

Phuket Gazette

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Democrats cruise to victory in Phuket

By Gazette Staff

PHUKET: On a day when over 74% of registered voters in the province made it to the polls, official results from the general election held on December 23 saw Democrat Party candidates Rewat Areerob and Tossaporn Thepabutr winning both of Phuket's two constituency MP seats by huge margins, despite a smear campaign.

K. Rewat told the *Gazette*, "I'm happy with the result because I have a lot of votes from people, which means they believe in me. I will do my best for them. Now, I can't say a lot because I'm not yet in the new government, which must be confirmed with the national election office first."

Two-time constituency MP Chalermklak Kebsup will likely return to parliament as a party list MP, as unconfirmed results in party-list voting indicate, she will be one of eight party list MPs from the Democrat party to represent the southern region under the new proportional representation [party list] system.

In district voting in Phuket, official results confirmed by the Phuket Election Committee showed K. Rewat as the top vote-getter with 93,004, followed by running-mate K. Tossaporn with 87,905 votes.

Somchart Somnam from the Chart Thai party came in a distant third with 17,252 votes.

Despite a vigorous campaign and support from the island's Thai-language daily newspaper *Siangtai*, Palang Prachachon ("People Power") candidates Dr Sriyada Shinawatra and Wisut Santikul were



SECRET BALLOT: Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (OrBorJor) President and Democrat Party member Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutra was among the first to cast a ballot at the Phuket City Police polling station on December 23.

only able to garner 15,220 and 14,683 votes, respectively, to come in fourth and fifth.

In constituency voting 159,241 (74.3%) of Phuket's 214,329 eligible voters exercised their right, although nearly 10% opted to tick the "No Vote" option. There were also 4,066 (2.6%) spoiled ballots.

In Phuket party-list voting, the Democrats also won in a landslide with 122,038 votes. They were followed by People Power (14,376) and Puea Pandin (2,870).

Turnout for the party-list voting was identical to that in the constituency voting at 74.3%, but there were fewer No Votes cast (6,035 cards or 3.8%) and more spoiled ballots (6,779 cards or 4.3%).

There was a strong voter

vance. Most were in Muang District (4,717 voters), followed by Thalang (1,068) and Kathu (761).

There were no reports of spoiled ballots or illegal campaigning near polling stations while the voting was underway, said K. Supap.

Nationwide, an unprecedented turnout of 2.9 million absentee and advance votes were cast.

The turnout of absentee voters exceeded 87.5%, amounting to 1.83 million ballots. Some 1.12 million voters cast advance ballots, EC member Prapun Naigowit said.

On the eve of the election, K. Tossaporn and K. Rewat handed a petition to the Phuket Election Commission (PEC) complaining that leaflets attacking them had been distributed around the island.

The pair handed the complaint and a copy of one of the leaflets to PEC Director Supap after a visit to Phuket City Police station, where they filed a criminal complaint earlier that morning.

K. Supap accepted the complaint, noting that the pair would have to return later to complete more paperwork before the complaint could be forwarded to the Election Commission (EC) in Bangkok, which is authorized to suspend or ban from political activity politicians deemed to have violated election law.

K. Supap said that, if the identities of those behind the leaflets could be revealed, the perpetrators could face punishment under election and criminal law, depending on the EC's ruling.

turnout in advance polling, with 25,956 voters from around the country making their way to Phuket Community Hall on December 15 and 16 to cast absentee ballots in their home constituencies.

Phuket Election Commission (PEC) Director Supap Akkam told the *Gazette* that the turnout exceeded 85% of the 30,394 out-of-town voters who had registered to cast absentee ballots in Phuket.

Advance voting took place at three polling stations, one in each district: the Kathu Army Petrol Depot in Kathu, the Thalang Pranangsang School in Thalang and Phuket Municipality Meeting Hall.

A total of 6,546 voters, or 3% of all eligible voters, took the opportunity to cast ballots in ad-

Cherng Talay Tesco-Lotus opens amid controversy

CHERNG TALAY: While local residents continue their fight against the opening of the "Laguna Tesco-Lotus Market Cherng Talay", the store opened just in time for last-minute Christmas shopping.

The opening of the store is mired with controversy, with local residents and shopowners, led by Samarn Krohle and Apisit Ngarnpresertkit, having filed complaints with Thalang District Chief Chaiwat Tapee and Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit.

K. Samarn and K. Apisit in September led a protest of some 50 locals outside the offices Cherng Talay Municipality, claiming that the new store will destroy the livelihood of locals while increasing their cost of living.

The protest followed an order – signed on July 27 by Samart Sagae, then-president of Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) – for construction of the store to stop.

On November 26, K. Samarn and K. Apisit on behalf of the protesters filed a complaint with Thalang District Chief Chaiwat, claiming that the store violated a 2004 Ministry of Interior regulation stipulating that individual supermarkets must cover a space between 300 square meters and 1,000sqm.

On November 30, District Chief Chaiwat called on Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit to rule whether the construction violates the ministerial regulation.

At that time, Gov Niran had yet to issue a statement and had yet to clarify whether the issue falls under the jurisdiction of Cherng Talay Municipality or Cherng Talay *OrBorTor*.

Since the meeting with Governor Niran, K. Apisit has confirmed to the *Gazette* that a complaint has been filed with the Administrative Court.

Ya bah bust near Heroine's Monument

By Natcha Yuttaworawit

THALANG: During a sting operation near the Heroines' Monument December 20, Phuket Provincial Police special investigations unit arrested a Thalang man for possession of 400 *ya bah* (methamphetamine) pills with intent to sell.

Lt Anukul Nukate, of Thalang Police Station, explained to the *Gazette* that undercover police officers had arranged to meet Surachai Maimad, 29, at 3 pm on Srisoonthorn Rd [Route 4025] to buy the pills for 60,000 baht.

After completing the sale, Surachai was

arrested and later confessed to the crime, Lt Anukul said.

Police seized the 400 *ya bah* pills, 243,900 baht in cash and Surachai's Nissan Sunny sedan, Lt Anukul added.

Surachai was taken to Phuket Provincial Court, where he was charged with possession of a Class I narcotic with intent to sell.

Earlier on December 20, Thalang Police acting on a tip-off arrested two suspects in Phuket City for attempted murder in Kathu earlier this year.

Lt Anukul identified the pair as Jittiporn Sritongkaew, 26, from Nakhon Sri Tham-

marat, and Pakamas Nakpeng, 33, from Prachuap Khiri Khan.

Although unfamiliar with the details of the attempted murder case, Lt Anukul said the suspects had been arrested in Thalang on October 30 for possession and use of *ya bah*, two pills of which were seized as evidence at the time.

The arrests in Phuket City followed the suspects being identified by an informant who knew there was a warrant for their arrest, he said.

Although they denied any wrongdoing, the pair were sent to Phuket Provincial Court to answer the warrant, he said.

Phuket welcomes first Estonia charter flight

By Janyaporn Morel

MAI KHAO: The first charter flight from Tallinn in the Republic of Estonia to Phuket touched down at Phuket International Airport on December 19.

At 8 pm, a group of 220 Finnish and Estonian tourists arrived in Phuket aboard a Boeing 757-200 operated by Air Finland.

The tourists were welcomed by members of the local press, Phuket International Airport Deputy Director Yutthana Jitrob-aree and staff from Tourism Authority of Thailand Southern Region 4 Office, including its director, Suwalai Pinpradub.

Air Finland will operate six Tallinn-Phuket flights a week as part of an initiative to promote Phuket and the Andaman region as a holiday destination for Finnish people in the Baltic Sea region.



COMING IN FROM THE COLD: Two passengers aboard the inaugural flight from Estonia pose with local beauties in traditional Thai dress.

Airport post office relocates within terminal

MAI KHAO: The post office at Phuket International Airport has been relocated from the departures terminal to the arrivals terminal on the ground floor of the airport.

Kusol Yamyeen, manager of Post Office Region 8, told the *Gazette* that the post office was closed on December 22 so that furniture and equipment could be moved.

The post office keeps the same opening hours at its new location: Monday through Sunday, 9 am to 8 pm, including public holidays.

In addition to serving local residents, the post office at the airport offers tourists heading home a last chance to send postcards or souvenirs to friends and family abroad. Last year, nearly 5 million tourists passed through the airport.

Red Cross seeks donations for annual charity fair

PHUKET CITY: The Phuket chapter of the Red Cross Foundation is in need of donations to be sold during its annual fair, this year to be held at Saphan Hin from December 27 to January 7.

All money raised from sale of donated items will go to the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center (JOPC) in Phuket to pay for various activities and projects.

Donations of items for the sale can be taken to the JOPC on Rattanakosin 200 Pi Rd until the final day of the fair.

The JOPC is joining forces with the Phuket Home for the Aged, the Kusoldharm Foundation and Rotary Club of Phuket to organize the fair, which has been named Pan Rak Soo Dek Kao Plad ("Share love with the child who is missed").

The center was established to give children a better life by assisting the development of their social skills.

For more information call 076-250352-3. Alternatively, contact the Kusoldharm Foundation, which can collect any items for the sale, by calling 076-246301.

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Two die in bypass road horror smash

By Sompratch Saowakhon

PHUKET CITY: Two people have died after a high-speed collision between a motorbike and a pickup truck at the Tesco-Lotus intersection on the bypass road on December 25.

Patthama Jiewluan, a high-school student at Phuket Wittayalai School in Phuket City, died at the scene.

Jirapan Chanchaivej, the driver of the pickup, died later at hospital.

Lt Theeradet Jiraksa of Phuket City Police Station, who is leading the investigation into the accident, told the *Gazette* that the collision, which happened about 7 am, was between Patthama, who was riding her motorcycle from Kathu to Phuket City, and a pickup truck driven by Jirapan with his friend Jirasak Samutthikarn as passenger.

The pair were heading southbound through the junction

on their way from Koh Kaew to Chalong.

"I received a call from Vachira Phuket Hospital this afternoon informing me that K. Jirapan has died," Lt Theeradet said.

"K. Jirasak is still in a coma," he added.

Lt Theeradet said that police have yet to press charges as they are still investigating the accident.

"We need to check the CCTV camera recording taken at the scene at that time before we can draw any conclusions," he said.

However, he said, "It looks as if one of the drivers failed to stop for a red light. It seems both of them might have been driving through the intersection at high speed.

"I will have to wait for Jirasak to regain consciousness before I can proceed with the investigation," he added.

Security guard, 26, murdered in Kamala

By Natcha Yuttaworawit

KAMALA: Police are investigating the murder of a security guard found beaten and shot to death outside a room at an apartment building in Kamala on the afternoon of December 22.

Duty Officer Pol Lt Chaipayong Thamasurin of the Kamala Police identified the victim as 26-year-old Jirasak Khundamri, who was employed as a security guard by a private firm in Cherg Talay.

He was found outside apartment A1 at an unnamed apartment block on Soi OrBorTor in Bangwan village, tambon Kamala.

The victim died from a single .38-caliber bullet to the left side of his lower ribcage, Lt Chaipayong said.

Several of the victim's teeth were found on the ground near the body, which together with

other injuries indicated that he had been badly beaten before he was shot.

Although the murder weapon was not found, police collected at the scene the .38-caliber bullet which passed through the victim's body and exited through his back, he said.

Police have already questioned several witnesses in the case, including the owner of the apartment block, 61-year-old Kosol Korkaew, and his daughter Supak, 36.

Lt Chaipayong declined to say if they had any suspects in the case, although he said a relationship between the victim and K. Supak was thought to be a factor in the motive for the killing.

The victim's family, who are Muslims, were required by their faith to bury K. Supak as soon as possible and thus have not yet been questioned, said Lt Chaipayong.

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Luang Phu Supha, 114, blesses 'safe teddies'

By Semacote Suganya

CHALONG: Phuket Vice-Governor Tri Augkaradacha traveled to Wat Luang Phu Supha on December 22 to present 2,000 "Nong Prodpai" ("safe sister bear") teddy bears for blessing by revered monk Luang Phu Supha.

The teddy bears are to be distributed to motorists at police checkpoints during the "seven days of danger" period, from December 28 to January 3.

Luang Phu Supha, who is reputed to be 114 years old, used a blessing popular during the reign of King Rama IV for the ceremony.

As in previous years, the province has also been set with threshold numbers of accidents (41), injuries (32) and deaths (3) for the seven-day period.

If actual numbers fall below these figures, the provincial effort will be deemed a success.



Revered monk Luang Phu Supha, 114, blesses the teddy bears that will be handed out to motorists as part of the government's new year road-safety campaign.

Work begins on home supplies retail center on bypass road

WICHIT: Amid rumors that a new shopping mall is under construction opposite Central Festival Phuket on the bypass road, the *Gazette* has learned that a new branch of homeWorks, a complete home-decoration and building-supplies subsidiary of retailing giant Central, is slated for the site.

Work began recently on the large plot behind Darasamuth School, with trucks working day and night to clear the land.

Wiset Sabaijit, Chief Administrative Officer (*Palad*) of Wichit Municipality, told the *Gazette* that permission to build the retail center was granted several months ago.

However, he added that they were currently awaiting ap-

proval of an environmental-impact assessment for an enclosed pedestrian bridge to be built to connect the homeWorks building with Central Festival.

Such permission involved many government agencies, he said, including the Provincial Highways Office.

Palad Wiset said he could not disclose more information about the project, though he added that construction of the shopping center was expected to be complete within 2008.

The new retail center will bring the total number of homeWorks outlets in the country to nine, including the store on the lower level at Central Festival Phuket.

— *Sangkhae Leelanaporn*

Alms-giving for the New Year

PHUKET CITY: Phuket City Municipality invites all members of the public to offer alms to Buddhist monks and nuns in a ceremony on January 1 to celebrate the new year and make merit for an auspicious 2008.

The ceremony will be at Queen Sirikit Park on Thalang Rd.

A total of 199 monks and nuns have been invited from temples around Phuket to receive food in the ceremony, which will begin at 7 am. People are advised to assemble at the park from 6 am to allow ample time for everyone to be seated before the ceremony begins.

Dried or canned foods are suggested as appropriate food donations.

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Phuket is a special place; a place that has a habit of making headline news. Not a year passes without some major incident taking its toll, but each year local residents and even the tourists, who visit but once and take Phuket to their hearts, stride forward for a better future.

Here *Gazette* News Editor Stephen Fein looks back at the stories over the past year that have made their mark in Phuket history.

Less than three years after the 2004 Asian tsunami disaster, Phuket once again found itself making international news headlines in 2007 with the crash of One-Two-Go Flight OG269 at Phuket International Airport on September 16 – by far Phuket's biggest news story in 2007.

The cause of the crash, which claimed the lives of 90 people including five crew members, is still under investigation. However, initial indications are that adverse weather conditions, including wind shear, were a major factor. A review of the flight data and eyewitness accounts indicated that Indonesian pilot Areef Mulyadi attempted to land the McDonnell-Douglas MD-82 aircraft and then unsuccessfully tried to abort at the last minute.

Most of the those on board perished after the plane's wing hit an embankment, causing the fuselage to crash into the ground and break in two. Some 40 people managed to scramble to safety after two passengers were able to force open an emergency door, but the majority died in the ensuing fire that left many burned beyond recognition.

One survivor was long-term Phuket resident Robert Borland from Australia, who was pulled from the burning wreckage by a Thai man wearing a yellow shirt. The hero was later identified as Paiboon Phaphan, an air-conditioning mechanic from Pa Khlok who was also seriously injured in the crash.

Like many of the survivors, Mr Borland was treated at Bangkok Hospital Phuket, where he underwent 10 skin-graft surgeries before his release on December 23, just in time for Christmas.

On Christmas Day, he told the *Gazette* that he was satisfied with the support of One-Two-Go in covering all his medical bills and expenses for his mother Muriel to come and be with him throughout his recovery.

Mr Borland said he held no grudge toward the airline. "It could have happened to any airline," he said.

He added that he was touched to have received a Christmas card signed by the One-Two-Go chairman and all its Phuket staff, together with an optical computer mouse in the shape of a One-Two-Go aircraft – to replace one lost in the disaster.

2007 was also a year with a high rate of violent attacks on innocent people, among them some foreigners. Perhaps the most horrific of these took place at Loma Park along Patong Beach on February 13, when Sombun Kaewkhaaw, a 43-year-old vagrant and glue addict, doused 21-year-old beach masseuse Saijai Phromdaen with thinner and set her alight.

K. Saijai, who was critically injured and spent months in hospital for treatment of first degree burns to her face and body, will remain scarred for life.

2007: the year

The attack appears to have followed an argument that ensued when the victim's two-year-old daughter "Ice" began crying, which outraged the drug-addled sensibilities of Sombun.

Onlookers who witnessed the attack pounced on Sombun and beat him to a pulp before eventually handing him over to authorities. He was later sent to a psychiatric hospital in Surat Thani.

Another high-profile case, one which remains unsolved, was the fatal stabbing of Norwegian sea captain Simen Sparre Knudsen, who was stabbed and left for dead at about 1 am on September 23 near the Kata Viewpoint as he was returning by motorbike to his home in Rawai from a night out in Kata.

As Knudsen was a highly-respected expat resident with a Thai wife and teenage son, his murder sent shockwaves throughout the expat community and raised fears about the safety of visiting Phuket, especially in the victim's home country, where the murder became headline news.

Four young suspects, thought by some to have been scapegoats, were rounded up by Chalong Police. Although the first two reportedly confessed to the killing, they were later cleared and released. The case, later turned over to the Phuket City Police, remains unsolved as 2007 passes into 2008.

The Knudsen murder was one of many violent crimes that put the Chalong Police, whose ambit covers the entire south of the island, in the spotlight in the latter half of 2007. Many cases involved armed attacks on motorcyclists late at night. Another notable crime in the district was the robbery of Don's Mall in Rawai by a gang of teenagers on November 2.

