platu sailors," said Duncanson.

"We are using the nationals as a warm-up for the worlds," he said.

PCS is sponsoring the crew in both the national finals and the world championship.

As the national finals and the world championship are strict "one-design class" competitions, Duncanson explained, there will be no technical advantage over other competitors.

"We do, however, have a brand-new set of Quantum Sails bought especially for the nationals and the worlds," he added.

In the national finals, Duncanson expects the toughest competition to come from the Thai South East Asian (SEA) games team, sailing on *Naiad*.

"We have been acting as

'tuning partner' for them for most of this year. They have been training six days a week for the past two months and have a professional coach from New Zealand, John Weston," Duncanson explained.

"They have improved immensely and have beaten us in the past two Ocean Marina mini-regattas in Pattaya. They will also be competing in the worlds, in Germany," he added.

As for preferred conditions during the finals, Duncanson said, "Moderate winds of 7-12 knots

are expected. However, as our total crew weight is right on the class limit of 400kg, we prefer fresher conditions of 12-17 knots.

"All competing crews are weighed before the event so most of the *Ferret* crew have been off the booze and on strict diets since Phuket Raceweek," he said.

Joining the crew for the world championships will be New Zealander Aaron Taunt as tactician.

"Aaron often sails on *Somtarn Express*. He is a former Etchells 22 champion and he has a wealth of big-fleet experience that our crew would otherwise lack," Duncanson explained.

Looking forward, he said, "I guess it will be bloody cold! But seriously, as we will be sailing a chartered boat, are not local to the area, will be competing against many previous world champions and America's Cup crews, it will be an uphill battle from the start.

"We are hoping to finish in the top half of the fleet and will be absolutely delighted with a top 20 finish," he added.



Haad Yai dominates

Prince of Songkla (PSU) Phuket campus cheerleaders took to the field during the opening day of competition between five PSU campuses to determine which teams will advance to the 'Universiade' games in Bangkok August 8 to 18. PSU Haad Yai cleaned up seven of the ten medals during the inter-PSU games.

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Plookpanya the golden school

PHUKET: Students from Plookpanya School topped the medals table with 146 medals at the annual Phuket City Municipality Games held at Saphan Hin Stadium and Surakul Stadium from July 12 to 20.

Budding athletes from six municipal schools – Piboon-sawaddee School, Wat Kajorn Rungson School, Bangneaw

School, Samkong School, Plookpanya School and Muang Phuket Municipal School – took part in the event, which was organized by the Phuket City Municipality.

Students aged from 8 to 16 years old competed in a variety of sports, including football, takraw, volleyball as well as track and field.

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Home of the Week

Patong



The villa comes with consummate views of Patong Bay.

This week's Home of the Week is a stylish modern villa on the hillside overlooking Patong Bay. The property, which has a total land area of 330 square meters, enjoys panoramic views of the bay that can be seen from inside the home, but are best viewed from the roof-top terrace.

The spacious property, with 280sqm of interior space, has garage parking for two cars, air conditioning and a private swimming pool that also has bay views.

Inside are three large bedrooms with private en-suite bathrooms and either built-in or walk-in wardrobes. The master bathroom has a large whirlpool tub in which residents can soak away their worries before heading out to the buzzing nightlife of Patong.

Stylishly furnished throughout, the villa comes with satellite TV, telephone, Wi-Fi Internet access, water heating and is located within a secure estate.



A "wall of windows" allows the view to be appreciated from nearly every room.

The property also includes maid's room, laundry, outdoor bathroom and a Western-style kitchen.

Ideal as a holiday rental unit, the two-story property comes with services such as maids and cleaners ready to take care of tenants.

Utilities include well water, electricity, telephone line, mains

drainage and a septic tank.

The property is available freehold. Asking price is 26 million baht.

For more details contact Richard Lusted at Siam Real Estate at Tel: 076-288908, visit the website at www.siamrealestate.com or by email at info@siamrealestate.com

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Design

by Semacote Suganya

Long lines and clear views

Long lines and rich inspiration from nature are the guiding components of the Laguna Dusit Villas, designed by Dusit's in-house team of architects.

The plans for the villas took two years to develop and with the beauty of the nearby environment in mind, the design team wanted to make every view count.

Dan Simmons, director of sales and marketing, explained the design to the *Gazette*: "The style is Thai contemporary. Basically the layout is based around Laguna's environment."

We wanted to build the villas without obstructing the view of the environment, and we actually increased the number of trees in the area as we built.

"Even the government is impressed by what we have created around the lagoon," Mr Simmons said, explaining how the property was once barren due to tin mining but was revived by the Laguna development.

"Now there are more than 60 species of birds in the lagoon and more than 30 types of fish."