Some hope for better security in the area came on November 8, when Pol Col Samarn Chainarong took over as super-



Burn victim Saijai Phromdaen, 21, in her bed at Vachira Phuket Hospital, where she was treated for first-degree burns after being doused with thinner and set alight by a vagrant glue-addict at Loma Park in Patong on February 13. She said her biggest sadness was that that her two-year-old daughter was afraid to look at her.

intendent from Col Chalit Kaewyarat, who was transferred to Takuapa District Police Station in Phang Nga.

The *Gazette* notes that the problems in Chalong are only part of an island-wide problem in law enforcement, much of it due to lack of funding. Phuket's registered population of just over 300,000, on which central government budgets are largely based, remains about half the actual population – not even counting the number of visiting tourists, expat residents and migrant laborers from neighboring countries that continue to move here.

Phuket's actual high-season population at any one time is thought to be around one million, with the Tourism Authority of Thailand predicting the number of visiting tourists to surpass the five-million mark for the first time by year's end.

Recognizing the severity of the "hidden population" problem when he took over as Phuket Governor in late 2005, Nirat Kalayanamit promised to launch a registration drive to counter the problem. That initiative took a step

forward with the launch of Thailand's first "mobile registration van" on November 8.

But while the number of Thais being added to the provincial rolls continues to increase, thanks to the registration effort, so does the number of people flocking to the island – continuing to fuel growth in almost every sector, including the real-estate market, which continues to boom.

Under these circumstances, it came as little surprise when Royal Thai Police Region 8 Commander Lt Gen Thanee Tavitcha told the media in September that some 10% of Phuket's current police force have requested transfers out of the province for easier postings elsewhere.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Decha Budnampeth confirmed this, saying at the time that Phuket had only about 1,050 officers, far fewer than the 1,600 officers needed to provide high-season security. Regardless, Royal Thai Police headquarters, citing inadequate funds, has continued to



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in review



The fatal stabbing of Norwegian sea captain Simen Sparre Knudsen in Rawai on September 23 sent shockwaves through the expat community and raised fears about the safety of visiting Phuket, especially in the victim's home country, where the murder became headline news.

deny his requests for reinforcements and the establishment of a new, independent police stations for both Tah Chat Chai and Karon.

However, it was announced in early October that the Police Region 8 command headquarters, currently in Surat Thani, will be moving to Mai Khao, where 150 rai of Treasury Department land had been put aside for the project.

Construction of the new headquarters is scheduled for completion by the end of September 2008 under a 170-million-baht budget from police headquarters in Bangkok. The new headquarters will have training facilities including a shooting range.

Meanwhile, violent crime has continued. Another violent murder, this one apparently trig-

gered by inhalant abuse, was the murder of 31-year-old transsexual Keittirat Longnawa, found beaten and with her throat slashed on January 31 in Rassada. At least six members of a glue-sniffing gang, all but one of them minors, were arrested.

Another unsolved murder involving a transsexual was that of 19-year-old Thanawoot Wiriy-ananon, whose strangled and beaten body was found near the road to Tri Trang Beach in Patong last month.

Police said the victim had a criminal background including arrests related to *ya bah* (methamphetamine) and had been known to scout other transsexuals to work for an Internet pornographer who was arrested earlier in November in a hotel near



One-Two-Go flight OG269 dominated headlines in Phuket and around the globe after it crashed and burned at Phuket International Airport on September 16. Only 40 passengers survived the disaster. Survivor Robert Borland (inset) is seen here with his mother Muriel and staff of Bangkok Hospital Phuket, from which he was released just before Christmas after 10 skin-graft surgeries.

Soi Bangla.

On June 22, two youths were arrested for the grisly murder of two-year-old Nitchanart Phueng-rang and her nanny Dang Panthip, 40, during a botched robbery attempt at the victims' home in Rassada the same day. The pair slit the throats of the victims after they broke into the home and the child began crying.

The two teenagers, a 15-year-old student at Phuket Technical College and his 17-year-old friend, were caught at Saphan Hin a few hours later and confessed. They were back on the streets by mid-September after their relatives posted bail. The father of the two-year-old, Narisorn Phueng-rang, is a teacher at Phuket Technical College.

There were numerous

other murders in Phuket in 2007, many involving jealousy, business disputes or teenage gang rivalry.

In one case, a Phuket City Police officer shot and killed a youth who evaded a police search on the bypass road in Koh Kaew in the early morning hours on April 18.

This led to a four-hour blockade of Thepkrasattri Rd later the same day by the victim's relatives that paralyzed traffic and caused many tourists to miss their departure flights.

The roadblock ended when Phuket City Police Chief Superintendent Col Nos Sawetalek agreed in writing to numerous demands ensuring that a fair investigation be carried and justice served to the responsible officer, Sgt Prasarn Chuayman.

Although one of the demands was that the officer be suspended while the investigation was underway, by June the *Gazette* learned that the officer had been transferred to Krabi – and given a promotion.

While this year-end review could easily be filled with reports of murder and violent assaults, there were also several cases of theft that deserve mentioning.

The most notable robbery was the successful one-man stick-up of the Siam Commercial Bank branch on Patak Rd in Karon in the late afternoon of June 29 by a Caucasian man who managed to get away with 420,000 baht in cash.

Continued on page 6

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The year in review

Continued from page 5

Despite an intensive manhunt using footage obtained from Karon's new 16-camera CCTV surveillance system, the masked man escaped on a Suzuki Step motorbike and his identity and whereabouts remain unknown.

The most profitable heist of the year, however, came on January 27, when a lone gunman entered the Thongroj gold shop on Chao Fa East Rd and emerged three minutes later with gold jewelry valued at more than one million baht.

Police believe the robbery might have been carried out by the same man who pulled off a similar heist in the same area in 2006, but despite offers of reward money totaling 500,000 baht, the bandit is still at large.

Less successful at armed robbery was down-on-his-luck

Dutchman Jeroen De Valk, 35, who walked into the management office at the Phuket Villa California residential development on June 15 armed with a replica gun and walked out with 74,000 baht in cash – but not before CCTV

cameras recorded his motorcycle license plate number.

After his arrest on June 22, he told police he had lived in Thailand for six months, bought a house on credit, and set up a clothing store with a Thai woman – but the store was not making money. The gun used in the hold-up turned out to be of the type used for lighting cigarettes, not for shooting bullets.

Despite being a year marked by tragedy, needless violence and acts of desperation, hope seems to spring eternal in Phuket, as witnessed by the ongoing property boom and unprecedented number of tourists visiting.

Although the entire year was spent under a militarily-installed government with parsimonious funding outlays, 2007 was definitely the year of the megaproject in Phuket.

Among the ideas put forward to the media this year were:

A pop-up tsunami barrier to protect Patong from future devastation; a cable car project to whisk tourists up the rapidly eroding Patong hillsides; Gulu

The most profitable heist of the year came on January 27 when a lone gunman entered the Thongroj gold shop and emerged with gold jewelry valued at more than one million baht.



A sketch of the farang bank robber who walked into the Siam Commercial Bank branch in Karon near closing time and walked out with 420,000 baht in cash.

Lalvani's idea to build a man-made island off the coast of his Royal Phuket Marina in Koh Kaew as a marina for megayachts; and Asia's largest aquarium, the exact location of which has yet to be announced, to be developed jointly by Ripley's Believe it or Not and Minor International Plc.

Other megaprojects that remain in the conceptual realm after years include the decades-old dream of building an international convention and exhibition center somewhere on the island.

This project got a shove closer to reality when ING Funds (Thailand) showed interest in investing and Governor Niran ran with the idea, getting approval from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and having plans drawn up.

Also approved was the use of a seaside plot of 350 rai of government land at Tah Chat Chai in Mai Khao.

However, the decision to use the government land raised numerous legal and bureaucratic obstacles that will take about two years to resolve, during which time the next government could easily move to change or ax it altogether.

Two other big projects of note for Mai Khao include a 1.4-billion-baht sports complex, to be developed on 238 rai of government land by the Phuket Office of Sports and Recreation Development.

The other project, the 50-million-baht Welcome Gateway, was finally finished three years after it was conceived by Phuket Administration Organization (OrBorJor) President Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutra.

The rest stop and information center, which covers 25 rai about 300 meters from the Sarasin Bridge, was officially opened on September 9.

It features 29 seven-meter-tall concrete pillars, each engraved with passages explaining Phuket's history in Thai and English, and a 21.8-meter tall granite sculpture.

Another large project nearing completion further south is the 45-meter-high Mingmongkol Buddha image, an icon-in-the-making that is already visible across much of the southern half of the island from its perch high in the Nakkerd Hills in Karon.

Nine monks have taken up residence at the site, where the cool sea breezes and spectacular views are already drawing a steady stream of visitors – many of whom make merit by making donations for further expansion of the project.

On a more practical note, work on several important infrastructure projects moved forward in 2007, with the 7.2-million-cubic-meter Bang Neaw Dum reservoir project in Srisoonthorn, Thalang, scheduled to open and provide water by September 2008, at the earliest.

It will be the island's second reservoir. Final funding for all land acquisition for a third reservoir, a 5.7-million-cubic-meter basin at Klong Krata in Chalong, was finally made available and construction work is expected to begin soon after all the land purchases go through.

Finally, despite several studies and a memorandum of understanding signed by all of Phuket's local administrative bodies this year to improve the island's waste management, there is still no funding for a second incinerator at Saphan Hin.

A second incinerator is badly needed because the island already generates well over 520 tonnes of waste daily, about twice the amount the current incinerator can burn.

Storing of the excess in landfill around the incinerator has already resulted in one environmental catastrophe.

In mid-June, all of the fish in the 396 fish-farm baskets were found dead after heavy rains caused a toxic plume to flow from waste lagoons around the incinerator into nearby waterway.

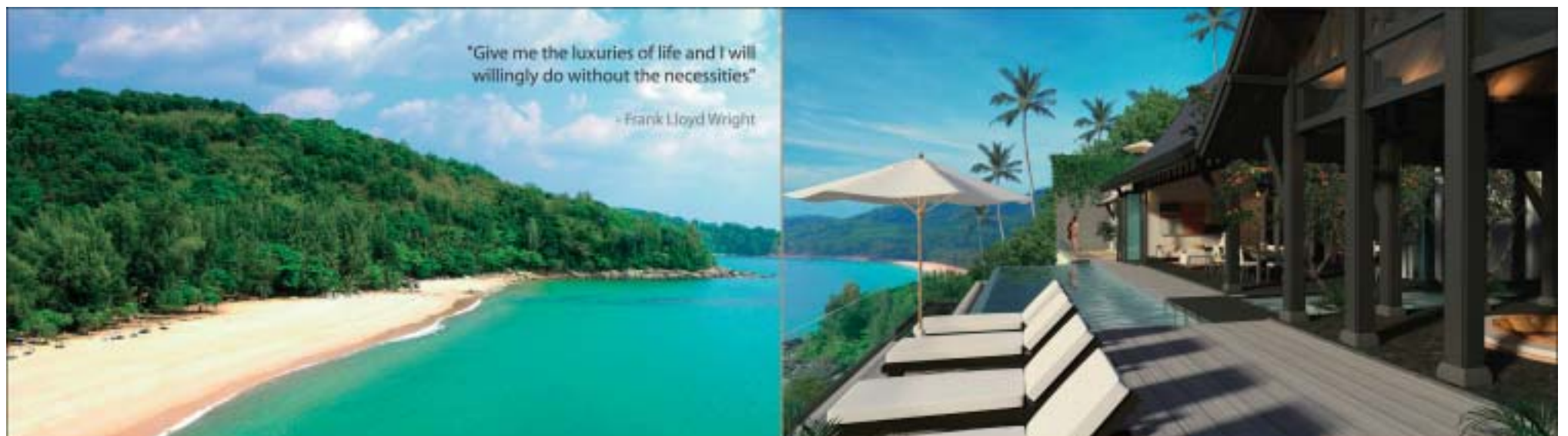


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The controversial Internal Security Bill was overwhelmingly endorsed by the National Legislative Assembly on December 20 with no lawmaker opposing it during two hours of deliberation.

The assembly voted 105-8 in favor, with two abstentions.

Chotechuang Chutinartorn, one of the 200 or so protesters outside the parliament while the NLA was in session, said Thailand now had its own "Gestapo" that could curb people's rights, such as freedom of movement and the right to use electronic devices and access the Internet.

The protesters have vowed to gather 10,000 signatures to start a constitutional motion to repeal the law.

At its heart is Article 17, which grants the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) the authority to order curfews, restrict citizens' freedom of movement and access to and use of any electronic equipment, place anyone under house arrest, stop vehicles and close down roads or transportation routes, and order any government official to carry out or stop carrying out any duty.

ISOC, headed by the prime minister with the Army chief as his deputy, will have regional and provincial branches. Its upper echelons are filled mostly by generals and senior bureaucrats.

Wildlife corridors planned. The government plans to expand wildlife forest areas for the animals in them by using corridors to connect 19 protected forests.

Samart Sumanochitraporn, director of the National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department's Wildlife Conservation Office, said the intention is to boost the size of wildlife habitats by joining adjacent forests with a safe way for the wild animals to come and go between the areas by building tunnels for them, so they can go under the roads rather than across them.

Officials are now surveying animals' movements in order to place the tunnels in appropriate locations, he said.

Director-General Chalerm-sak Wanichsombat told a press

Loss of freedom feared as security bill sails through



A NEAR MISS

RICE DELIVERY: Fortunately, no deaths or injuries were reported when a trailer filled with 29 tons of unprocessed rice decoupled from the truck that was transporting it and crashed into this downtown home in Nakhon Ratchasima.

Truck-driver Boontham Semarum, 34, was transporting the rice from Buri Ram to a mill in Nakhon Ratchasima when the trailer parted from the truck and careered into the building.

conference on December 19 that the department also plans to raise wild animals for profit by building tree-houses, from which tourists will be able to pay to observe animals in the wild.

Clean cafes. In a bid to curtail alcohol sales and other vices at Internet cafes, authorities are encouraging entrepreneurs to join their "safe and constructive Internet cafes" project.

The project requires participating Internet cafes to strictly ban access to pornographic or illegal websites, ban smoking and the drinking of alcohol, and not allow anyone younger than 18 years old to stay after 10 pm.

Social Development and Human Security Minister Paiboon Wattanasiritham said that cafes

joining the project would receive benefits that include low-cost software.

The project was launched by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Culture Ministry, Interior Ministry, Education Ministry and Royal Thai Police.

The government already prohibits youths aged under 18 years old from staying in Internet cafes after 10 pm, but many have flouted this law, K. Paiboon said.

Some cafes sell alcohol and cigarettes to minors, he added.

Stoned cars. Following a report that a car waiting at an intersection in the capital had stones thrown at it on December 19, Bangkok Metropolitan Police Chief Pol Lt Gen Assawin

Kwanmuang instructed 88 police stations across the city to be vigilant in the search for stone throwers and said such criminals should be dealt with strictly.

Several rock-throwing incidents have been reported recently in central Thailand, some of which have resulted in deaths.

A truck driver is under the care of HM The Queen after he was blinded in a stone-throwing attack in Ayudhaya in October while driving his six-wheeled truck.

Earlier this month, a cafe singer was killed by a 1.5-kilo-

gram rock thrown at her by two young men on a motorbike after an abusive exchange in Kamphaeng Phet.

In October 2004, Thai comedian "Jo Mokjok" was killed in a stone attack on the Asia Highway in Ayudhaya's Bang Pa-in district by a group of youngsters during an attempted robbery.

Two visas in one. Thailand and Cambodia will sign a single visa agreement that will enable visitors to use only one visa for both countries, the Foreign Ministry has announced.

Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram was expected to sign the agreement with his Cambodian counterpart Hor Namhong during an official visit to Phnom Penh recently.

The pact is a pilot project under the Ayeyawady-Chao Phya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS).

Set up since 2003, ACMECS is a joint development scheme that includes Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

Under the slogan of "four countries, one destination", the Single Visa pact is aimed at facilitating tourism in the region.

Foreign ministers of the four countries in August 2005 agreed to allow Thailand and Cambodia to implement the scheme first, the remaining members joining later if the scheme proves successful.

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



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Attack of the omnipresent shophouses

As Ao Nang becomes more Westernized, with fast-food restaurants and the like, the “Thai-ness” of the area is slowly disappearing, especially in terms of the architecture.

Thai-style wooden structures are being replaced by omnipresent three- and four-story shophouses.

One example highlighting this change was the recent sale of the Krabi Seaview Resort.

This resort, one of the first in Ao Nang, boasted Thai-style bungalows, the Roof Restaurant (named after its traditional Thai-style roof) and a small lagoon.

This has all been torn down to be replaced with... guess what? Four-story shophouses.

This will certainly change the environment of the beach area as the resort is just a few hundred meters from the beachfront.

From an economic point of view, this high-density style of construction is one of the few alternatives available to recoup the large investment made with land prices at record highs.

But there are more projects like this underway, and the oft-cited aims of the Tourism Authority of Thailand to keep Krabi a green, natural destination are probably out the window.

Give it a handful of years at this rate and you won't know if you are in Ao Nang or Miami Beach.

Krabi needs you. Pol Maj Gen Phuwadol Vudduccanok, commander of Krabi Provincial Po-



Thai-style wooden structures are being replaced by the omnipresent three- and four-story shophouses. One example highlighting this change was the recent sale of the Krabi Seaview Resort. This resort has all been torn down to be replaced with four-story shophouses.



lice, has asked the local expat community to help the Tourist Police during this high season.

As we all know, Krabi's tourist industry has boomed in recent years, with tourist arrivals approaching two million visitors a year.

Gen Phuwadol pointed out that the police force in Krabi is of comparable size to rural areas in Isarn with few tourists.

His answer to the increasing strain on his manpower is to enlist the aid of expats to help in the tourist areas.

This approach has been used elsewhere in Thailand with varying degrees of effectiveness, but it is a program that should provide

some utility for local police and tourists.

The major tourist destinations in Krabi are filled with thou-

sands of tourists speaking a multitude of languages.

When tourists have problems and English is not their native language, the local police have difficulty communicating with them.

The expat volunteers will not be volunteer “police” as in other tourist cities, but a less formal group of language specialists.