Mr Simmons explained that the layout of the villas was de-



The long lines of the Laguna Dusit Villas allow for unobstructed views out to the sea and plenty of living area, as seen in this computer-generated impression of the dining room.

signed so that views of the sea can be seen from the master bedroom, which is partly why the design process took so long.

"The way it was laid out so each one is very private, so you

don't see your neighbor and your neighbor doesn't see you, but the view outward is beautiful," he explained.

The 28 units, spaced around the banks of the lagoon, are three

stories each and all face toward the water.

The units, which are selling for 32 million to 48 million baht, are expected to be finished in mid-2008.

For more information contact the Laguna Phuket sales office at Tel: 076-324366, Email: property@lagunaphuket.com, or Website: www.lagunaproperty.com.

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Someone from Samkong had a go at me in the letters page a few weeks ago. I can't really blame him – I mean I've had a pop at a few people in this column over the years, so I suppose it's only a matter of time before they bite back.

I bet he was Welsh. "Pithy observations"? No, he's got to be French. This week, I'll do my best to expand my subject matter beyond the benefits of beer.

Here we go then – just for you. For some reason you mentioned vegetables. I'm not sure why, but it would appear that there are people around who actually like these things. Am I the only person in the world that thinks vegetables are just plain dull?

In fact, vegetables annoy me. They just sit there on the plate staring up at you, with their irritating blandness almost reaching out and tapping you on the shoulder. If they were human, they'd have a comb-over style haircut, they'd wear socks with sandals, say "isn't that fascinating?" a lot, and they'd probably be fans of Milton Keynes.

Vegetables don't actually do anything. They just occupy space on the plate that doesn't have any

Vegetables

meat on it, really. The vast majority certainly don't taste of anything more interesting than water. We need to cook them and add some proper flavoring to them to make them even remotely palatable. What's the point? It would be easier not to bother!

You can take a chunk of any meat, chuck it on a barbecue for a few minutes, take it off again, and consume. Job done. Follow the same procedure with vegetables and what do you get? Exactly the same blandness, but a bit hotter than it was before. In fact it's probably burnt, so inedible anyway.

Scientists can clone sheep and send messages to the far corners of space. They can create computers the size of a grain of salt and generate energy from cow farts. In these days of the hybridization of plants, why can't anyone invent a vegetable that actually tastes pleasant? Surely they could come up with something more exciting than the stan-



The wide variety of peppers, even though they are actually fruits, add some spice to the rest of the mind-numbingly boring vegetables.

dard, familiar "grass" flavor?

At least fruits, which can usually be eaten without having to do something to them first, actually taste of something. It's a shame they can't be pre-peeled

though – that can be hard work at times. If somebody else can do all the hard work for you then you're all right.

Salads mystify me. You're supposed to take a collection of completely tasteless leaves and throw them together in a bowl and enjoy it? It does become vaguely pleasant once a liberal dose of dressing is splashed on top, but then whatever health benefits may have been enjoyed have quickly disappeared. Cabbage, a salad mainstay in this part of the world, is even more mysterious. You can add whatever you want to that stuff and it still tastes of moldy charcoal.

Should you feel the urge, you have plenty of vegetable choices here in Thailand. Yes, I know I'm not a fan, but those who are claim that Thai-grown vegetables are among the best in the world.

Yard-long beans (*thua fak yao* in Thai) are one of the most common. They're a bit like the green beans we see in the West, but a lot longer. The succulent green pods are only up to about half a yard long, strangely.

The young pod has fairly crisp flesh and smooth skin (the ones you dunk in that spicy sauce), while the mature pod is a lot tougher and usually cooked. The skin is wavy and fairly rough, with kidney-shaped seeds inside. The plant is propagated through seeds. It can be eaten with soup or fried with other vegetables. They're a kind of health food, as the fiber in them is thought to help reduce cholesterol.

The small, red or green bird chili (or *prik kee noo suan* in Thai, literally "garden rat poo chili") is actually a fruit, if you want to get technical. It's diminutive size, just three to four centimeter in length, doesn't affect its

potency – it's fiery hot. Even the skin, without the seeds, is spicy. These tiny "vegetables" are not only superb, but an essential part of Thai cuisine and ridiculously easy to grow from seed.

Lemongrass (*takrai*) is another fundamental component of Thai cooking. It's a long thick grass with leaves at the top and a solid, almost woody portion several inches long at the root end. It's the lower portion that's sliced up and used in cooking. Fresh stalks and leaves have a zingy lemon-like aroma because they contain some kind of oil. Lemongrass is used in all sorts of Thai dishes (a *tom yam goong* without lemongrass just wouldn't work) and it's also extracted into oil.

There are a couple of types of basil (*kapow*) here too. I'm sure that someone will write to me explaining that strictly speaking herbs aren't vegetables, but I don't care to be honest. Basil stays.

Holy, or "sacred", basil is a small annual plant with flowers that grow along the end of the branches, with white or purplish petals. The young stem is covered with soft hair. It's a fragrant herb used to enhance all sorts of Thai dishes. There are two kinds of sacred basil: the more flavorful red basil has dark green leaves with reddish-purple stems, while the other has medium-green leaves with a very light-green stem and is milder in flavor.

Sweet basil is hairier overall and comes from a plant that reaches three feet in height. The leaves are dark green with a smooth surface and a pointed tip. The white flowers grow on long stalks in several layers at the end of branches. The young leaves can be eaten fresh or added to food to give a pleasant aroma. This is the one they use in minced pork with basil (*kapow moo sap*).

Okra (aka lady's finger, bhindi and gumbo) is a tall, warm-season, annual vegetable that grows into a bush. The green pod is long, tapered, covered with soft down and has a jagged ridge throughout the pod. The young pod has crispy flesh which becomes tougher as it ripens. Once cooked it has a weird, greasy consistency. Okra is a powerhouse of valuable nutrients, though. The greasy gums and pectins are thought to lower serum cholesterol, thus reducing the risk of heart disease. Research suggests that the fiber helps to decrease the risk of some forms of cancer.

There you go, my fan from Samkong. A whole article about vegetables, for your delectation and delight. I even managed to get all the way through without mentioning flowers or ornamentals. I didn't even bring up the subject of beer. Whoops – I just did. I'm sure you'll forgive me.




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Construction Update

by Janyaporn Morel

Living large by the lake

When it is finished in 2009, the 800-million-baht Lakeside condominium development will cover 5.2 rai and owners will enjoy views overlooking the tin lagoon at the end of Soi Ton Bodhi in the Tung Tong area of Tambon Kathu.

The five condo blocks, each seven stories, will house a total of 226 condo units in a wide variety of designs. Prices will range from 2.6 to 12 million baht.

The project, to surround a 55-meter-long swimming pool, will also feature a large archway spanning two of the blocks and housing more condo units at three stories and above.

Grenville Wilson, managing director of Phuket PRD Properties Co Ltd, noted that the central location near the Tung Tong junction is less than a kilometer away from the Phuket Country Club and "provides easy access to all Phuket has to offer".

In an effort to make use of all the available space in each unit, there will be 23 different designs, including 24 penthouses. Each design has been tailored to expand outdoor balcony and terrace areas as much as possible.

Units range in size from 62 square meters for a single bedroom apartment to 200sqm for a three-bedroom penthouse. About half the units are 67-sqm double-bedroom designs.

"We maximize the space wherever we have the opportunity, by adding additional balconies or making rooms larger. This provides variation, even though all the units share common design traits," Mr Wilson explained.

"In grassy areas, we created garden apartments to optimize the view and maximize usable space for residents," he added.

"On building corners we try to put wrap-around balconies and terraces so people will get the



When it is completed, the Lakeside project in Kathu will have 226 condominiums in five buildings.

maximum view as possible," said Mr Wilson.

The four archway apartments, located on the fourth through seventh floors, will have prime views because they will sport windows looking out both directions. These 120-sqm apartments will have two bedrooms, two bathrooms and two terraces – one for each side.

The Lakeside project will feature full facilities, including parking areas in the basement of each building and a large fitness club and reception area on the main floor. There will also be a coffee house and a restaurant built on the property.

The buildings, all sporting "Lakeside" names such as "Lakeside Views" and "Lakeside House", will surround the focal point of the property – a free-form swimming pool that aims to mimic beach-side swimming by creating a slope into the water. There will also be a waterfall and a plunge pool on a different level.

"We will offer rental return management to our buyers. With our project's location we think it will appeal to people who want

to play golf, have a night out in Patong or Phuket Town, or whatever activities they can think of.

"We expect it will serve people from Singapore and Hong Kong, though we also have several interested buyers from the UK," he said.

Mr Wilson said that he kept

UK buyers in mind when creating the project and made pricing a major consideration.

"To be frank, the key to our approach to the UK market was to make sure we had something with a starting price under 50,000 pounds sterling, which is basically 3.5 million baht. This will be an


attractive selling point in the UK market," he said.

"We will also have an official business center and we will provide shuttle buses to take residents to places like Phuket Town, Central Festival or golf courses, which are all very close by. Or we can take them to Patong in the daytime on the beach, or at nighttime for whatever other activities. We will offer housekeeping and all normal facilities through our management service," he added.

Lakeside condominium was designed by an architect from Studio 906 Co Ltd who has been involved in many condominium projects in Bangkok and Hua Hin. Construction is expected to begin in December.