All the volunteers are business owners, residents and many have families here and have already helped many of their home nationality over the years.

Currently, more than 10 volunteers have stepped forward to offer to translate in Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, Japanese, Korean, French, German, Italian and Flemish.

If you live in Krabi and have some language skills other than those listed and you would like to volunteer, email me at ltr@loxinfo.co.th.

Fare's fair. My previous column crying for more diversity in cuisine and questioning the number

of tailor shops evoked a large response in the expat community.

Among them, the local Italian population serving genuine Italian fare have always had the opinion that the cheap pizza restaurants run by non-Italians reflect poorly on their efforts to provide an authentic Italian dining experience.

Nearly all expats – and Thais too – said that the large number of tailor shops added little value to the attractiveness of the area as a quality tourist destination.

However, free market forces are at work and those who can pay their rents have the right to open their businesses and operate freely.

As long as no laws are broken, one can conduct his business as he sees fit. As it has been said many times, it is impossible to legislate against bad taste.

Give and take. The anniversary of the tsunami is upon us and it's a time of reflection.

Sadly, however, I urge people to be alert to groups soliciting donations on behalf of tsunami victims.

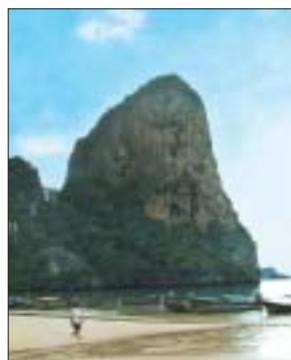
If you are approached by people asking for money, ask them for identification, their Thai foundation registration number, foundation address and phone number.

Foreign-based foundations are not registered in Thailand and anyone can print letterhead stating they are helping poor orphans on some island.

Verifying that the money has gone to the espoused cause is almost impossible.

It is a shame that people take advantage of such a situation, as there are still far too many children who have lost their families and genuinely need some form of help.

If you want to make a donation, it is best to give to a registered Thai foundation that is required to provide audited financial statements upon request.



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By Gus Reynolds

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Fifty Burmese feared lost at sea

At least 22 Burmese workers were killed when a boat taking them from Kawthaung on the southern-most tip of Myanmar to Ranong capsized December 20.

The remainder of the 50 passengers on the boat are still unaccounted for.

On the morning of December 22, a fisherman reported to 2nd Lt Suwit Jiateupheua of Bak Nam Police Station in Ranong's Muang district that he had seen bodies floating in the water to the west of Koh Chang.

A Ranong Marine Police patrol boat was sent to investigate and found the bodies of 11 men, seven women and four boys floating in the water.

All the victims were dressed in warm clothing for the journey and had Burmese passports and identification cards.

From their investigations, police discovered that the boat had left Kawthaung in the evening of December 20 carrying 50 passengers.

The boat was overloaded and is thought to have capsized after being hit by a large wave.

A source in the security sources said that Burmese police are hunting for a person named Po Saw, 38, who had brought the workers to a hotel in Kawthaung before taking them to the boat's captain, Kla Mao Mao, 40, who was to deliver them to another agent in Ranong Province.

The fate of Kla Mao Mao is still unknown.

Old junk. Fisherman in Phang Nga have discovered a sunken junk containing five cannons estimated to be hundreds of years old about three miles off shore from Ban Nam Khem in Takuapa district.

Nui Rawee, 52, was fishing for shrimp with seven relatives when he noticed the wreck of a boat at a depth of about six meters.

K. Nui and his relatives dived to examine the wreck and found long strips of metal on board.

The divers hammered at the metal to release them from the wreck and found that they were in fact cannons. The men salvaged the guns and found two 1.3-meter-long, six-inch-diameter cannons and three one-meter-long, four-inch-diameter gun. K. Nui took the cannons back to his house.

Word of the find soon spread and crowds gathered to see the guns. Local officials were notified and on December 20 Phang Nga Governor Wichai Phraisangop visited the house.

Gov Wichai said that he could not be certain which era the cannons were from, but estimated that they were hundreds of years old.

Cultural authorities will examine the weapons to determine their age and officials have been



CELEBRATING ABRAHAM

Around 3,000 Thai Muslims pray to mark Eid al-Adha at Benjamarachuthit School in Pattani December 19. The festival marks the willingness of Ibrahim, known as Abraham in the Jewish tradition, to sacrifice his son to God.

sent to the site of the wreck to prevent it being damaged by people hunting for antiques before it can be salvaged.

School feud stabbing. A 19-year-old man was found stabbed to death outside a karaoke bar in Nakhon Sri Thammarat's Phibun district December 21.

Somphon Klaeow had been stabbed multiple times in the head and chest. Friends of the victim told police that the killer was likely to be Jarakrit Lamai, also 19, who had been a known enemy of K. Somphon since they were in school together.

Somphon's friends told police that the previous evening,

Somphon and about four friends had gone to an unnamed karaoke bar in Tambon Khao Phra. Jarakrit was also drinking in the bar with a group of his friends.

After some time had passed, Somphon's friends alleged, Jarakrit called Somphon over and said that the two should go outside to discuss their dispute. A short time later, Jarakrit allegedly returned to his bar saying that he had killed Somphon and asked for his friends to dispose of the body. He then fled the scene.

Jarakrit's friends allegedly searched for the body, but could not find it so went home, police said.

Second Thai-Malaysia Bridge

opens. Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont and his Malaysian counterpart Abdullah Badawi on December 21 jointly opened the second Thai-Malaysia bridge linking Narathiwat with Narathiwat's Buketa and Malaysian Kelantan's Bukit Bunga.

The US\$2 million cost bridge connecting Narathiwat's Buketa and Malaysian Kelantan's Bukit Bunga is a part of joint economic cooperation scheme Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT) to boost economic growth in Thailand south and Malaysia's northern state.

Cambodians caught. Police in Songkhla arrested 230 illegal im-

migrants from Cambodia on December 17 as they were preparing to return to their motherland.

The arrest was made in Muang district 6 pm December 17, when the Cambodians were waiting for buses to take them home.

Police said the Cambodians had just been laid off by operators of fishing boats, transport boats and tour boats during the high sea season so they were going home. They were handed over to the Sadao Immigration Office pending deportation.

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

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Ditch the clichés: it's D Gallery

By Skyler Swezy

DGallery doesn't deal in clichés. They aren't hawking souvenir sunset scenes or acrylic Scarfaces. This new contemporary art gallery at Royal Phuket Marina offers unique works from high-profile Vietnamese and Thai artists, placing sophisticated taste over the commonplace.

The gallery juxtaposes polished concrete floors and exposed ceiling ducts with fine art on titanium white walls, creating a post-modern feel. The work ranges from abstract forms in watercolors on handmade paper to highly detailed oil portraits.

After working at a gallery in Bangkok for more than five years, Managing Director Pornthip "Dashy" Raksapiksu decided to open D Gallery. While visiting Phuket over the past three years, she noticed a lack of what she calls "proper art galleries".

"By 'proper art gallery', I mean we don't mix art with other things, such as furniture and antiques. A proper art gallery supports the artists by holding exhibitions, doing advertising and pro-

moting them," K. Dashy said.

She believes that Phuket expats and residents are open to contemporary art and the abundance of million-dollar homes means there are plenty of blank walls.

"The people here, locals and foreigners, are sophisticated and there are more million-dollar houses in Phuket than in Bangkok. So, I think people here need art for their nice homes, not just beautiful things but something more collectible," K. Dashy added.

The gallery exhibits work by six Thai artists and eight Vietnamese artists, many of whom are well established in Asia and internationally.

The majority are young, up-and-coming artists in their thirties. They are second-generation artists who have the potential to become masters in the future. Often, the artists produce a limited amount of work per year, insuring their work is quality and enhancing the market value. The Vietnamese artists are different from Thai artists because they have a higher profile and are internationally known, explained K.



Dashy.

Vietnamese artist Nguyen Xuan Tiep uses watercolors on handmade paper to create abstracted faces and figures with ghostly aesthetic. Tiep, who is director of the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, has had works featured

in the Singapore Art Museum and the National Art Gallery of Malaysia.

Although equally gifted, the featured Thai artists often lack the same recognition from Asian and global art communities. This leaves K. Dashy with a sense of responsibility to be more than an art vendor – she wants to raise her Thai artists into the art world's spotlight using D Gallery and its stylish website.

"Many people go to Vietnam or China looking to buy a piece of art. In Thailand, people want to go to the beach," she said.

She believes that the small number of Thai art collectors also stunts the growth of Thailand's art scene. "In Thailand, there are not many Thai people who like to buy art and support artists, that's why the art scene is going very slow.

"Thais tend to want or believe in objects. For instance, the Jatukhams they hang around their necks. They will pay a million baht for that because they believe in that object," K. Dashy said.

Another challenge is the subject matter of contemporary artwork, which focuses on the communication of an idea or emotion rather than beauty. Pointing to a portrait of a face, painted with thick brush strokes and



Above: D Gallery features a collection of contemporary artwork for the serious or curious.

Left: The works by Thai and Vietnamese artists range from photorealism portraits to political commentary, such as this piece by Le Quang Ha titled *Soldier*.

eerie hues of blue, K. Dashy said, "Like that portrait, some people don't want to put that in their home because it's not about beauty and it's not an easy subject."

"But I think people can trust what I'm trying to present and are sophisticated enough to understand what I'm doing. I'm not trying to make a hot sale, I'm doing it because it's my passion," she added.

The gallery's grand opening is slated for late January. Throughout the coming year, the gallery will hold exhibitions for individual artists, who will be flown to Phuket from around Thailand and Vietnam to promote their works and give patrons a chance to meet the artists.

The gallery welcomes the serious and the curious.

"You don't have to want to buy art to walk in the gallery. I just want people to come in, sit down, read a book or ask some questions. I want people to know more about these types of artists," K. Dashy said.

D Gallery is located at Royal Phuket Marina. 63/501 Moo 2, Thepkasattri Rd, Koh Kaew, Muang, Phuket 83200. Tel: 076-360897. Email: info@dgallery.co.th Website: www.dgallery.co.th

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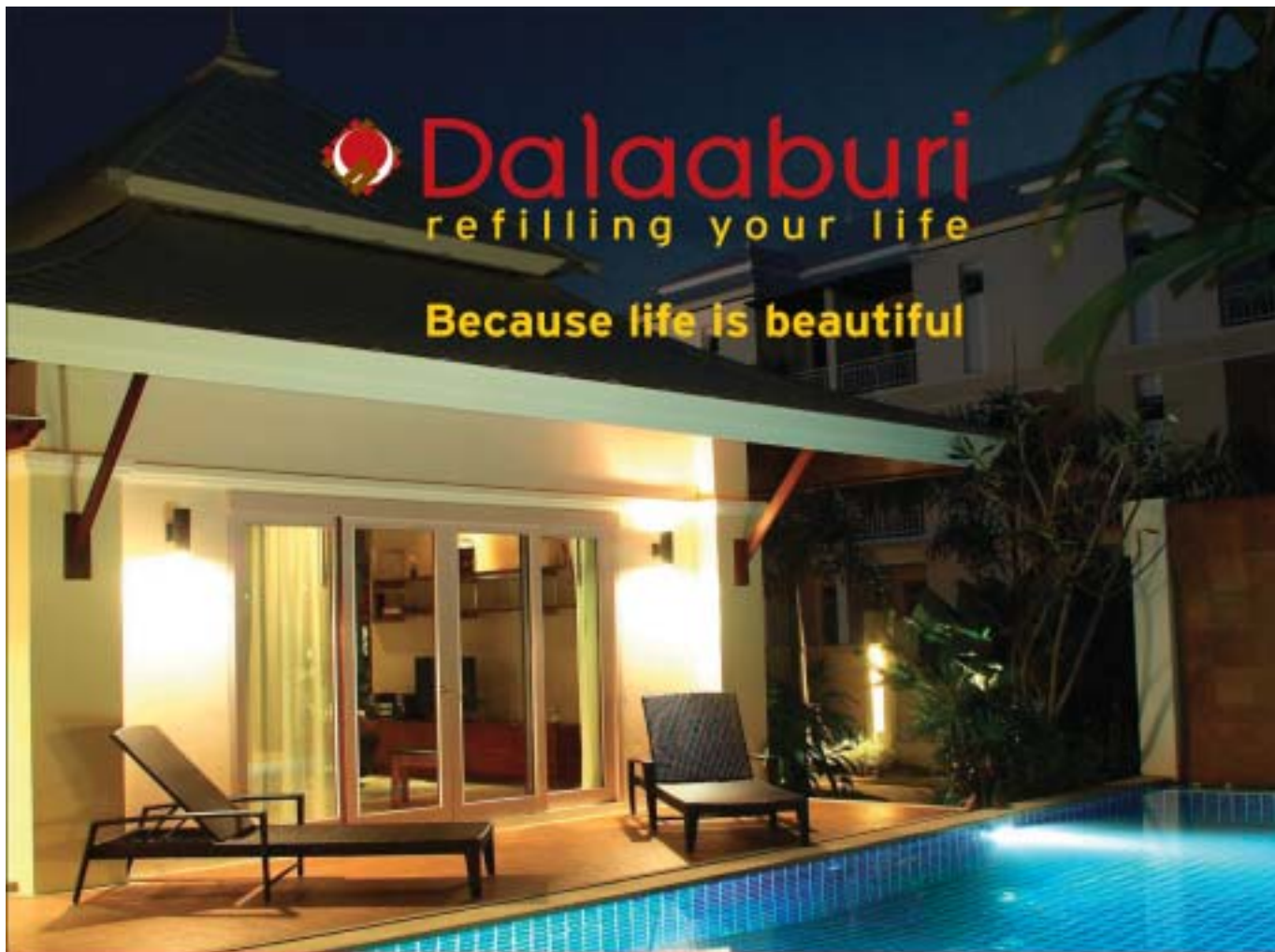
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New to Phuket is Chef Sanya Thotong, originally from Buri Ram, to head the kitchen at Thai Brasserie at Jungceylon, which opened last month.

The latest Blue Elephant eatery to open, Thai Brasserie offers a variety of Thai and Asian dishes, but is better known for its international fusion and vegetarian selections.

Chef Sanya was chosen to open the venue because of his natural flair and creativity. But what sets Chef Sanya apart from most chefs on Phuket is that he has never studied culinary arts at a college. All his education and training has been gleaned from working in kitchens – the rest is just natural flair.

He started work as a chef relatively late, compared with his contemporaries. Chef Sanya began cooking when he was 28 at a small restaurant in Bangkok.

However, after some supportive comments from friends, he soon joined Bussarakam restaurant on Silom Rd, Bangkok, where his passion for cooking began to take hold.

He then moved to Sol Twin restaurant on Rama VI Rd, where he worked as a chef for two years, preparing banquets. After a recommendation from a friend, he joined Blue Elephant on Sathorn Rd in Bangkok in 2002. He then joined Orangery Restaurant, another Blue Elephant affiliate, at Siam Paragon, before moving on to the Blue Elephant's Lemon Cherry noodle cafe at Central World.

However, it was the Blue Elephant at Sathorn where he created some of his first fusion dishes, introducing flavors from his native Isarn to the menu through his creations *cho-muang* (sweet and salty dessert made from flour

and cassava), *pla krung* (spicy minced shrimp dish similar to larb) and *kangkao puak* (deep-fried starter of pork and mushroom sealed in mashed taro).

"When I was young, I didn't like cooking much, but I was looking for a job in Bangkok when I was 25. I started working at a small restaurant. Soon after, a friend told me that I was good at it and suggested that I apply for a job at Blue Elephant," Chef Sanya explains.

Noodling some fresh twists on fusion fare



Chef Sanya, now at Thai Brasserie in Jungceylon, shows off his two new fusion creations: Chef's Salad featuring oak leaves and sweet basil, and green curry noodles featuring Japanese soba noodles.

until it has a smooth texture, and season with the vinegar, salt and sugar to taste. Then mix in the mayonnaise until it is a smooth, creamy dressing.

Green Curry Noodles Serves 2

Ingredients

1 piece large shrimp (about 150g)
100g shredded steamed chicken
200g soba noodles
100g concentrated coconut milk
300g plain coconut milk
50g bread crumbs

For the green curry paste:

10g green chilis
10g galangal
10g lemongrass
5g coriander
5g sweet basil

"I have adapted my favorite dishes to the Blue Elephant's style. Before, authentic Thai food was most popular, but now the world has changed and Thai food is evolving to suit the changing tastes of diners," he adds.

"Here, Blue Elephant gives me the freedom to create new dishes and adapt dishes to Blue Elephant-style fusion food. A personal favorite is fried shrimp green curry. This method is used nowhere else – it's our unique style.

"We always create new dishes. You can even see that with the green curry noodles – we use soba noodles because it's different and changes the taste of the dish," he says.

Even the Chef's salad being served at Thai Brasserie was developed especially for the restaurant's opening in Patong in November.

Chef Sanya explains that the salad is loaded with sweet basil and the dressing's creamy texture is its main attraction. Any meats, including fish and shrimp, can be substituted for the salad instead of using chicken, salmon or pork.

Similarly, he says that the softer soba noodles gives the green curry noodles dish a different texture and more of an egg flavor.

Chef's Salad Serves 2

Ingredients

40g sliced smoked salmon
40g sliced grilled chicken
40g sliced grilled red pork
2 slices cheddar or parmesan cheese
10 pieces red oak leaves
10 pieces green oak leaves
40 Japanese golden mushrooms
4 sliced tomatoes
2 sliced red and green bell peppers
Any other vegetables to taste

For the salad dressing:

3 tablespoons sweet basil
2g peppermint leaves
1g coriander
2 tablespoons olive oil
80g vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons mayonnaise

Method

Using a blender, blend the sweet basil, peppermint and olive oil

2g garlic
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon fish sauce
2 tablespoons sugar

Method

Create a curry paste by blending the galangal, lemon grass, coriander, garlic, sweet basil and chili until it becomes a smooth paste. Save some of the curry paste to baste the shrimp.