For more information, contact Phuket PRD Properties Co Ltd, 62 Lagoon Road, Cherng Talay, Thalang (Tel: 076-271773; Fax: 076-271418; Mobile: 086-2715319; Email: info@phuket-prd.com).

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Property Gazette

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APT IN BANG TAO FOR SALE

2 bedrooms, fully furnished, aircon, Western-style kitchen and pool. Asking 5.5 million baht. Tel: 089-8749080. Email: mllcarpenter@hotmail.com

NAI YANG LAND

for sale. 1km to the beach. 3 plots: 20m x 22m (440sqm each), road access. Price: 900,000 baht. Please contact Tel: 089-7241140.

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Property Gazette

58 RAI BEACHFRONT LAND



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24 RAI IN KAMALA



With sea view. All land has a fantastic sea view and good road access. Chanote. Land can be sold in divided plots. Thai owner. Price: 6 million baht per rai. Contact Sakorn. Tel: 087-6050365. Email: tim.kamalaparadise@hotmail.com

6 RAI IN KAMALA



Nice land with sea view and good road access. Chanote title. Thai owner. 6 million baht per rai. For more info, please contact Sakorn at Tel: 087-6050365. Email: tim.kamalaparadise@hotmail.com

BEACHFRONT HOUSE
at Kamala. 2 bedrooms, 2 stories, last one. Only 15 million baht. Please call Tel: 085-7839062.

RAWAI POOL VILLA
New resort of 6 villas for sale. 4.5 million baht each. Tel: 086-9408914. Email: freeholdprop@yahoo.com

BEACHFRONT HOUSE



Brand-new villa with 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, fitness room, 12-meter swimming pool, Western kitchen, teakwood floors, 2 Jacuzzis, 24 meters of beach frontage and beautiful sea and hill views. Price: 29 million baht. Tel: 081-3430777.

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1.5 rai of secluded flat land (2 adjoining 3/4 rai Chanote plots). Ideal for private villas. Tel: 076-239432, 081-0879237 (Thai and English). Email: crob58@gmail.com

LAND FOR SALE

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LAND FOR SALE

61 rai. 3 million baht per rai on Thepkasattri Rd. Tah Chat Chai area, next to new check point. 1km to JW Marriott. 15 minutes to Phuket airport. Call Tel: 089-0927697. Email: matklang@hotmail.com

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Khao Lak. Bang Niang bungalow-apartment resort. 8 bungalows with 2 rooms and 2 bungalows with 3 rooms. 6m x 12m swimming pool. Sauna, Jacuzzi, restaurant. All rooms with aircon, color TV, DVD player and ADSL. Parking available. Price: 9 million baht. Tel: 076-346065, 081-8914844. Email: joerg@phuket.ksc.co.th

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Fully furnished, 2-story 3 bedrooms, large living areas & patios, yard, bright & quiet central location between beaches and Phuket City. Must see! 40,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-0882179.

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BEACHFRONT HOUSE

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CHALONG SHOPHOUSE

This new 3-story shophouse is available for long-term lease. Ideal for home office/shop accommodation. Please inquire for more information at Tel: 089-6521473.

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Property Gazette

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A number of listings that may appeal to you. Prices starting from 15,000 baht per month. Contact Tel: 081-7196088 (English) or 089-6498703 (Thai). Website: www.gardenislandphuket.com

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Rawai location, 2 stories, 8 rooms, aircons, 170sqm, ideal for 2 families. Long-term rent: 2,800 baht per month. Condo with aircon. Rent: 5,000 baht per month. Tel: 084-4454614.

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for rent. Land and Houses, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, garden and carport for 2 cars, Western-style kitchen, hardwood floors. 30,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-378179, 086-0109782. Email: info@timberway.net

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PATONG ROOM FOR RENT

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4-STORY BUILDING

for rent. 6 bedrooms, opposite Tesco Lotus. Please contact for more details at Tel: 089-4743575, 085-9095191, 089-4744839.

SHOPHOUSE BLOCK

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Property Gazette

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YACHT AND CHARTER BUSINESS

Well-established yacht charter business featuring lovely 60ft Ketch, based in Phuket. 4 guest cabins sleeping 8 pax, 1 large crew cabin, 2 shower/heads, 2 generators, dive compressor, 2 kayaks, tender, and much more. High-traffic website included. Bookings for 2007/2008 season already placed. Turnkey business, ready to sail. Owner retiring, but full handover support available. Price: 6.5 million baht. Contact us for full details. Email: tropical.lifestyle@gmail.com

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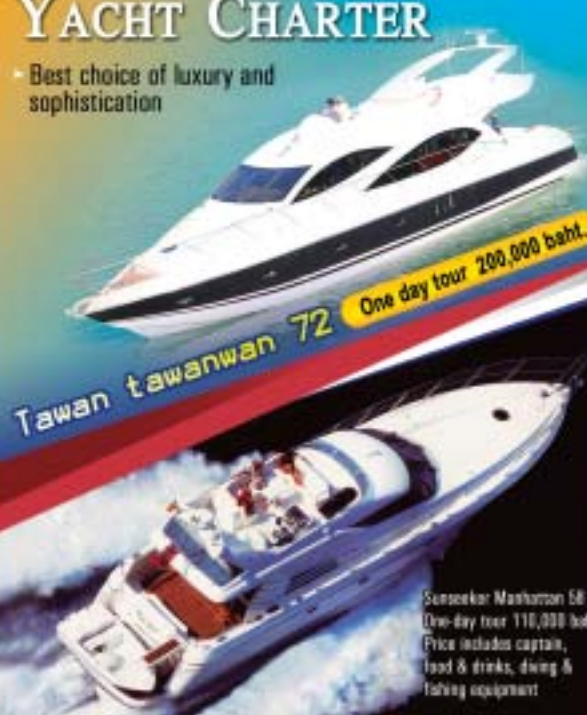
Thai-registered wooden boat for sale or rent. 65ft long, 18ft wide, 30 tons. Email: shaanxi.xian@vipmail.hu or p.atiss@freemail.hu

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Bangkok Office Tel: +66-2-429-2877, 429-2021
(Contact Ms. Kanokorn Sangutthai)
E-mail: sales@sunnay.com Website: www.sunnay.com

9M CATAMARAN

for sale. No engine, no mast and no sails. Price: 270,000 baht. Call for more information. Tel: 087-8919620.

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 <p>Cumberland 44' - 2006 Thai commercially registered already a successful charter boat. Available immediately - based in Phuket Contact us as a Central Agency.</p>	 <p>Skip Jack 18 Built FRP in Phuket, Yamaha 2 x 85 hp. Good general state Reduced Price at 700.000,- THB</p>

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Phuket Branch

We are looking for open-minded people who are seeking a challenging role within their career. Join our extensive international team and work for one of the world's market leaders in real estate. Our Overseas Chain of Estate Agents Network gives you the chance to enjoy both a successful career and a dynamic lifestyle. You will be working with our worldwide offices and global property exhibitions program.

Opportunities Available

► Listing Executive

Thai nationality. Excellent communication and negotiation skills, good team player. Having your own car will be an advantage. Must know Phuket very well.

► IT & Exhibition Co-ordinator

The candidate should have experience in the Adobe Suite including InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator, knowledge of printing industry would be advantage along with good general IT grounding.

► Administrator

Thai nationality. Enthusiastic and well organized candidate required. Basic office skills including database management, good command of spoken and written English, good interpersonal skills, team player and service-minded.

Email your CV with photo if possible to adminphuket@oceanestates.com

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9.00-21.00

British International School, Phuket
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All Applicants must have at least bachelor's degree.

For more information please contact
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British International School, Phuket (BIS, Phuket)
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Tel: 076 238 711-20 Fax: 076 238 750 info@bcis.ac.th www.bcis.ac.th



HOTEL POSITIONS

We are looking for

- Restaurant manager
- Captain
- Sales & marketing

You should be motivated, service-minded, pleasant personality, some English language skills. Email your resume and recent photo to: sinhavee@hotmail.com

HOUSEKEEPER

Required full time for retired businessman in Chalong. Must have own transport and speak English. Duties include general running of house, bill paying, cleaning, ironing, some cooking, etc. Excellent wages given to right person. Email: verhar@yahoo.com

ABSOLUTE TELEMARKETERS!

Absolute is currently recruiting Thai nationals for new telemarketing department based in Patong. Successful applicants must speak fluent English. Salary and commission. Email: thailandjobs@clubabsolute.com



Alila Hotels and Resorts, an international luxury lifestyle resort management company, is seeking talented candidates for its latest opening in Phuket. Currently under construction in one of the most exclusive and upscale areas on Phuket, the 200-rooms resort is scheduled to open in the third quarter of 2007. We are looking for candidates with energy and enthusiasm, a passion for working to the highest standards and preferably pre-opening experience.

Financial Controller Rooms Division Manager Chief Engineer Chief Gardener Sales Manager Reservation Manager	Public Relations Manager Spa Manager Chief Concierge Chief Security IT/EDP Manager
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Alila Phuket offers attractive salaries, benefits and career opportunities within Thailand and abroad with one of Asia's most exclusive hotel management companies. Applications with resume in English, a recent photograph, work certificates and salary expectations may be sent to:

Alila Phuket

Pre-opening office, 9/2 Moo 6,
Kamala, Kathu, Phuket 83150, Thailand

Tel/Fax: 0-76 279 772,
Email: hrphuket@alilahotels.com

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Required for a New Charitable Initiative In Phuket



The Phuket Community Foundation is looking for a full-time person to run its operations in Phuket City.