To prepare the soup, fry the curry paste in a pan on medium heat until the aroma of the paste emanates from the pan, then add the concentrate coconut milk, stirring it until the oil rises to the surface – then add the plain coconut milk.

Baste or soak the shrimp with the green curry paste for 10 minutes, then cover with shrimp with bread crumbs and pan fry with medium heat.

Boil the soba noodles until its strands can be broken easily with a pinch (just like spaghetti) and place in the curry soup. Sprinkle the shredded chicken on top then place the shrimp on top as a finishing touch.

Thai Brasserie at Jungceylon, Patong. Open daily 11 am to 11 pm. Tel: 076-600172. Website: www.orangery.co.th For more information email Sirima Rojprasitporn at sirima.roj@orangery.co.th

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Married for nearly half a century, French South African, Gundeger Herberstein, 71, and his wife Helga, 66, enjoy a mutual passion for travel and new experiences, which has meant a far-from-tranquil retirement with their faithful 110 Land Rover that has taken them across six continents.

Both Helga and Gundeger were born in Austria, where they met and married before moving to Paris. There, Gundeger worked in the automotive industry before running his own advertising company.

They lived in Paris for 22 years and became French citizens, then in 1984 they moved to South Africa and started a new company manufacturing advertising materials. Gundeger eventually sold the company to his employees in 2001 before retiring and embarking on the couple's global trek by Land Rover.

"We have always enjoyed travel, but never really went far," said Gundeger.

The couple began their intercontinental safari in April 2002. "We started from Johannesburg and then drove to Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria

By Janyaporn Morel

and then Chad again. We went to Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and then took a ferry to Spain," Gundeger recalled.

Angola and the Congo were not on the itinerary because of civil strife. A few other small countries were also off the list due to concerns with possible traveling difficulties. They also wanted to make sure they saw a lot of Europe as well.

After arriving in Spain by ferry, they drove through Portugal, France, Switzerland, Lichtenstein and Austria. By that time, the couple's passion for travel was in their blood and they soon began planning their next trip and preparing the car.

"We prepared for about three months before starting our second long journey. We traveled around Europe again for about three months, then in June 2004 we went from France to Buenos Aires by container ship. We were the only passengers traveling on the boat, which took three weeks



Gundeger and Helga Herberstein in Phuket with their trusty Land Rover, in which they have traveled across six continents.

to get to Buenos Aires," said Gundeger.

Over the next three months Gundeger, Helga and their Land Rover covered 6,000 kilometers through Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru, up to Lima and then to the very south of Chile and back to Buenos Aires before heading back to South Africa.

"We came back through Buenos Aires and traveled up to Uruguay and Brazil. We went through Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and we all through the Amazon on a small trail, always in the Land Rover. We went on to Manaus then to Venezuela, on to Colombia and on a boat again to Panama," said Gundeger.

"Then we traveled to all the South American countries; Panama, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Guatemala and up to Mexico. Then we went to the US, from the west coast [San Diego] across to New York. From there we went north to Canada, crossing from the east to west coast be-

fore going to Alaska," he added.

From Alaska, they traveled south to the US, stopping off in San Francisco, then onto a cargo ship heading for Malaysian Port Klang before coming to Phuket.

Phuket was a destination of choice, not just because of the island is en route to Bangkok: Gundeger had heard that Phuket was an ideal destination for a medical stopover.

"I was told that the doctors in Thailand are very good and that Bangkok Hospital Phuket would be able to operate on my knee, plus Phuket was a much nicer place to recover after the operation than Bangkok," he said.

"From Bangkok, we went on to Cambodia, visiting Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. Then we went to Vietnam, but we had to leave our car at the border and take a taxi to Ho Chi Minh. Then we came back to Thailand through Cambodia and then to Laos. We saw much of southern Laos with the car before going

to Myanmar and then back to Bangkok," he said.

The couple don't have plans for Australia. "It's not really so different from South Africa and it's expensive to get there and travel once you're there," the couple agreed.

"Now we are planning to leave from Port Klang so we can go on to Indonesia. We want to see Bali. Then we will have to put our car on a cargo ship from Port Klang again so that we can get to Bangladesh or India. Once there, we want to visit Nepal and Bhutan and travel across Asia back to Vienna then Paris, where we will catch up with the family again," Gundeger said.

"Once we are back in Paris we will make plans for the next trip," he added.

Asked what they enjoyed best about their travels, Gundeger replied, "I couldn't really say what I love the most about these travels. We have seen so much diversity in the countries we've

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passed through. The African, American and Asian people and cultures are so vastly different to our way of life," he said.

"In Africa we experienced the wildlife and deserts. In South America the lakes and landscapes were spectacular, while in Asia we have met lovely people and enjoyed a wonderful climate.

"We also love discovering these countries' histories. Phuket is fantastic and we love Cambodia. Angkor Wat is lovely and Phnom Penh, too. It is very interesting to see Vietnam after the Indochina war that I heard so much about when I was young. The same goes for Laos, too.

"We didn't really know much about Thailand before coming here, but it is an amazing place and it's good to find out about Thailand's history," he added.

Although cross-country is not always the easiest way to travel, they feel that the experience is more worthwhile than traveling as package tourists.

"From Bangkok to Phuket took us four days and we have seen a lot of interesting things along the way which we wouldn't have seen if we just took a plane. Of course, traveling like this is not without its difficulties, but it's well worth it.

"We have discovered some lovely places between here and Bangkok. We had a lovely quiet hotel beside the beach all to ourselves and many of the people we have met have been very kind to us," Gundeger said.

"We have been very lucky not to face any really difficult situations during our travels. Whenever we have had a problem, there have always been very nice people to help us.

"We have not really had any problems with the people, cultures, food or language. In South America, we used Spanish to communicate. Africa was no problem because we could communicate in English or French. Asia isn't so easy but sign language and good will is always easily understood," Gundeger said.

"Not so many people speak English in Thailand so it's been a little more difficult but there is always someone in a group who

can speak some English," he added.

Apart from a bout of malaria in Malawi, Africa, where they were sick for about three days but treated with quinine, the couple said that they experienced no other major problems in the vast continent.

"Friends and family were concerned about how we would cope with traveling in Africa, but we didn't have any negative experiences. We slept in the open with no problems.

"We didn't have any problems at the African borders either, although people warned us that immigration and border police in some places would ask us for money or treat us badly. Some were worried that we might be robbed along the way but that has never happened.

"Whenever we got to a border or a road block, we would simply get out of the car and greet officials in a friendly way. I think it depends a lot on how you treat people, although we were still vigilant and wary of what or who we may come across next," Gundeger said.

"We have seen the difference between developed and developing countries; it's so diverse, but wherever you go, there are always nice people.

"Many people stay in places such as Phuket for only one or two weeks, which isn't enough time to experience or really know anything about the way of life here.

"One thing we have learned is that people often have the wrong impression about somewhere we intend to visit and they will sometimes give us misleading advice or information. Some told us that we wouldn't find accommodation in Phuket at this time of year, but we were fine.

"Others said that Sudan would be very dangerous but we didn't experience any problems there either," Gundeger said.

"I think everyone should try traveling like this. There are so many interesting things to see. Some of the young people we have met along the way are surprised at our ages but they say that it's good to know that life is not over after 30," he added.

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This week



CULTURE FEST: Students of Phuket Technology College welcome 229 students and 37 teachers and staff from Asahi High School, Japan, for a cultural exchange extravaganza of dancing, games, food demonstrations and other activities.



SUPER SPINNER: A true master at work, 'Little' Louie Vega spins house music classics at Seduction with his eclectic beats in Patong on December 11. Louie played into the early hours of the morning as revelers danced relentlessly to his signature US sound.



DECK THE MALL: *Phuket Gazette* publisher John Magee joins the Central Festival Phuket (CFP) Christmas tree lighting ceremony with (from left) The Metropole Hotel General Manager Peerapong Supaorus; Tangmo Group CEO Chanok Kaewsinuan; CFP GM Kankanok Chanprasartporn and Marketing Manager Songpon Pongrapeeporn; Phuket Tourist Association Consultant Pattanapong Akewanich; *Siangtai Daily* newspaper publisher Chaowapong Mekarakkul; Clinic Dent Central owner Kamonwan Rojanajinda; and Lt Col Kosit Kanjanakomom, deputy superintendent Crime Suppression at Thalang Police Station.



BEAUTY AND THE BULL: Chef Pablo introduced the delights of Spanish tapas and desserts to Phuket, with the opening of his El Toro Steakhouse & Tapas in Boat Lagoon on November 23. Pictured are some of the gastro-satisfied guests.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY: The Holiday Inn Resort Phuket's team and guests celebrate the resort's 20th anniversary with a Thank You party on November 30.




HEART HELP: Emergency Asia recently completed a community defibrillation education program at The Racha resort, making it the first hotel in the Phuket area to have an automated external defibrillator for certified resort staff to use in cardiac emergencies. Pictured is Peter Davison (4th from left), managing director of Emergency Asia, with The Racha staff after their training session.



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Talking 'bout



Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit: "I want to see a big, positive change for Thailand, especially after the election. I would love to see people living in more harmony. I want to see the new central government settle and develop our country to be better. I want them to give people a good quality of life and help the country walk into a good future."



Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (OrBorJor) President Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutra:

"I'd like to see the development of human resources. Children and youth are very important in our country's development and future. I think if we focus on their development and give them a good education, it will help the country in the future."



Phummisak Hongsyok, member of National Legislative Assembly, former mayor of Phuket City and ex-president of the Phuket Real Estate Club, said, "I would love to see Thai politics change for the better. I want to see Phuket change for the better too. I cannot give a specific point as to what should change, just that Thailand and Phuket should change for the better."

Pim, a 'new' lady in Patong: "I want to set up a bar for private business. Now I'm looking for a good location in Patong."



The New Year is once again upon us with no more dry weekends forecast at the hands of general elections, so it's time to pop some champagne and change the calendar.

For many, the new year is an opportunity to make some positive changes in their lives. Slimming shakes, nicotine gum and gym memberships are popular purchases to go with the new year's resolutions, which in reality, rarely outlast the hangovers.

The *Gazette* asked members of the Phuket community, from Bangla denizens to Phuket politicians how they planned to make 2008 great (once they've recovered from New Year celebrations).

Panu Maswongsa, deputy president of the Phuket Tourist Association, said, "I would love to see the construction of a big footpath for tourists walking along the beach, so they don't have to walk in the street, as they presently do. I would love to see a big change in Phuket's traffic because it is so bad now. I want to see the land law problems solved because Phuket has so many rules from different officials it has become very fuzzy and complicated. Lastly I wish to see Phuket's people live together with love."



Mike Wood, of Mike Tailor on Soi Bangla: "No more drinking all the time. Each time I drink I have a big accident, so no more beers for me. I've had too many accidents and I have no license so the hospital doesn't cover me for insurance."



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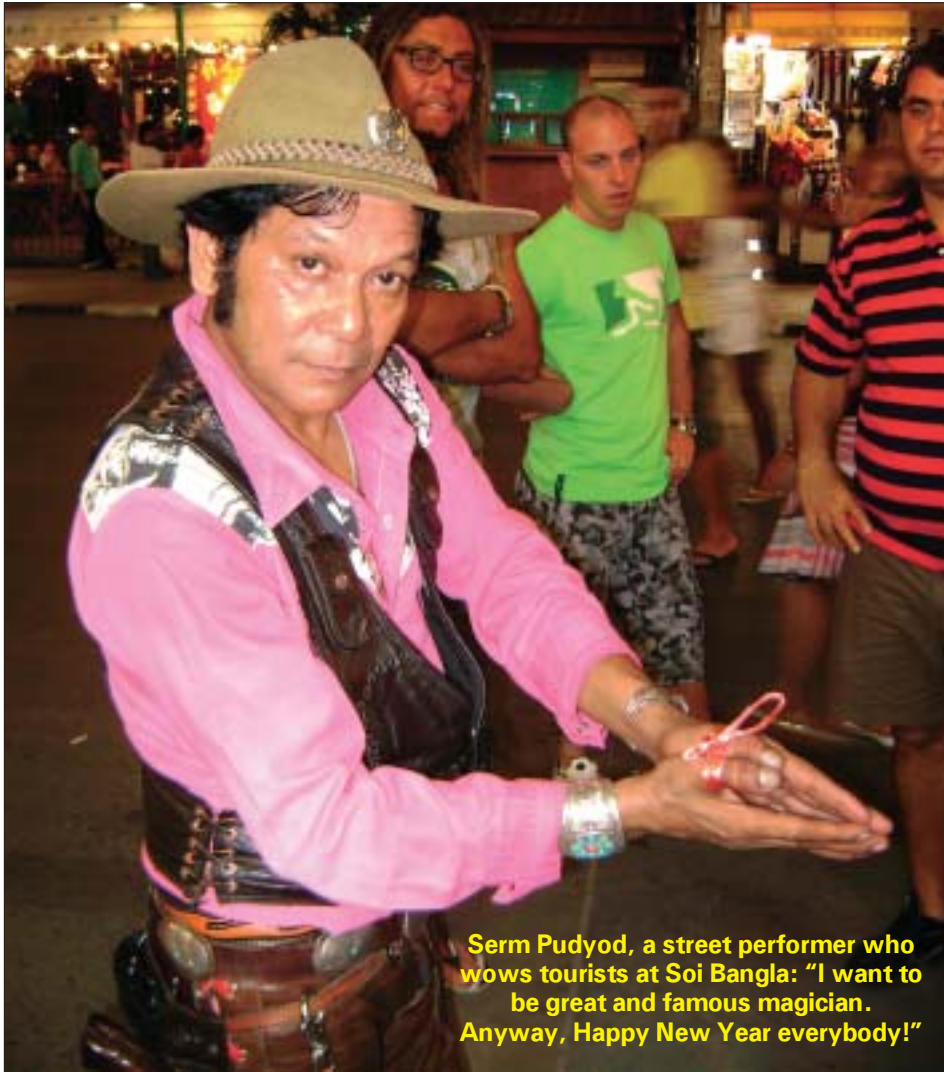
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a RESOLUTION



Serm Pudyod, a street performer who wows tourists at Soi Bangla: "I want to be great and famous magician. Anyway, Happy New Year everybody!"

Patong tuk-tuk driver Seri Praipun: "In 2008, I will think good and do good for His Majesty The King."



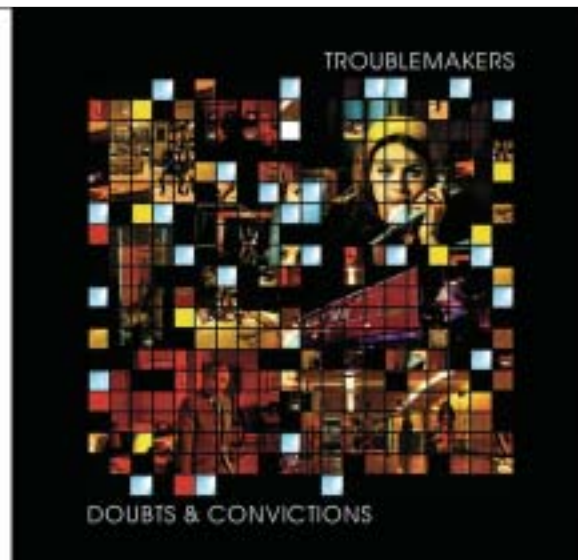
Pol Col Grissak Songmoonark, Kathu Police Superintendent: "I would like people to recognize their own responsibility and to unify. Our country's situation now needs unity and help from every side to improve. I'd like everyone to think good thoughts and do good things."

South African tourists (from left) Megan, Shari and Sarah threw in a range of standard resolutions. "I want to learn to surf!" said Megan. "I hope to lose weight," added Shari. Sarah chipped in, "I need to stop swearing."



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No rest for non-stop mums

Right, that's it for yet another year. Christmas is over. Just the New Year to go and then we can relax. Oh yeah? Not if you have kids whose birthdays tend to fall at the most inconvenient time of the year – on New Year's eve, to cite a prime example.

Four years ago, I made the heroic decision to organize a kids' bash at the end of the year to coincide, sort of, with my youngest son's birthday. It was a mistake at an extremely busy time of year.

There were four messages waiting for me when I came out of the meeting. The first three involved weighty matters from the fashion industry, including one intriguing message about some misfitting hot-pants.

But the fourth was in capital letters and color-coded bright red, the tell-tale symbol for maximum priority: **DANNY DONUT IS OK FOR STEPH'S PARTY. WILL BRING HECTOR, THE 20FT INFLATABLE SNAKE.**

Danny Donut is a rather tragic old showbiz troupier who never made it in London and ended up in Cyprus, specializing in the expat offspring party circuit. Hector, as the leaflet said, is indeed a 20ft inflatable snake – a reptile still terrorizing some of those offspring in their dreams.

At the time, Steph, my son, was six years old – the cutest kid in the world. Well, I am his mum.

There used to be a problem in the whole "me and Steph" set-up until recently. I used to see him for precisely two hours a day, five days a week. By the time the weekend came, I was too knackered to do much more than sit next to him and stare into the middle distance – not the favorite leisure pursuit of your average hyperactive ankle-biter.



Work was the problem, a four-letter word coming between me and my son. But work was what paid for people like Danny Donut and a whole lot more. Trying to strike a balance between being a top mum at home and a top cat at work was an odd mixture of serious soul-searching and pure comedy.

There can be few things as unsettling as finding yourself halfway through intense work negotiations and suddenly noticing that the other party is staring at your shoulder. Is she taking time to admire the elegant cut of your Armani jacket? Or is she, in fact, wondering just how recently the vomit was deposited there?

Still, at least in this case it was only sick. Pity my work colleague who used to head the "Best Excuses For Being Late" list. I remember her being obliged to spend an extra half-hour getting out of the house after her daughter performed a rather close Number Two during an early

morning mother-and-daughter bonding session in the bath.

Sales meetings do have their own peculiar way of throwing the mum-work thing into sharp relief. Within 45 minutes of finishing a boring sales meeting I would find myself down on all fours, singing "The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round..."