The PCF will be officially launched in August with the aim of raising and distributing funds for worthwhile projects in the following areas: Poverty alleviation; Education (of both children and adults); Art and Culture; Architectural and Historical Heritage; Public Safety; Public Health; The Environment.

The Board expects that the PCF's work will expand rapidly, and will hire more staff to cope with this expansion. To start with, however, we need a real go-getter who can help to ensure that the PCF's assets and donations grow rapidly and that worthwhile projects are targeted and implemented with minimum waste and the maximum effect.

The ideal candidate will be:

- A Thai citizen;
- Fluent in Thai and English (spoken and written);
- Aged 30 to 45;
- An energetic self-starter;
- Full of ideas;
- Able to work independently;
- Not afraid of taking responsibility;

The post will carry a salary commensurate with the successful applicant's experience and reflecting the hard work and responsibility that will be required of him or her.

Specific responsibilities will include:

- Working with the Board of the Phuket Community Foundation to ensure timely implementation of the board's policies and decisions;
- Providing overall direction, coordination and implementation of the Foundation's fundraising activities, and independently identifying new sources of donations;
- Representing and serving as spokesperson for the foundation to the general public and other organizations or entities;
- Making suggestions to the Board for the making of grants, and ensuring timely, transparent implementation of projects for which grants are approved;
- Developing and managing budgets, taking day-to-day responsibility for financial management;
- Overseeing all PCF staffing and administrative functions.

Details of the post will be explained to those called for interview.

Applications, in English and including resume, scans of ID card and education certificates, and the names of two relevant referees should be submitted by email to: Alasdair.phuket@yahoo.co.uk

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Assistant Project Manager

- Male Thai national.
- Over 30 years old.
- Bachelor degree in construction, structural engineering or Quantity Surveying
- At least 5 years experience in a project management role
- Responsibility includes construction management, contractor management scheduling, reporting and the ability to undertake admin support between sub – contractors and architectural finishing works
- Support information, controlling and evaluation of project progress
- Excellent spoken and written English
- Positive and flexible approach to all aspects to work

We are recruiting for a hard working, open minded, experienced Assistant Project Manager to join our team on Coconut Island. The successful candidate will report directly to the Project Manager and together will oversee, manage and control the whole construction operation. This is a demanding and challenging role that will require total commitment to achieve results.

If you feel that you have these skills and qualities then please send an up to date CV and cover letter to phom@thevillage-coconutisland.com, Tel: 086 942 9190

20/12 Moo 2, Boat Lagoon Phuket, Thepkasatri Rd, Tambon Koh Kaew, Amphur Muang, Phuket 83200

Knight Frank

We are an international property consultant having 200 offices worldwide providing property agency services, asset valuation, property and facilities management, research and consultancy, due to rapid expansion, we are looking for qualified personnel to join our company as follows:

1. Zone Manager (2 positions)

- Male or female, age over 28 yrs
- BA in Real Estate/Property Management or related fields
- At least 3 yrs experience in building/estate management
- Knowledge of Land Development Act, Condominium Juristic Person Acts an advantage

2. Estate Manager / Assistant Estate Manager (4 positions)

- Male or female, age over 28 yrs
- BA in Real Estate/Property Management or related fields
- At least 1 yr experience in building/estate management or 3 years in management level
- Knowledge of Land Development Act, Condominium Juristic Person Acts an advantage

3. HR Officer (2 positions)

- Male or female, age over 28 yrs
- BA in HR or related fields
- At least 2 yrs experience in HR function
- Knowledge of Thai Labor Law

4. Receptionist (2 positions)

- Female, age over 22 yrs
- Vocational or higher in related fields
- At least 1 yr experience in receptionist front office
- Familiarity with office automation

5. Department Secretary (2 positions)

- Female, age over 28 yrs
- BA in Secretarial or related fields
- At least 3 yrs experience in secretarial work

6. Accountant (2 positions)

- Male or female, age over 25 yrs
- BA in Accounting or Finance
- At least 2 yrs experience in accounting
- Familiar with accounting software with knowledge of MS-office especially MS-Excel and Thailand taxation systems

Interested candidates are invited to write in with full resume, stating present and expected salaries, and enclosing a recent photo to Human Resource Department at the address below:

Knight Frank Phuket Co., Ltd.
1 Plaza Del Mar Building Room no.109-111 & 201-202, Pasak-Koktanod Road, T. Chermgtalay, A. Thalang, Phuket 83110
Tel: 0-7631 8151-8 Fax: 0-7631 8159
Email: chutima.ninlawan@th.knightfrank.com