The meeting may or may not have gone to plan, but I yield to no man on the sheer gusto with which I can kick in that extra verse in which "the wipers on the bus go squish-squish-squish".

At the peak of my career, I wondered what would have happened if those two very separate

roles were to become mixed up in my already frazzled brain. How would it go down at head office if a query about monthly sales were met with an inane grin and the observation that "Yes, there

is a worm at the bottom of my garden and his name is Wiggle-Woo? And while we're here, everyone, would anybody like me to lie down beside them until the Big Bear turns out the light?"

Thankfully there was a major upside to having a split personality. Being an executive mum used to have the positive aspect of being the single finest business ice-breaker known to man. Can't think of anything to say to that desperately

dull client? Simply whip out a picture of Steph at play and he whips out his wallet before you can say, "And this is Jessica – she's just turned three."

Stuck for an opening gambit at an important drinks party? Just tell the assembled party about the first time your kids called you mummy and watch grown women (however bitchy at work) melt – or make a sneering remark about not being ready to give up their careers yet. Who gave up her career? I certainly didn't. I was able to juggle both.

People's reactions can be a tad cynical, but becoming a mother soon eliminates that hard-nosed reaction when it comes to all things "kid". I never used to have a problem making some fairly tough decisions at work. Once I was home, though, I would become mush when I had to decide whether to put on Fireman Sam or Bob the Builder.

Danny Donut, as it turned out, was one of the best decisions I made that year. And all for the equivalent of 4,000 baht and a few bottles of beer.

Throughout the party, I wore a little stick-on label on my top to let the other children know who I was. For once, my little name-tag did not say "Ambrosia, managing director". What it did say made me insanely proud, and brought a distinct lump to my throat as I stood in the hallway and waited for our little guests to arrive. It said two words: "Stephanos' Mum".

Ambrosia Sakkadas, a UK-born Greek Cypriot and graduate of Central St Martins College of Art & Design in London, is an artist, designer and newspaper columnist. Her first novel, Greek Girls Don't Cry, is available from amazon.com.

AMBROSIA'S

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Kayaking under Koh Penak's stunning tidal nape at slack tide on a calm day, I weaved between stalactites while collecting marine rubbish. Suddenly, I developed a headache.

Inhaling the vapors and smell of petrol, I looked down. Sure enough, I was paddling in a two-cycle petrol slick – in one of the planet's most beautiful places. Oblivious of their environmental impact, speedboat captains pass within meters of the rocks to let passengers pound mother nature's jewels. They drop this pollution every day, which usually dissipates with the tides.

I paddled away, muttering that chimpanzees are smarter than speedboat operators – at least chimps don't destroy their homes. But what about the sponges, oysters, green shore crabs and monitor lizards that could not escape the slick?

Clearly an environmental crime, a fair penalty for operators and their agents would be to spray their homes with two-cycle mix, close all the windows, turn off the aircon and lock them in for the night.

After 18 years of environmental protection work in Phuket, a Koh Penak oil slick was another lifetime eco-shock. Fortunately, I'm learning how to handle despair. The big question is, "Can we act immediately to avoid the extinction of our species, and the thousands of others we will take with us?" I'm hopeful, but while humans are intelligent enough to destroy the planet, we do not seem smart enough to save it.

I first felt despair in 1953. The Los Angeles Basin was so smoggy I could see the haze between houses across the street. Breathing deep meant choking.

Twelve years later, an old-

Paddling our way out of a two-cycle eco-shock



The big question now is, "Can we act immediately to avoid the extinction of our species, and the thousands of others we will take with us?" Can we protect what Nature has created?

erly Native American shared an afternoon with me explaining how the Earth became hot in just his lifetime. He took global warming back to 1900. I listened and took it back to the industrial revolution.

I felt so strongly that in 1961 I decided not to have kids. I didn't want to add to the population problem, put my children through an obviously ugly future or have grandchildren angry at me for destroying their

world. Giving up parenthood is a great sacrifice that most people didn't make.

In the past 46 years, the

world's population more than doubled – from 3 billion to 6.5 billion.

Until last month, my most shattering eco-event was paddling Fiji's Vanua Balavu – a reef so remote it literally has no human contact except with kayaks. I remember giant lobsters didn't move from their coral heads when I snorkeled by. But on the millennium, my kayak floated over a dead, algae-covered reef. The reef was fried for kilometers, the damage irreversible.

Twenty years earlier, I picked up the paddle as a symbol of non-motorized conservation. In Fiji, my kayak was drifting over a dead planet. I cried, knowing that humans won't start defending our planet until it's too late.

Back in Phang Nga, I eventually re-joined our trip – to my second headache. Our guests were buzzing about other companies using the stalactites as bongo drums, laughing and singing as they battered them. A

teary-eyed guest claimed her guide said, "100,000 years to build that stalactite – and one minute to destroy it." Thank you for educating your staff."

A decade ago, I asked a speedboat operator why he was in my industry. "We just go to the *hongs* to have a good time." Right, let's take Patong into mother nature's most sacred sites – and bust them up for good fun.

These folks promote themselves as two-activities-in-one companies. Cutting costs to the bone, increasing retail prices to suggest quality and then sacrificing quality to offer outrageous commissions. Travel agents suck it up – making windfall products without leaving their aircon offices. Maybe that's good business for city bus tours, but nature always suffers when mainstream travel kidnaps eco-tourism.

Sea kayaking symbolizes non-motorized alternatives and its popularity has exploded worldwide in the past two decades. It's

much more than motor versus paddle; sea kayaking is about environmental awareness.

I'm frustrated that we use motorboats to access Phang Nga's scattered islands – and even more frustrated by speedboat operators who exploit the environmentally enlightened sea-kayaking industry. With irresponsible behavior at the micro level, our species doesn't have a chance on the macro level.

We are already in the fastest mass extinction since dinosaurs – but many basic organisms will survive.

Following the Nobel Peace Prize announcements, CNN's Jonathan Mann asked Al Gore if he still felt "unsuccessful". Big Al said that creating awareness is great, but that one cannot claim "success" when we still increase greenhouse-gas emissions faster than we cut them back.

Gore's co-winner, Dr Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, drove the point home. "We won't stop global warming until we really want to."

How many energy-efficient light bulbs does Phuket need to offset one two-cycle speedboat tour? Do we even care?

There are a few bright spots. Last week at Koh Hong, I learned that Phuket Adventures lead guide "Woody" also hates monkey feeding and advises his guests not to participate.

Recently, I also found four-cycle speedboats at Phuket Tropical Marine. They discourage snorkelers from feeding monkeys and breaking coral with their fins. They are small, but when it comes to nature tours, small is beautiful. For details, please see <http://phuketdir.com/pkttropicalmarine/index.htm>

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By John 'Caveman' Gray




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Land Cruiser rolls on into 2008

Big, brutish and bold, but certainly not beautiful, the Land Cruiser has seemingly been around for decades, but for 2008, it will receive a number of refinements that will see it through to at least the end of this decade and probably well into the next.

Built on a revised platform with a body-on-frame design, the length of the new model has increased while the wheelbase remains the same.

The biggest difference with the new Land Cruiser is the availability of a 5.7-liter V8 from Toyota's US Tundra pickup, replacing the old 4.7 version. The Tundra engine produces a hefty 381bhp (280kW) and 545Nm of torque, although in some markets the "old" 4.7 is still available.

As well as the Tundra V8, there is a rather more environmentally-responsible 4.5-liter V8 diesel that develops peak torque of 650Nm between 1,600 and 2,800rpm and a maximum power output of 286bhp.

Fuel consumption for the diesel is claimed to be 10.2 liters per kilometer – a 4% improvement versus the outgoing 4.2, in-line diesel. Five- or six-speed automatic transmissions are available, depending on the engine.

Advanced technology allows the Land Cruiser to go virtually anywhere, with the world's first "crawl-control" system, which automatically controls the engine and the brakes to maintain a low speed, avoiding spinning or locking.

The driver needs only to steer the vehicle when driving in extreme off-road conditions.



Renowned for being a rugged workhorse, the Land Cruiser is set to receive a face-lift for 2008 to keep it ahead in the 4x4 market.

There is also hill-descent control, pioneered by Land Rover on its Freelander.

The Land Cruiser features four-wheel active height control and adaptive variable suspension, which links all four wheels and provides a new spring-rate control system.

Additionally, front and rear stabilizer bars are operated by hydraulic control cylinders.

Safety features include the newly developed multi-terrain ABS, vehicle-stability control and 14 airbags.

Of these airbags, the driver and front passenger get active front bags, knee bags and thorax side airbags, while in the second row, the outer passengers are protected by side bags and all three rows of seats have roll-sensing side curtain bags.

Although equipment in different markets may vary, standard features include automatic climate control with an independent rear system, leather upholstery, a full-length moon roof, garage-door opener, cruise control, rear wiper, defogger and an out-of-this-world 605-watt, 14-speaker audio system with a six-disc auto-changer.

The latest Land Cruiser is an eighth-generation model from Toyota and, says the Japanese



giant, "Retains all the world-beating, off-road capability of its predecessors, but adds more refinement, comfort and superior driving quality".

Land Cruiser chief engineer Sadayoshi Koyari summed it up,

saying, "For more than 50 years now, three key words have been the basis of each generation of Land Cruiser: strength, durability and reliability."

"Therefore, rather than opting for revolutionary change, we decided to carry on the sense of trust in the new Land Cruiser as the basic concept."

"With the latest generation, we had to recognize the loyalty of Land Cruiser customers by providing a vehicle that will not betray that trust."

The Land Cruiser is far from being a luxury four-by-four, but if off-roading is your intention, there are few peers.

The original Land Rover is probably the master of rough terrain, but the Toyota offers a degree of comfort lacking in the British model.

Disadvantages include its sheer bulk – parking at Tesco-Lotus might present a problem. Despite this, it is a vehicle that has been proved time and time again.

Sales begin in Europe initially, with the rest of the world following early next year.

This Land Cruiser will undoubtedly be as successful as its forebears.

Jeff Heselwood can be contacted at jhc@netvigator.com

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EVENTS CALENDAR

Upcoming events on the island

December 31. New Year's Eve Wine Dinner at Wine Connection Chalong.

See off 2007 with a New Year's Eve six-course set dinner, with six glasses of wine and a live band. From 7:30 pm until 12:30 am; 3,960 baht net per person.

Contact Pascal for more details. Tel: 087-8896074. Email: fb.phuket@wineconnection.co.th

January 3-30, 2008. My Awakening.

January 3 marks the date for K. Map's latest solo exhibition titled My Awakening "P" at the Watermark bar and restaurant. Join us for a glass of wine and some exotic color combinations.

Opening cocktail reception 7 pm. Exhibition open January 3 to 30.

Strong, powerful paintings that stir emotions and appeal to the passions are Varaporn Ponrit's trademark.

Contact Stuart. Tel: 081-7376184, 076-239730. Email: stuart@watermarkphuket.com Website: www.watermarkphuket.com

January 12, 2008. Saphan Jai Photo Exhibition at Phuket Aquarium.

On this year's Children's Day, Phuket Aquarium presents the outstanding photography and artwork of the InsightOut! Creative Children's Workshop and Exchange Project.

Besides the opening of a two-month photo exhibition, the children will share their work and experiences. Come and have fun with your whole family and learn how to take great pictures. Or join in with one of the other special activities, like face painting and action games.

The event will take place 9:30 am until 5 pm.

For further information contact K. Tu. Tel: 076-391126-15, 087-6933965. Email: prom_natt@yahoo.com Website: www.phuketaquarium.org

And best of all: entrance to the aquarium is free for children.

January 12, 2008. Malaiwana TriBallistic Relaunch Party 2008.

From 6 pm to 11 pm at Skippers Sports Bar at Royal Phuket

Marina. Live music by Indigo Pearl house band The Boom, featuring May Palmer and the "Sax Bomb" DJ and saxophonist Gerard Cornielje.

Also includes pre-race registration for February 3 Triballistic race and a new range of Tri-Ballistic merchandise on sale.

Adults: 1,000 baht, inclusive of buffet, one beer or glass of wine (only first alcoholic drinks included) and raffle ticket. Children: 750 baht, inclusive of buffet, three soft drinks and raffle ticket.

Tickets are available from Shaun at 089-5902015 or at info@triballisticclub.com; from Skipper's Bar at 076-360890; and from Helle Kirstein at the British International School - Phuket library.

January 12-27, 2008. French Cuisine Festival at Mom Tri's Boathouse.

Mom Tri's Boathouse will host the annual "Quinzaine de la Gastronomie Française", an extravaganza of French cuisine each night from 7 pm to 11:30 pm, from January 12 to 27, 2008.

Guest Chef Maître-Cuisinier de France Jean Noël Lumineau, in collaboration with Mom Tri's Boathouse Executive Chef Tummanoon Punchun, will present a four-course dégustation menu every evening.

Each course will be accompanied by a superb French wine, chosen by the Boathouse's Wine Director, Georges Ciret.

The Boathouse Wine & Grill à la carte menu will remain available throughout the entire festival.

For more information contact: Pinyo Thippimas. Tel: 076-330015. Email: fb@boathousephuket.com Website: www.boat-housephuket.com

January 16-19. Puravarna Windsurfing Rally for His Majesty the King.

The Puravarna Windsurfing Rally for His Majesty The King, in celebration of the auspicious occasion of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 80th Birthday, is a rally with a course that will take contestants, for the first time in Thailand, around the island of Phuket.

The rally course will guide



World musicians The Durgas (pictured) and popular Thai band The Caravan will provide the frame for presentations of Saphan Jai stories and artwork.

Saphan Jai Community Festival and Live Concerts.

December 30, 2007

Saphan Jai is an exciting cultural event with live concerts and presentations of beautiful photographs taken by children in the Insight Out! Creative Workshop and Exchange Project.

The Phuket Aquarium partners with Insight Out! to raise awareness about the marine environment through creative techniques promoting youth leadership.

Come and join the most exciting end-of-year event in Khao Lak from 5 pm to 9 pm, at Khao Lak Youth Club (Book Tree). Entrance free.

Saphan Jai continues on January 12 with the opening of the photo exhibition at the Phuket Aquarium.

Contact K. Pim for details. Tel: 081-4919983. Email: snseak@yahoo.com Website: www.phuketaquarium.org

contestants past the famous beaches of the island province and cover a distance of more than 100 kilometers.

The route will start at Nai Yang Beach and pass by Surin Beach, Patong Beach and Kata Beach before ending at Nai Harn Beach. From noon until 4 pm daily.

For more information contact Thanit Raksanaves. Tel: 081-6997700. Email: ewc@loxinfo.co.th Website: www.startline.org

February 3. Malaiwana Tri-Ballistic Race at Indigo Pearl Resort.

The new Triballistic series will get underway at Indigo Pearl Resort at Nai Yang Beach, from 6 am to 11 am.

- Senior Sprint: 750m swim, 20km bike, 5km run.

- Junior Race: 200m swim, 6km bike, 1.5km run

- Splash & Dash: 50m swim, 3km bike, 750m run.

Registration available at www.triballisticclub.com, BIS library and at the Skippers Bar TriBallistic Party on January 12.

Registration can also be done by email to info@triballisticclub.com or by calling

089-5902014. Races start 7:30 am.

For more information contact Shaun Boulter at Tel: 089-5902014, Email: info@triballisticclub.com or visit the website at www.triballisticclub.com

February 7-9. Chinese New Year.

Chinese New Year starts with the New Moon on the first day of the Chinese new year and is the biggest social occasion on the Chinese calendar. It is celebrated with gusto among Thailand's sizable Chinese community and legions of Chinese tourists from neighboring nations choose to enjoy the holiday in Phuket.

February 21. Makha Bucha Day - Public Holiday.

Makha Bucha Day, which falls on the full moon of the third lunar month of the Thai calendar, commemorates the Buddha's ordaining of 1,250 monks who arrived unannounced from afar only seven months after the Buddha began his teachings. It is also the date the Buddha delivered his Fundamental Teachings - just months before his death.

February 22-23. Phuket International Blues Rock Festival.

Presented by HotelTravel.com, the third year of Phuket's biggest international blues rock festival will be huge - expanded to 12 bands - showcasing 10 of Southeast Asia's finest acts and topping it off with an American headliner each night at the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa.

The event will have one of Australia's top blues bands as well. Returning is guitar phenomenon Rich Harper and his band from California and another top US act will close the show Saturday night.

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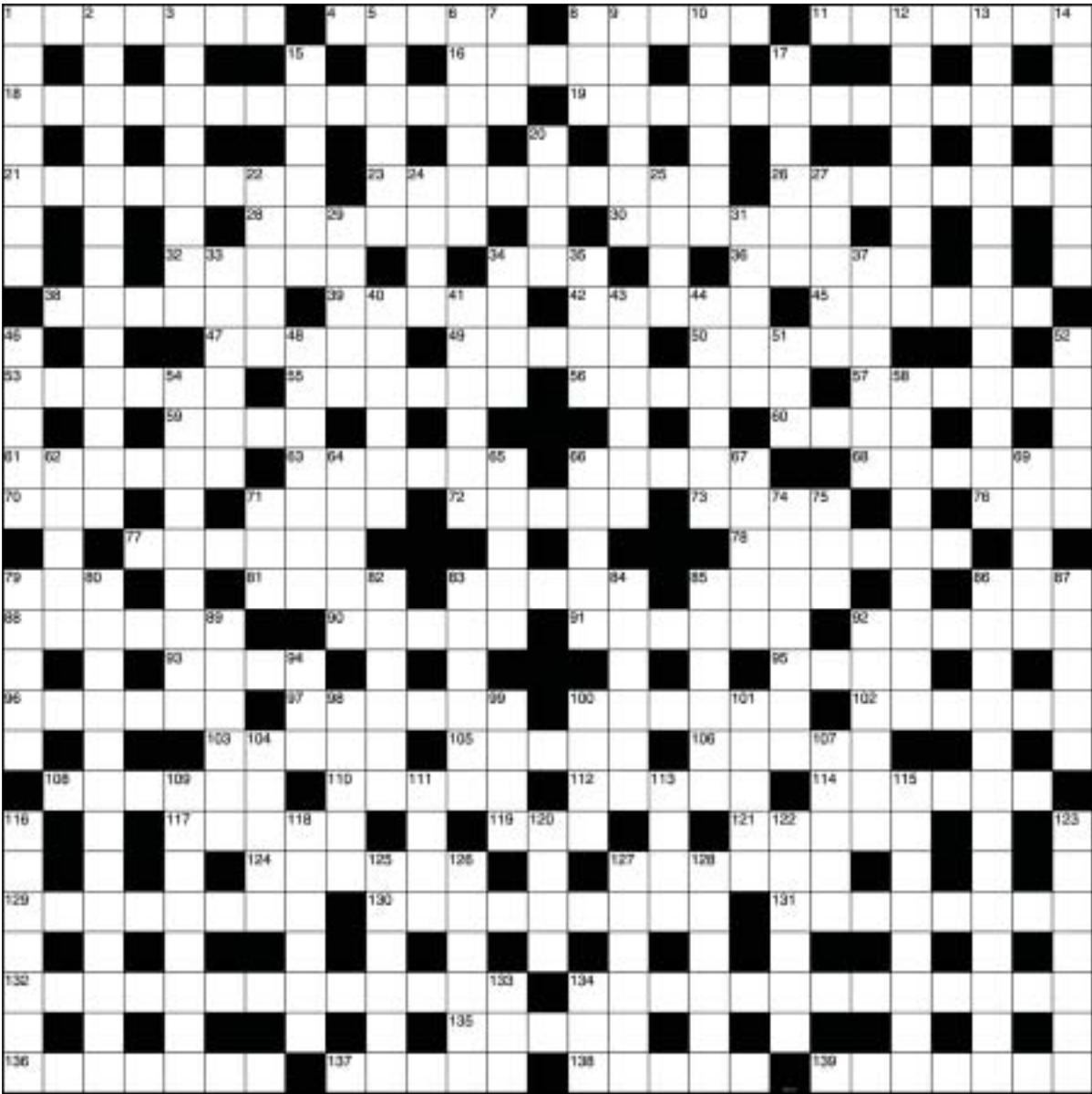


The BIG Crossword

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are at least 25 words or phrases related to the holiday season. The words may read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They may also read right-to-left or down-to-up. Score: 15 or more, good; 20 or more, very good; 25 or more, excellent. Solution on the next page.

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



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- Across

1. Soft Italian cheese

4. Tennis ace, ...Becker

8. Astute

11. Prospect

16. Not talked about

18. Female executive

19. Non-fighting soldiers

21. Generosity

23. Most miserly

26. Documentary script reader

28. Type of ulcer

30. Gets faster, ...up

32. Amusement (park)

34. Insane

36. Grey

38. Christmas decoration

39. Actor, Nick...

42. Comic pantomime women

45. Inundate

47. ...box recorder

49. Macho person (2-3)

50. Terminate

53. Chatter

55. Fanatic

56. Succumbs

57. Jamaican music

59. Singer, ...Horne

60. Epic tale

61. Large gourd

63. Actor, ...Cleef (3,3)

66. Cabs

68. Designer, ...Laurent (4,2)

70. Aye

71. Use book

72. South Korean capital

73. Risqué

76. Karate, ...kwon do
- Down

77. University treasurer

78. Whipped dessert

79. Olympic Games body (1,1,1)

81. Small island

83. Indian prince

85. Hearth fuel

86. Date of birth (1,1,1)

88. Deposits eggs (of fish)

90. Shelled gastropod

91. Beach bonnet

92. Polite

93. Plastic money, credit...

95. Involved in

96. Lopes

97. Casts out

100. Nursing boss

102. Undid

103. Sharpens

105. Actress, ...Barkin

106. Excavated (3,2)

108. Whine

110. Prostitute

112. Minimum amount

114. Untruths, ...of lies

117. Debatable matter

119. Money roll

121. Rot

124. Enrol

127. Recite (prayer)

129. Knitted garments

130. Paper retailer

131. Climbing plants

132. Sober

134. Elizabethtown actress (5,8)

135. Shouts, rants &...

136. Pancake day, Shrove...

137. Sightless

138. From Wales

139. Utmost
67. Pacific nation

69. Hairdressing shop

71. Typist's complaint (1,1,1)

74. Covering (with paint)

75. Actor, ...Brynnner

79. Muslim religion

80. Common gas (6,7)

82. Embroid

83. Violent demonstra-tor

84. Compassionate

85. Groups of musical notes

86. Sock-mending tool (7,6)

87. Necklace balls

89. Dress ribbons

92. Perfect society

94. Study

98. Gem

99. Killed

100. Fuse

101. Surpass

104. TV twins, Mary-Kate & Ashley...

107. Mouth sore

109. Infringed (law)

111. Unseat from power

113. Pimpily condition

115. Restrict to role

116. Sawmill powder

118. Unspoken

120. Related

122. Sheathe

123. Lack

125. Tel Aviv is there

126. Inn

127. Instil

128. Test runs

133. Father

134. Embroider

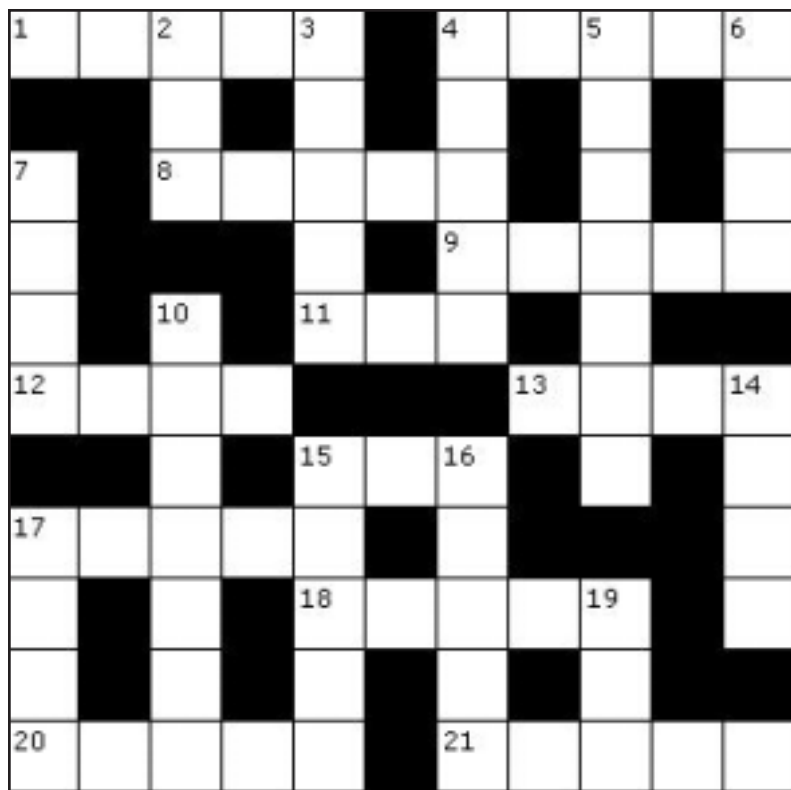
Solution on next page

su | do | ku
© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

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

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



Quick Crossword

Across

1. Sea movement
4. Terrible
8. Object words
9. Open
11. For writing
12. Beetle larva
13. Dislike
15. Save us
17. Wallowing animals
18. Flower
20. Teacher
21. Rot

Down

2. Vehicle
3. Rubbish
4. Vandalism by fire
5. Death ceremony
6. Pick up
7. Do at karaoke
10. Help
14. Repeated sound
15. Not drunk
16. Bladed weapon
17. Hot energy
19. Computer

Solution below

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



Kids! Ask Mum and Dad to help you find the answers to these questions. They're not easy but, if you do some research, you should be able to find the answers to all of them.

1. The oldest signs of life on Earth are fossilized ancestors of which one-celled organisms?
2. Phobos is a moon of which planet?
3. Edward Teach was which "dark" pirate of the Caribbean?
4. Whose quartet put out an LP in 1959 titled *Time Out*?
5. Referring to animals you shouldn't challenge, what does NEC stand for?
6. What moves in a "Chandler circle"?
7. Your grandma's brother is what to your brother?
8. The Maya found what ocular condition a mark of beauty?
9. Which is a monarchy: Singapore, Indonesia or Malaysia?
10. Which Pink Floyd album was inspired by a George Orwell novel?
11. When an atom undergoes a quantum leap, what type of light particle is emitted or absorbed?
12. When a jackass and a mare mate, the hybrid offspring is called a what?
13. Historians refer to "the long 19th century" as the 125-year span between which two events?
9. What is Sicily's largest city?
14. What is the largest bird after the ostrich?
16. If your hobby is philately, you collect what?
17. Steve Fossett flew around the world with 18,000 pounds of what?
18. White and yellow are the only colors of balls used in which sport's pro tournaments?
19. A prism rearranges white light into what?
20. Which people conquered Spain in the 8th century?

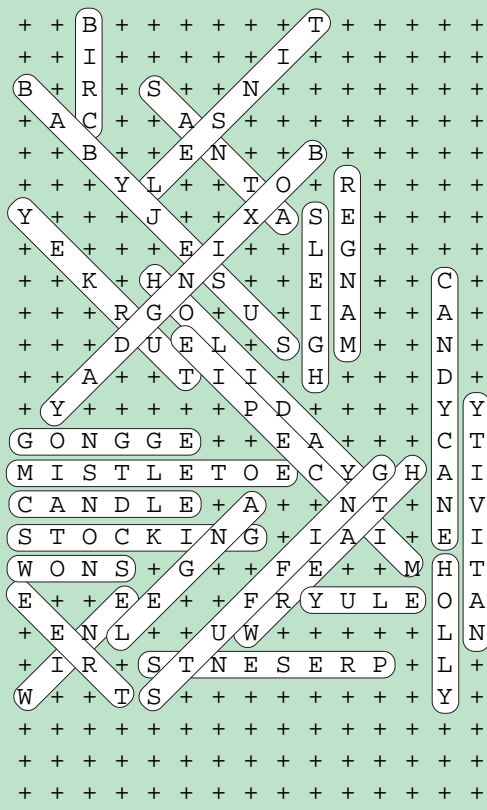
Answers below

Puzzle Solutions

Solution to this week's Quick Crossword

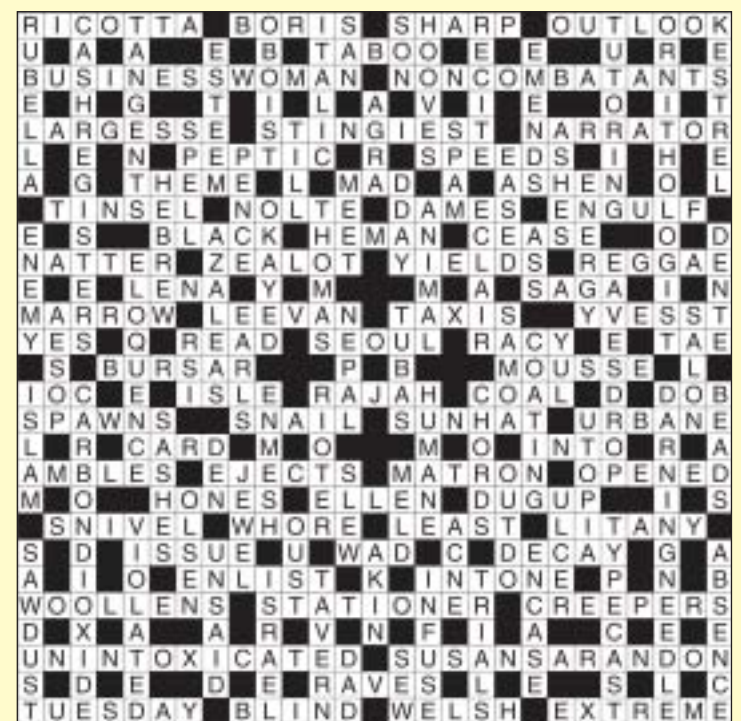


Hidden Words SOLUTION



Monster Quiz Answers

1. Bacteria; 2. Mars; 3. Blackbeard;
4. Dave Brubeck; 5. No eye contact;
6. The North Pole; 7. Great-uncle; 8. Crossed eyes; 9. Malaysia; 10. Animals;
11. A photon; 12. A mule; 13. The French Revolution and World War I;
14. Palermo; 15. An emu; 16. Stamps; 17. Fuel; 18. Tennis; 19. A spectrum; 20. Moors.



Solution to this week's BIG Crossword

Solution to this week's Sudoku puzzle

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



Nguyen Minh Phouc "Three Disciplinarians"



Zhang Xiao Gang "Big Family"



Maye "Happy Ladies I"



Yue Min Jun "Kung Fu"



Dinh Quan "The Girl in Red"



Tibetan Rug



Tibetan Rug

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Gao Xia Wu



Bronze Carriage "Han Dynasty"



Chinese Panel



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Phuket Gazette



In The Stars

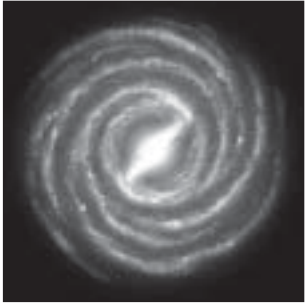
by Isla Star

Searching the stars for favor in 2008

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): This year will present a series of challenges for you, but you will have the support of the stars and be able to rise to the occasion.

After May, the pressure will ease and more focus will be on enjoyment and finding new sources of pleasure.

You should beware of so-called healers who are interested only in parting you from your cash. Money flows towards you freely until April, after which, flexibility is advised. Romance looks to be more promising during the final few months of 2008.



AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): A positive year is forecast. Hard work and struggles of the past few years will finally bear the fruit you want to harvest. There will be a rise in income that will lead to relocation.

Personal relationships will become better balanced and those of you who have been single for longer than you've wanted to be are likely to meet your soulmate early in the year.

Later in the year, mixing business with pleasure could have untoward effects on long-standing friendships. The coast is clear for those wishing for a radical change of career.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Those of you who are lazy will be faced with the truth this year. Your lack of productivity during 2007 will ensure that others are favored regarding promotion.

A late chance to prove your worth is due to occur by the end of February, so putting work above pleasure is recommended in order to get 2008 off to a positive start. Dissatisfaction with personal relationships is forecast to become an issue after May and difficult decisions will have to be made.


By the end of the year, harmony at home will compensate for this tricky time. During the middle months, a financial burden is certain to be lifted.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): The focus is firmly on foreign travel for most of you this year. Last-minute departures could mean that family relationships are affected and you should make a point of helping those close to you to feel more secure.

Although there will be a cloud hanging over your career during June and July, this should disperse in August when you get a lucky break. It will be tempting to spend freely, but saving is recommended and a golden investment opportunity will appear in September for you.

Those of you with children will be forced to consider education and discipline matters more seriously.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Your experience in leaping over hurdles during the past few years will mean that problems are more easily overcome this year.



Others are likely to come seeking your advice more frequently than you are comfortable with and it will be important to put your own needs first. The chance to

boost your income that arrives in March or April could be confusing and you should not dive into deep waters without examining the situation.

Property investment is not recommended until later in the year. Your domestic security remains all-important, but an unsettled period is forecast during the middle of the year.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): The year ahead promises to be a bumper one. Your career will expand after a rocky patch during January and February.

In these months, your trust sensors should be on high alert as false commitments from others are likely.

Due to a busy period until April, you will look forward to a lazy hot season, but family commitments will be demanding until the middle of 2008.

Those of you who are single will meet an enticing new partner while traveling and commitment is forecast.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): You should be able to call the shots in 2008. The year ahead can be as active as you wish to make it and dramatic career advancement is available for those of you who are prepared to make sacrifices.

Where money is concerned, the emphasis is mostly on gain, but unexpected family expenses towards the middle of the year will call for an economic review.

A mild romantic attachment is forecast to become a serious commitment just when you least expect it to. Travel will not happen the way you plan for, but overseas trips will lead to exciting discoveries.

LEO (July 24-August 22): A creative path is waiting for you. During 2008, your talents will be put to more productive uses than this year.

You may be forced to take out a loan during May or June, but with your sensible attitude towards money, this will not be a burden for long. Harmony in personal relationships will be put to the test at the start of the new

year, but don't worry too much.

Your diplomatic skills should help overcome this period of unrest. Later in the year, a way to combine travel with work will come from a surprise source.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Disappointment in romance during 2007 has left many of you cautious about revealing your emotions, but an encounter with someone born under a water sign should restore confidence by the middle of the year.

Those of you with a partner are advised to allow that person sufficient space to spread their wings. An unstable period regarding housing is forecast to occur in August.

Money matters will remain tight for the first few months of 2008, but the spiritual side of life is more important.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): The year ahead should prove to be a more stable one than the past 12 months.

Where work and material matters are concerned, hurdles that you have successfully navi-

gated during 2007 will not be met again. In the area of romance, however, you might be tempted to give an ex-partner a second or third chance. This is not recommended.

A new love affair in September should cheer up those of you who are single. At the same time, those of you in a committed relationship are likely to receive more support than you expect when different work circumstances shake family life.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Imminent family reunions should ensure that you start the new year in a happier frame of mind. Health problems will ease as long as you remember to focus on balancing work and free time.

Even if you're not considering a change of career, new possibilities could be too good to turn down in the middle of the year. At this time, however, a legal matter will be like a game of cat and mouse.

During October, those of you who are single should maintain a practical outlook to avoid being swept off your feet by an unsuitable romantic interest.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Intellectual growth is forecast to be the main focus for the year ahead. Take advantage of this encouraging astral atmosphere to study new subjects and travel to previously unseen places.

Romance is set to occur in a learning situation for those of

you who are single. Where money is concerned, a much better source of income should present itself during June or July. Until then, it will be necessary to practice financial juggling and resist temptation to splurge.

Relocation is indicated this year, but avoid committing to any new housing situations before May as the chance of encountering unscrupulous behavior is high.