Remark:
Thai Nationality only
Good command of spoken and written English and computer literacy is essential
Male applicants must complete or exempt from military service
Knowledge of Real Estate an advantage

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Property manager

Position take full advantage of our established property management

- Male or female over 35 years
- BA in real estate/ property management or related fields
- At least 2-4 years in building / estate management
- Complete manager-leader skills
- Excellent in both written and spoken English
- Fringe benefits and other options

Phuket Andaman Real Estate Co., Ltd.
17/11 Chaofa Rd, T. Taladnau, A. Muang, Phuket 83000
Tel: +66 (0) 7624 5966 Mobile: +66 (0) 8578 42004
CV to hakan@phuketandamanrealestate.com

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- * Restaurant manager
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- * Cook
- * Waiter/waitress
- * Cashier
- * Maid
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You should be motivated, service-minded, with pleasant personality, an energetic individual, have minimum of 2 years' experience and good command of English. Please email your resume, expected salary and recent photo to: pia@phuket-bangtaolagoon.com

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• SPA MANAGER	1 POSITION
• CHIEF GARDENER	1 POSITION
• SPA TRAINER	1 POSITION
• HOUSEKEEPING SUPERVISOR	3 POSITIONS
• SPECIALTY CHEF	1 POSITION
• CHEF DE PARTIE	1 POSITION
• COMMIS, COLD KITCHEN	1 POSITION
• GUEST SERVICE ATTENDANT - ACTIVITY CENTRE	1 POSITION
• GUEST SERVICE ATTENDANT - GUEST SERVICE	2 POSITIONS
• F&B SERVICE ATTENDANT	8 POSITIONS
• SPA THERAPISTS	3 POSITIONS
• PORTER	1 POSITIONS
• GARDENER	1 POSITIONS

THE CANDIDATES SHOULD POSSESS THE FOLLOWING QUALIFICATIONS:

- THAI NATIONALS PREFERRED, AGED BETWEEN 20-35 YEARS
- PLEASANT PERSONALITY, EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION SKILLS, SERVICE MIND
- EXPERIENCE IN SPECIFIED FIELD IS AN ADVANTAGE
- FORMAL TRAINING AND GRADUATION FROM A RECOGNIZED INSTITUTE OR HOTEL SCHOOL PREFERRED
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- COMPUTER LITERACY FOR GUEST CONTACT POSITIONS
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RAYA VADEE KRABI, THAILAND
HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
214 MOO 2 TUMBON AO-NANG, AMPHUR MUANG, KRABI 81000
CONTACT: KHUN SUKAN PUKAO
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One of Phuket's biggest Dive Centers has free positions in the following departments in Phuket and Khao Lak.

PHUKET:

- 1 Accountant Patong office
- 1 Asst. Accountant Chalong office
- 2 Booking staff Patong office
- 1 Shop Manager Karon/Kata
- 1 Driver with license for minibus
- 1 Driver

Khao Lak:

- 1 Manager
- 2 Booking staff
- 1 Driver
- Instructors (Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, German, English)

The driver must have good knowledge of hotel locations, and spoken English is an advantage. For the booking position we require a person with the following qualifications:

- Excellent skills in spoken and written Thai
- Good skills in spoken and written English
- Knowledge of the dive business – persons with a dive certification will have an advantage
- Good knowledge in working with a computer
- Presentable and flexible

Employment start due to agreement.

Interested candidates, who fit the above profile, please Email your resume immediately and then call our office to make an appointment for an interview.
Phone: 076-294 225, Email: info@scandinavian-divers.com

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Experienced in all areas of maintenance with ability to lead a team, develop maintenance schedules, plan preventative work & use budgets. The job covers a small condo block, the marina & offices. Must have English language skills. Tel: 076-206704. Fax: 076-206706. Email: zara@yacht-haven-phuket.com

NANNY WANTED

We are looking for a English-speaking nanny in Patong. Please contact Nicole. Please call for more information at Tel: 084-6470462.

SALES/ RESERVATIONS/ OPERATIONS

Destination Air is seeking ten new team players for sales, operations, and reservations at Phuket International Airport. Applicants should be male/female, Thai nationality, with previous experience, excellent interpersonal skills and service minded. Fluent English communication and proficient computers skills are a must for these positions. Salary based on experience. Interested persons, please send CV to Tel: 076-328638. Fax: 076-328598. Email: hrda@destinationair.com For further details, please see our website at <http://www.destinationair.com>

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Thai lady required part time with very flexible hours. Must have good English and computer skills. Please contact Tel: 086-2790837.

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- Room accommodation
 - We shall assist with obtaining your work permit
- Please contact Mr Chirinet.