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romance –
what do the
stars hold in
store for you in
2008?**

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- Since 1994 -

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Driving in the wrong direction

At the risk of sounding like a holiday-season Scrooge, the *Gazette* notes that the distribution of free teddy bears – even ones blessed by a monk believed to be 114 years old – is unlikely have any real impact on the holiday-season road toll in Phuket.

If anything, the Nong Prodpai campaign [see News] only highlights the continuing lack of any effective strategy on the part of Phuket's traffic police to deal seriously with dangerous drivers.

Over the years, Phuket has been chosen as a site for numerous pilot projects, ranging from the installment of CCTV surveillance technology in public places to high-tech disaster warning systems. Yet the single greatest threat to the safety of island residents and tourists comes not from terrorists or tsunamis, but those among us who are unwilling or unable to drive responsibly.

Apart from the initiative a few years ago encouraging motorcyclists to turn on their headlights during daytime, there have been no serious efforts in Phuket to deal with this lethal issue.

For numerous reasons, Phuket is a particularly dangerous place to drive. One factor is the large and ever-increasing number of out-of-towners who take to the roads in rented vehicles. Many of these people are foreigners with no driving experience in Thailand who are unwilling to fall prey to the avarice of the transport syndicates.

Able to rent vehicles by presenting almost any form of identification along with their passports, they take to the unfamiliar roads on the island with almost no knowledge of Thai traffic laws or customs – many quickly concluding from what takes place on our roads that there are none.

Second is Phuket's poor road network, which has failed to keep pace with the ever-rising number of vehicles competing for space on them.

Third is a lack of common sense and civility among many Phuket drivers that manifests itself in a callous disregard for the rights of others they share the roads with.

Throw in a little holiday boozing and the recipe for disaster is complete.

What is needed to improve safety on Phuket's roads is less carrot and more stick. Teddy bears simply will not do the trick, nor will the establishment of easy-to-avoid traffic checkpoints in the same old places, year after year.

Phuket needs is a year-round surge in arresting motorists who commit moving violations, such as running red lights. CCTV technology is now in place at many dangerous intersections around the island, but there are no indications it is being applied to arrest and fine dangerous drivers.

– The Editor

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

The Phuket Gazette

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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.

We need boat bidding at the parks

It is obvious to all that dive sites in the Similan and Surin national parks are over-crowded. Riche-lieu Rock is now a place where the fish come to look at the divers, as the local dive guides joke.

No doubt there must be some urgent restriction of divers and boats on those dive sites to avoid further environmental destruction or a complete loss in the future.

The most practical way to implement restrictions of divers and an equally important restriction of dive boats would be a seasonal permit auction.

At the beginning of each season, the authorities could auction off 20 or 30 boat permits to the highest bidders, who would then be allowed to visit Similan or Surin national park dive sites for one season.

This would not only create substantial revenue, but effectively limit both boats and divers and so better preserve the environment.

To wait any longer is simply not an option.

Orita
Phuket

Lost and found

Recently, while visiting Phuket, my wife Sharon and I became disoriented (lost) around Samkong on our way back to Bang Tao Bay. A European gentleman on a motor scooter went out of his way to help direct us back to the correct road.

If you hear of a kindly man who helped out two farang on a Nuovo near Tesco Lotus during early December 2007, please

pass on our thanks and gratitude.

Please also thank all your staff for the production of the *Gazette*. It's brilliant!

All the very best for the future.

Garry and Sharon Eldridge
Canberra, Australia

Banks beware

Thai Banks have another problem along with the ripples sent this way from US bank failures in the troubled mortgage industry. When the first Thai bank closes its doors because of non-performing loans, just like in the US, resident foreigners will withdraw their assets.

So what happens when Immigration demands the deposit in the bank for three months to obtain a Non-Immigrant visa? Foreigners will decide to either make the deposit of 400,000 baht and risk losing it or leave Thailand with all of their assets.

If Thailand wants to retain the support of retired and resident foreigners during the lean times coming, then Immigration should reconsider the three-month, money-in-the-bank regulation or risk losing the expats' money.

Andrew Downie
Taiwan

Tuk-tuk tyranny must stop

I write to you to see if you would run an article about the tuk-tuks and motorbike taxis trying to rob foreigners by over-pricing their fares.

I have been coming to Patong at least twice a year for the past five years. Until last year, I could go anywhere in Patong

for 100 baht, but since November the tuk-tuks have been asking for 200 to 300 baht.

Until last year, you could get a tuk-tuk from Patong to Phuket City for about 300 baht, but now some tuk-tuk drivers have attempted to charge 1,000 baht for the trip.

It appears that no government officials are attempting to stop this. Maybe the Traffic Police should stop tuk-tuks with *farang* in them and ask what the driver is charging them.

If it is a price gouge, then the Traffic Police office should issue a large fine for doing so – this goes for motorbike taxis as well.

Maybe a solution is that all the tuk-tuks be required to install – and use – a fare meter. If the meter is not a good option, then fare-pricing signs for tuk-tuks and motorbikes should be placed in populated areas such as Patong, as well as other tourist spots, so that tourists know what the proper price is.

James Adair
Phuket

New Year's Resolution

I recently wrote to the *Gazette* complaining about the trees being pulled up in front of the Honda garage on the bypass road.

It seems my grumbling was a little premature and the garage forecourt now looks wonderfully landscaped with more trees and greenery than there was before the garage was built.

My New Year's resolution: not to jump the gun. Have a great 2008!

Green Dreamer

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.

Violence among teenagers: who are the true offenders?

I am happy to be back working in my hometown, but it is sad to return to see an alarming increase in crimes committed by juveniles, with 607 cases reported from January to the beginning of December this year. This is also an unusually high figure considering that Phuket has just three districts.

In December alone, 49 youths between 13 and 17 years old were arrested in Phuket, four of them females.

The most common crimes that juveniles here are arrested for are theft, robbery and drug abuse, especially sniffing glue and other inhalants. About half of these are repeat offenders.

The statistics show that bad behavior among juveniles can often be attributed to them living in a dysfunctional home environment. 70% of the juveniles arrested for crimes come from broken homes where parents have separated or are having adulterous relationships.

My own policy in dealing with juvenile crime is looking at ways of changing their behavior so they are not getting into trouble in the first place, which will make Phuket a safer place, especially for the tourists who come here and on whom so many people in Phuket rely on for an income.

If we don't make an effort to deal with these issues at their root causes then the crimes will continue and Phuket will become an undesirable holiday destination and we will all lose out.

To achieve this, it is important that parents and adult family members take responsibility for younger family members and pay

FIRST PERSON

Sukporn Odomsin, the new director of the Phuket Juvenile Observation and Protection Center, has returned to find a dramatic rise in violent teenage crime in her native Phuket.

She agrees with the provincial government policy that violent teenagers not be granted bail, but says the rule must apply whether the victim foreign or not.

Here she explains why, and why she believes the teenagers themselves are victims of today's society.



attention to the kind of care they are giving to children.

Family finances are also a contributing factor. Many of the juveniles arrested for crimes have relatively poor parents who have to work very hard to make ends meet, but they are subsequently not able to spend much time teaching and guiding their children.

These children often enter a life of crime when they feel unloved or that family and society has turned its back on them. They feel worthless and criminal acts can often be a way for them to get some kind of recognition or attention from their peers.

Many of them have never known the warmth of a loving family as some may have been orphaned and homeless from an early age, having to take care of

themselves. Kids in this situation will have had to fight for their own survival for most of their lives, making them fiercely independent, while stealing is the only way they know how to survive or get by when they have no support from anyone else.

In the Juvenile Observation and Protection unit, we try to teach the children to change their outlooks on life and their way of thinking. We give them creative and constructive outlets with opportunities to do something worthwhile and constructive, such as receiving more schooling or learning new job skills, such as learning to fix motorcycles, washing cars or batik-painting; skills that they can apply once they leave the shelter.

Juveniles who commit serious crimes or are repeat offend-

ers are treated by the law in the same way as adult offenders, so they will often end up in adult prisons. We try to prevent this by encouraging their parents to become more involved in their children's lives.

If we can see that the parents are willing to take on a more active parenting role with their wayward children, that the youth in question demonstrates remorse for his or her crime, and that they are prepared to make the effort to become a better person, then we can request the judge consider this in his sentencing.

In these cases, the judge may decide that the juvenile serves at least half of his or her sentence at the Surat Thani rehabilitation center for juveniles.

I agree with the provincial policy that juveniles who commit

serious crimes against foreigners should not be granted bail as this could badly affect the number of tourists that come to Phuket. If they are not punished properly then it sets a bad example to other potential criminals.

However, regardless of whether a crime is committed against a local or a tourist, the punishment or rehabilitation for the juvenile offender should be equal.

Although there are provisions in the law for treating juveniles less severely than adult criminals, young criminals can take advantage of the leniency they know they will receive from the criminal justice system. So it is important that we teach them responsibility for their actions in the first place.

Children need time to develop into adults. At 12 to 14 years old, children are testing the boundaries of society and they are very headstrong, still needing a lot of life experience to know the difference between right and wrong and discover how to fit into society.

Today, society is very different from before. Today's youth are engaging in sexual activity at a younger age, which means more babies are born to young, unmarried parents.

Those parents may not have planned how they will cope with having children or how they will have the time and resources to educate them properly.

Many of the youths branded criminals by society are actually victims of a society that is unprepared to help them become responsible adults.

Permits-to-stay for Thais

I am a Thai. I married a foreigner and left Thailand 20 years ago. Now I have returned to my hometown because my mother is ill. I have to stay here and take good care of her. I entered the country with my foreign passport with a tourist visa valid for 90 days.

I was told by staff at the Thai Embassy that issued my tourist visa that because I am still a Thai citizen and I still have my Thai ID card and passport, that I did not need to go to Immigration and extend my visa. I was told that I am still Thai and I have a right to stay in my hometown.

But, when I went to the Immigration office in Phuket City, I was treated so bad and no-one there could give me a clear explanation. I need to know whether I am allowed to stay or not. I do not want to have any problems at the airport if one day I want to return to my second home abroad.

Can anyone help me please?

Issues & ANSWERS

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

All I am asking for is the correct information and please treat me as a human being. Although I am married to a foreigner, I am Thai. Please help me to be able to stay here in my country with my mother until her last day.

Patty Bamert
Phuket

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

You should have entered Thailand using your Thai passport. Doing so would have meant that you would not have required a visa to come back to Thailand.

However, as you have al-

ready entered Thailand on a foreign passport with a 90-day tourist visa, you can apply for a permit to stay.

As you are Thai, just bring your Thai ID card and the *tabien baan* (house registration document) that you are registered on, along with 1,900 baht for the application fee.

You will be issued a one-year permit to stay, but you must report to an Immigration office every 90 days.

When you come to our office, please explain to the officer clearly what your situation is as it's high season and hundreds of people contact us each day.

Who keeps Karon Beach clean?

I have recently spent three weeks in Karon and the litter on the beach every day was unacceptable – and the amount of hazardous litter was something else. There were fluorescent tubes, broken glass and more.

Many tourists commented on these eyesores and it is only a matter of time before there is a serious injury.

Thailand has always positioned itself as a tropical beach destination, but the tourist market is a fickle one and those who are in control need to do just that – take control.

They should employ full-time beach cleaners. Surely there are many locals seeking employment. Whatever you do, please do something before it's too late.

Peter Logan
South Africa

Tawee Thongchaem, Mayor of Kata-Karon Municipality, replies:

The Kata-Karon Municipality has workers who are responsible for cleaning Karon Beach and the roads in Karon.

In the high season, we ask the beach-chair operators to help us keep the beach clean where they have their beach chairs.

In the low season, we hire a subcontractor to clean up all the garbage that is washed ashore.

Sometimes our staff overlook some places or haven't arrived before you see the garbage, but we ensure that we have responsible persons for that.

Regardless, thank you very much for informing us of the problem.

We intend to keep our area as clean as possible.

One of the great unsung classics of American literature is Nelson Algren's 1956 novel *A Walk on the Wild Side*, set in a New Orleans red light district during the Great Depression. I picked up Frederick Turner's novel *Redemption* (Harcourt, New York, 2006, 348pp) to see how it compares.

This novel of gangsters and whores takes place at an earlier time, 1913, and while Algren's book is Depression-era slangy, funny and fast-paced, Turner's tone is Faulknerian, orotund and totally lacking in humor.

At his worst, he shows a tendency toward purple prose and melodrama. But it's still a good read. Turner is a master of descriptive prose and his plot rushes to a suspenseful climax.

The story opens with Francis "Fast-Mail" Muldoon smoking a cigar on the porch of his cottage to the sounds of his widowed sister Maurine making dinner for her kids in the cottage next door. Then he straps on a shoulder holster, boards a tram car and alights at the cemetery that borders the Storyville district of brothels and

A walk on the baroque side

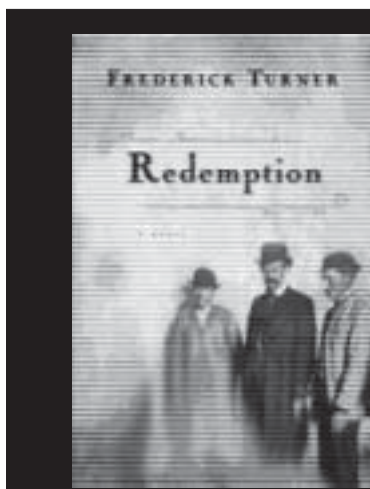
honky tonks that gave birth to jazz.

The reader is immediately plunged into the sights, sounds and smells of cribs, brothels, saloons, dance halls and gambling joints. Muldoon's job is to be the "man about town" for Tom Anderson, the unofficial "mayor of Storyville" and owner of much of it.

Anderson is a big, florid-faced, genial Irishman who has long acted as Muldoon's mentor. "Fast-Mail" got his nickname as a record-breaking runner for the local Catholic high school.

An act of heroism while working as a night watchman brought him to the attention of Anderson who pulled strings to get him into the police. Then a high-profile act of cowardice left him with a gunshot wound to the left buttock and a perpetual limp. Again, Anderson intervened and set him up in his current job of roaming factotum.

The two men are destined to become two sides of a love tri-



'And then there came over the face a slow spread of a kind of smile so bleak that Muldoon felt his heart shrivel in its pitiless presence...'

angle, set to the background of a looming gang war. The woman they are both in love with is a straight-backed, proud-eyed beauty named Adele who has just begun singing at a beer garden.

This is part of a complex owned by the Parker brothers who've just arrived from the Williamsburg slum of Brooklyn with a gang of gunmen to topple Anderson and take over his empire. The Parker brothers and their minions are textbook villains who all but twirl their mustaches.

Muldoon literally bumps into Adele in a dark hallway of the Tuxedo Dancehall as she flees the

embrace of Harry Parker. Anderson's history with Adele goes back to when she was 14, but I'll withhold the details. He sees her 10 years later on a New Orleans street and is smitten all over again.

He dispatches Muldoon to deliver letters to her at The Frenchman's Place, an after-hours hangout where she repairs after her singing stint.

Even the whores, madams, pimps, bartenders, cooks, singers and musicians of Storyville have Mondays off and ritually take a tram car every Monday to nearly lakeside resort. Here the tongue-

tied Muldoon meets up with Adele again.

He is terrified that she will fall into the depths of a whore's life and tells her about Mamie, the withered, twisted-back crone who never speaks or looks at anyone as she plays the piano at a honky tonk. He had come across a photograph of Mamie when she was a young breathtaking beauty. All he knew was that Mamie, like Adele, had once been a singer.

Muldoon had confronted Mamie one evening on her way to work and asked what had happened to her:

"And then there came over the face a slow spread of a kind of smile so bleak that Muldoon felt his heart shrivel in its pitiless presence. Then the mouth opened a bit and continued to open wider, revealing blackened gums, three worn molars, and a tiny stump of a tongue that when he gaped in horrified disbelief began to wag and pulse in soundless ululation... Here was the secret of Mamie's silence, of the transmogrification of the singer into sibyl whose prophetic utterance was this silence."

The book ends with a rousing Gunfight at the OK Corral.

Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

Why Marie Antoinette's fate wasn't a 'deheading'

Welcome to Word Court, where Barbara Wallraff unravels some of the mystery that shrouds the English language, debunking confusing usage and clearing away the clutter that stops clear understanding – all by answering reader's questions.

When there is a decimal point that's going to be represented by "and", it's awkward and potentially confusing to throw in another "and". For instance, "Five hundred and five and 32/

100 dollars." But without a decimal point, the use of "and" becomes a matter of personal preference. It's optional, but not wrong.

Hence my eternal indecision when I write checks. At least with "2007" there's a third, hard-to-find-fault-with way: Pronounce it "twenty-oh-seven" and the problem is solved.

I would be forever grateful if you would discuss which is correct: "me" or "I (am)" in "a grown woman like me," a phrase that you used in a recent column.

Jerry Hodge
Michigan, USA

Barbara replies:

I doubt you can ever go wrong using "me" after "like." The same, by the way, applies to the other objective pronouns "him," "her," "us" and "them". That's because in traditional usage, "like" is a preposition.

Other examples of prepositions are "for" in "There's a name for us" and "from" in "Take it from me."

You'd never think of saying "There's a name for we" or "Take it from I," I'm sure. Therefore, say "Write like me" or "a grown woman like me."

Admittedly, people say things like "Write like I do," but it makes traditionalists wince for the reason just stated. If you want to add a verb, like "do" (or "am"), you're supposed to precede it with something besides "like."

Use "as" or "such as" if it pleases you to sound starchily correct: "Write as I do," "a grown woman such as I am." A correct,

unstarchy alternative to "Write as I do" is "Write the way I do." The unstarchy alternative to "such as I am" is "like me."

Why do we say "behead"? Shouldn't it be "dehead"?

Frank S. Robinson
Albany, New York, USA

Barbara replies:

This is one of those weird little artifacts we've inherited from Middle English. "Be-" as a prefix having to do with removing was apparently common until about 500 years ago. But the version of "be-" that has to do with being around or all over something — as in "bedevil" and "bespeckle" — eventually won out.