Tel: 02-8614572,
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Email: job2500@yahoo.com

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Small international school needs qualified kindergarten/ grade 1 teacher for one-year position starting Aug 22, 2007. Curriculum planning experience and PYP training preferred. ESL teachers need not apply. Tel: 081-8942560. Email: pamela@horizons-phuket.com

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club manager. Looking for a dynamic and creative individual to manage guest relations, tour and kids club in a fun family-focused resort. Foreigners welcome. Please contact for more details. Tel: 076-396-666, 076-396667. Email: hr@ramadaphuket.com

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PHUKET

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- Male or female. Bachelor's degree or higher 2 years experience in sales department.
- Excellent communication skills including knowledge of MS Office, e-mail and Internet
- Proficiency in both written and spoken English

Night Audit

- Male or Female. Bachelor degree.
- Experience in front office department.
- Excellent communication skill, service minded.
- Fluent in both written and spoken English.

Purchasing Officer

- Male or female. Diploma degree or higher
- Experience in purchasing office
- English required and excellent communication skills, service minded

Estate Officer

- Female. Bachelor's degree.
- Excellent communication skills including knowledge of MS Office, e-mail and Internet
- Proficiency in both written and spoken English

Driver

- Male, English required.
- Have a driver's license and service minded.

All positions offer an attractive salary and benefits including service charge. Candidates with the above requirement and qualifications are invited to send a resume with a recent photograph to:

Human Resources Sri Panwa

88 Moo8 Sakdidej Road Phuket 83000

Tel: 076-371000, Fax: 076-371011

E-mail: hrm@sripanwa.com, recruitment@sripanwa.com

Staff Required

- 1 x Head Hostess
- 1 x Hostess

A luxury motor yacht charter company is looking for 2 English-speaking Thai national staff to fill the above positions.

A background in five-star service is essential as is a fun personality.

Please contact
prue@tawancruises.com or phone 081 894 3234 for further information.

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The Phuket Gazette seeks to fill the following positions:

Advertising Sales

- Thai national with an outgoing personality
- Good command of written and spoken English
- At least 26 years of age
- Driver's license and own car

Administration Assistant

The successful candidate will be a Thai national with an outgoing personality. Also essential are experience in sales and/or administration, a good command of written and spoken English, good management and organizational skills, and knowledge of PageMaker and Office software.

Qualified candidates are invited to send a CV by email to ann@phuketgazette.net

Reporter

The successful candidate will be a Thai national, with initiative, an outgoing personality, and plenty of experience about the world and how it works. Also essential are the ability to communicate in English, both spoken and written, and a car.

Good salary for the right candidate.

Qualified candidates are invited to send a CV by email to editor@phuketgazette.net

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at 7 pm and Fri at 8 pm

Chalong Health
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Tues 1 pm

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call 081-9564031,

081-8912895

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087-2795636 (Nor)

086-7458910 (Swe)

For info on other Thailand
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(for Thai language press 3)
www.aathailand.org or
email info@aathailand.org

PIWC GALA BALL

The Phuket International Women's Club announces the most prestigious event this year - the annual Gala Ball on Saturday, November 24th at the Indigo Pearl in Nai Yang Beach. Watch for more details. Tickets will be in great demand. Contact Carol at Tel: 087-4178860, email: carol@aplusplussoftware.com or Sue at Tel: 087-2776948, email: arnulphy@loxinfo.co.th

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GREAT OPPORTUNITY

Seara Int. is looking for an admin/sales assistant. Thai female, 22-25 yrs old, good command of written/spoken English, computer skills. Join our successful team! Tel: 076-355040. Fax: 076-355039. Email: boom@searaspots.com

RECEPTIONIST

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Hotel Travel

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HotelTravel.com is a leading international online travel information and hotel reservations service. We are a multi-cultural company, employing experienced and knowledgeable staff from six continents. We pride ourselves in our ability to provide unparalleled customer service in 8 different languages.

We are currently accepting applications for the following positions:

Korean Customer Service (full time)

This position is in our Phuket, Thailand Call and Reservation Centre Requirements:

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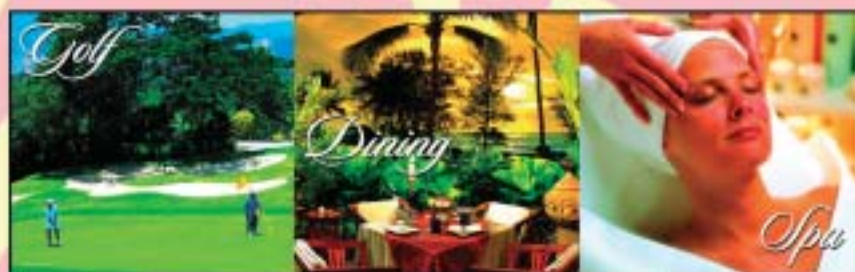
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