The only other current word I know of that contains the same kind of "be-" as "behead" is "bereave", "reave" being an old word for "rob, deprive of" and "bereave" meaning "be deprived of".

Barbara Wallraff is a weekly syndicated columnist for King Features and a contributing editor and words columnist at The Atlantic Monthly, where she has worked since 1983.

As a retired teacher, I am bothered by the use of "and" in numbers – "We will now sing hymn number three hundred and twenty-three." I taught that "and" was used in numbers to mean a decimal point, as in money, or with a fraction, as in, "The cost is five dollars and thirty-two cents."

Jean Huffey
Waterville, Iowa, USA

Barbara responds:

I ask myself about those "and"s whenever I write a sizable check or say the current year aloud. Should I write "Five hundred five dollars" or "Five hundred and five"? Say "two thousand seven" or "two thousand and seven"? The rules you taught are right – but they're not the whole story.

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Nearly everyone on Phuket has come across the name “Junk Ceylon” in one form or another. Apart from being the name of a shopping mall in Patong, the term is also an ancient reference to Phuket that first appeared in European maps, although the origins of the name are shrouded in mystery behind frequent mispronunciations. Long before the term became synonymous with boutique stores and coffee shops, Junk Ceylon might have referred to sea grass and trade ships.

The earliest known mention of the island in European chronicles dates back to Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographia*, a collection of all the geographic data of the then-known world compiled in the 2nd century.

A Greek mathematician, astronomer and geographer, Ptolemy lived in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, which at the time was the academic sanctuary of the Roman Empire.

To gather his data, Ptolemy relied upon sources from within the Roman Empire, including records that had survived from the Persian Empire, as well as travelers' accounts.

The *Geographia* contained geographic information about China and the Far East, including a mention of the island of Junk Ceylon, said to be located near the Golden Khersonese, known today as the Malay Peninsula.

Junk Ceylon receives only a brief mention in *Geographia*. It was written that in order to reach Malaya, ships must pass by the “cape” of Junk Ceylon, which is easily noticeable as it juts out into the sea from the mainland,

A 16th century Ptolemaic map of the world. Just below the Latitude 9°N from the east side of the map, is an island marked Junk Ceylon, what we today know as Phuket.



Putting ‘Junk Ceylon’ on the world map

at latitudes between 6°N and 8°N.

Sea captains used this information to calculate their bearings in order to enter the Strait of Malacca, past the so-called cape. Instructions based on landmarks were essential at the time as maps and charts were unreliable for navigation.

In Ptolemy's records, Junk Ceylon was described as a cape. This led to the belief that the strip of sea dividing the island from the mainland was previously solid land, which may have been true a long, long time ago.

But in the 2nd century, Junk Ceylon was most likely an island. Passing ships were most likely confused by the narrow channel dividing the island from the mainland, causing sailors to mistake

Junk Ceylon for a cape.

The name Junk Ceylon was often used in European charts and maps to refer to Phuket. Historical records show several variations of the name: Jonsala, Jonsalaon, Gunsulun and Jonsalam.

It's difficult to pinpoint from where Phuket derived its early name. It is possible that Europeans first coined the term when trying to pronounce the Malay name used for the island. As for the original Malay name, that's equally a mystery.

Due to the lack of references to the original Malay term, a number of interpretations of the origins of Junk Ceylon have surfaced. Historian and former Phuket Governor Sunai Ratchaphantharak wrote an extensive history about Phuket, published in 1984. K. Sunai speculated that

“Junk Ceylon” may have originated from the Malay term “Ujung Salang”, which translates as “sea grass cape”.

K. Sunai explained that the island may have been given the name “Salang” (“sea grass”) because of the abundance of sea grass around the coast. “Ujung”, the Malay word for cape, may have come from the island being mistaken for a cape.

When Europeans heard the Malay words, K. Sunai wrote, they mistook them for “Junk Ceylon” and the name stuck in an attempt to pair it with Ceylon, known today as Sri Lanka.

British historian Sir James E Tennent, who wrote definitive historical accounts of life on Ceylon in the mid-1800s, offered another explanation. He wrote that during the 4th century, there was considerable trade between

China and Ceylon in commodities such as ivory, coconuts and sesame.

Phuket was in line with the direction Chinese junks sailed through the Straits of Malacca to reach Ceylon. Chinese traders would stop at Phuket because of its natural harbors. They would wait for favorable wind conditions before setting sail to Ceylon.

The fleets would also stop on their way back. The large number of junks calling in, Tennent wrote, caused the Malay locals to name the island “Ajung Selan” – *ajung* means “large ships” and *Selan* is the Malay pronunciation of “Ceylon”. Ajung Selan, once again mispronounced by Europeans, became Junk Ceylon.

The various terms for Phuket have their roots in Malay language. Thais were late to arrive on the island. Thai settlers would often adapt foreign names to make them more “Thai”. One example of this, as K. Sunai wrote, is the word *chalong*. Originally, the name may have come from the Malay term “Salang”, which was changed because Chalong means “to celebrate” in Thai.

The current name Phuket, believed to have derived from the Malay word *bhukit*, meaning hill or mountain, came much later. But that is another story.

So, the next time you wander around Jungceylon, remember there's more to the name than Starbucks and SFX Cinema.

Anand Singh is an avid Phuket historian. He lived on Phuket from the age of 3 to 21. He is fluent in Thai and is currently completing his degree in economics at the University of Birmingham. Anand may be contacted at as.pkt@hotmail.com

LOOKING BACK

By Anand Singh



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The pros of Linux mini-distros

Cleverness, on the face of it, ought to connote something good. Instead, it is often the opposite, associated with devilry – and nowhere is the association plainer than in cyberspace. Clever folk from every quarter are trying to fool, foil, track use of or hijack the computers of innocents such as we.

Principal avenue of attack is Microsoft's Windows operating system.

I admit, I used to be a more-or-less-satisfied Windows user, but after experiencing four fatal crashes on my computers in two years, I saw it was time to think outside the box – literally.

That was about one year ago. A number of problems rankled. First, invading viruses, Trojans, spyware, malware and other strings of indigestible or aberrant computer code were a drag on my processing prowess. I hesitated even to turn the thing on. "What new beast, its hour come at last, will hustle through my boot sectors to be born?" I worried.

Then, too, my boxes (computerese for the CPU and associated hardware) never seemed to have enough oomph for Windows, which, like Catherine the Great, grows fatter and fatter apace, requiring steadily faster processors, more RAM and vast tracts of hard-disk space.

What to do? I wondered. What is Windows doing with all those extra gigabytes?

Some say, and various adverse multi-billion-baht court decisions reinforce their suspicions, that the computer boffins in Redmond, Washington, have been up to no good – writing extra strings of code by the millions, the only purpose of which is to preserve Windows proprietary character; secretly updating or chang-

Marque Rome has been forced to use computers of varying quality for years just to earn a crust as a writer.

Here, he explains his newfound love - 'mini-distros', or entire operating systems that fit on a single thumb drive. Read it – you might learn something... Marque Rome did...

ing the operating systems in users' computers – and thereby trespassing IT administrators' security safeguards.

The latest version, Vista, was beset with adverse publicity before release and news since remains dubious. The program reportedly runs 50% slower than the latest version of Windows XP, requires at least 2GB of RAM to run smoothly, and has an embedded digital rights management program causing untold problems with even simple hardware items such as speakers and monitors that do not have similar programs.

To top it all, Vista suddenly plunges into "reduced functionality" mode should any activity or stray code trigger a program meant to protect Microsoft's intellectual property rights.

The point here may be expressed as a question: Isn't there some alternative available to all this snooping and hectoring and useless code-bloating by the omnipresent Big Brother?

The answer is "yes".

First, you need to understand the problem: it's the hard disk. Windows' underlying problem, indeed, that of any big operating system, including Linux, UNIX and Mac OS (derived from a UNIX-like system called FreeBSD), is that it constantly reads to and writes from the hard-disk unit.

This naturally leads to a certain amount of fudging, so that even systems of elegantly written code unexposed to attack via

the Internet, eventually become corrupted.

Robert Shingledecker, one of the developers of Damn Small Linux (DSL), a remarkably full-featured 50MB operating system, figures some corrupting occurs about once every 39 sessions.

That doesn't mean you should toss out your hard disk. It's still a great place to save files and applications.

"It seems everybody's mindset is to install to a hard drive," Shingledecker writes. "That is the way it's always been done." But that cannot ensure a reliable system, which is what we want. The solution is to put the OS in read-only memory, that is, on a CD-ROM.

Experienced users will instantly respond witheringly that, CDs are slower than hard disks. But if the OS is small enough – as, for example, DSL, Puppy Linux and the Latvia-based Astrumi are – it will boot entirely into RAM, which is much faster than reading from the hard disk. The operating system thereby remains, as Shingledecker says, in "a pristine state" with every reboot.

Many of these so-called "mini-distros" are available online free. Type "mini-distros" into Wikipedia's search box for a complete list and links. The benchmark size is 50MB.

They include all features you're used to – word processors, text editors, networking programs, consoles, desktop search func-



A screenshot a desktop running Puppy Linux. A European IT expert in Kata said, "I haven't touched Windows in 10 years. Staff in my shop are busy every day restoring Windows systems that fail. People think it's normal for Windows to go down. Linux is much more stable."

tions, graphics manipulation apps, CD rippers, music and movie players, telephone and Wi-Fi interfaces.

My version of Australian computer engineer Barry Kauler's brilliantly conceived Puppy Linux, using a Pentium 2.4GHz processor with 128MB of RAM, boots fully in 20 seconds and comes standard with 170 applications and programs. It also shuts down fast, inside five seconds.

Another useful feature of the minis is their tools – something Windows can't or won't match. Most include programs allowing control of remote desktops, that is, of other computers to which you are linked over the 'net, and most are ready for use as servers. Linux, I should add, is derived from Bell Laboratories UNIX OS, and thus designed for networks and parallel programming from the start. The Internet always has been a UNIX-based environment.

Let's say, as sometimes happens, Windows won't boot. You might use a rescue disk, but maybe you don't have one – maybe the maid bagged it or the kids used it to play Frisbee. Maybe even when you have a repair disk – as happened to an acquaintance last week – it doesn't work: Windows insists on erasing the whole disk and re-installing. What then?

Grab Puppy or DSL, boot up and lo, all your Windows files are at your command to be saved before you erase the disc and reinstall Windows. As you gain experience, you'll even be able to use utilities available for restoring Windows without re-installing – that's because Linux in "super-user" mode allows you to see and modify every part of your hard disk.

Shops make money off faulty Windows systems, off upgrades and replacements. But users of three- to 10-year-old boxes can work quite happily without upgrades or replacements using Puppy or DSL.

Earlier in the year it was announced that Windows 7, the new OS scheduled for introduction in 2010, will feature a 25MB kernel, the implication being that Windows' troublesome bloat will be a thing of the past.

But you needn't wait till 2010 to find out. You can fight the bloat and get yourself a fast, full-featured, Internet-secure, flexible and incorruptible system merely by investing the time to download a mini-distro.

Go ahead, Windows users. Do it. You've nothing to lose but your chains.

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THE WHITE KNIGHTS SAVING BANKS

The problems in the credit markets continue. Switzerland's largest bank, UBS, announced on December 10 that it would have to take a write down of US\$10 billion due to losses in the credit markets.

UBS is not just a bank with Swiss operations. It has become a massive global operator by growth and acquisitions. It also has a substantial presence in the US as a commercial bank, asset manager and investment banker.

UBS's trading and investment-banking operations led to the accumulation of these losses. The Singaporean government, via one of its Sovereign Investment Funds, announced an injection of 11.3 billion Swiss francs and an unnamed Middle Eastern investor provided another 2 billion. These capital injections allowed investors more than a modest shareholding in UBS.

Two days later, America's central bank, the US Federal Reserve, announced a 25-basis-point (0.25%) cut in its Federal Funds Rate and Discount Rate. This dis-appointed markets. To quote Art Cashin, the chief floor trader for UBS operations in America, speaking in a televised interview

on CNBC, "Goldilocks had expected a diamond from the Fed for Christmas and instead, on opening her present, found it to be costume jewelry and she threw a fit."

Markets were not impressed by the Fed cut and, more importantly, some strong language that accompanied the cut. The US Federal Reserve, watching this negative reaction, hinted later the same day that it had some interesting news to release shortly and that it was not going to rely on interest-rate cuts to solve the credit market's problems.

Early the next day, December 12, major US investment banking group Morgan Stanley announced that its favorite "short" for 2008 was America's largest bank Citigroup. When a "short" is used, it is with the expectation that the share price is going to fall. Considering that Citigroup shares had already been the subject of heavy losses in 2007 and its new CEO had held the position for less than 24 hours, this was not good news.

Short selling is usually achieved by one financial institution borrowing shares of the target company from a long-term

holder, that is, a pension fund. The institution then sells these shares and waits for the price to fall. Assuming that all goes to plan, it later buys back the same amount of shares at a cheaper price and returns them to the pension fund, together with an interest payment.

On the same day, broking house and investment banking group Merrill Lynch announced the downgrading by one "notch" of the shares of JP Morgan Chase & Co, Bank of America and Wachovia Bank. All three are among America's largest banks.

Just to add more seasonal good cheer, Office Depot announced that a downturn in sales in Florida seemed to be spreading to other states.

Then, the US Federal Reserve made an announcement. In conjunction with the central banks of Canada (Bank of Canada), the UK (Bank of England), Switzerland (Swiss National Bank) and the European central bank, substantial amounts of liquidity were to be introduced to the money markets.

The current credit squeeze is a threat to banking and economic stability, not just in North America but in Europe and other

parts of the world. Australia's central bank (Reserve Bank of Australia) was also active with substantial cash injections into its domestic money market.

In a televised interview on CNBC US Squawk Box, the guest host was John Snow, who was US Treasury Secretary until 2006. He is currently chairman of Cerberus Capital, a major private equity group. One of the company's current projects is the ownership and attempted "turn-around" of Chrysler after its separation from Daimler.

The change in John Snow from a Treasury Secretary to a businessman was interesting. He bluntly said that most US banks needed to be re-capitalized. The source of this money is Sovereign Wealth Funds, also called Sovereign Investment Funds.

Both terms are identical: these "funds" are owned by countries. It is estimated that globally they account for around US\$3 trillion in assets. That figure is expected to rise to US\$15 trillion within the next decade.

Already mentioned is the injection of capital to UBS, while Citigroup received a US\$7.5 billion cash injection from the Sovereign Investment Fund of Abu Dhabi. In every case, Sovereign Funds are taking up equity stakes in the banks they assist.

They make for very good investors. They do not want to take over the banks they are investing in and they are also there as long-term, strategic investors. They make for a natural "fit". Banks, who through what really amounts to enormous mismanagement,

need cash; Sovereign Wealth Funds, which have cash, want to make investments.

John Snow went on to say that he believed that the US will avoid recession, although in his estimation economic growth will fall to about 2%. He estimates that it will take around 18 months for the situation to normalize.

Should his assessment be accurate, then it is not a bad scenario. He did say that for the US economy to grow, unemployment must not rise too significantly. However, if unemployment rises rapidly, all bets are off. He is by no means alone in this thinking.

Americans and Europeans are going to have to come to terms with the reality that their banks are going to have to accept billions of dollars in investment capital from Sovereign Wealth Funds.

Some 1.5 million American households will be seeing interest-rate increases in 2008, virtually all linked to the London Interbank offer rate (LIBOR). For this fate to fall, confidence and capital need to be added. Banks must return to normal interbank lending patterns, as the world cannot live happily with a long-term credit crunch.

The alternative could be some major bank failures and economic panic.

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

MONEY TALKS



By Richard G. Watson



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ON THE MOVE

David Roberts from Canada has been appointed Group Sports and Leisure Manager of Centara Hotels & Resorts.

Mr Roberts graduated with a bachelor's degree in international business from Malaspina University-College in Canada.

Mr Roberts will be responsible for the sports and leisure programs of all Centara properties.



Luca Mancini from Italy has been appointed Italian Chef at Cucina restaurant, JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa.

Chef Luca has more than 10 years' experience in kitchens with Italian cuisine.

Before joining JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa, Chef Luca was Executive Chef at Rice Italian Restaurant on Koh Samui.



Joon K Park from Korea has been appointed Room Division Manager of JW Marriott Phuket Resort & Spa after more than 10 years in the hospitality industry in leading hotels and resorts worldwide.

In his new role, Mr Joon will be responsible for a dedicated team of 76 associates and he will be overseeing room-operation areas.



By Sangkhae Leelanaporn & Janyaporn Morel

Tourism operators struggle to keep pace with the boom

PHUKET: Although Phuket's critical tourism-related businesses have enjoyed rapid re-growth of the industry and the best fiscal year since the 2004 tsunami, which saw a massive slump in income from tourist dollars, some key figures in the tourism industry have voiced concerns about the region's ability to manage and sustain the boom.

Maitree Narukatpichai, Phuket Tourist Association (PTA) President and owner representative of the Hilton Arcadia Phuket Resort & Spa, said that the year has been good for tourism with the number of visitors to Phuket reaching nearly 5 million.

"Hotel occupancy this year is about 20% higher than last year, with average occupancy for four- and five-star hotels averaging about 70% for the whole year, although occupancy in some three-star and budget hotels has averaged out at about 60% for the year," K. Maitree said.

However, three-star hotels with the support of big travel operators have also had an occupancy rate on a par with the luxury resorts, he added.

Although Phuket has become a choice destination for tourists from around the world, the PTA, tour operators and the related government agencies are still working hard to improve the industry's performance.

According to K. Maitree, the slogan "Smiling Phuket", part

of the international branding campaign by the PTA and the Tourism Authority of Thailand used on international road shows, has enticed many visitors to Phuket. "The Phuket Provincial Administration Organization [OrBor-Jor] has also continually reinforced this branding," he said.

"This year's low season has also seen a rise in tourists from the Middle East and India, up about 40% from last year. This is the result of the international roadshows to the region, which have been running for three years now," he said.

"More Europeans, especially Russians, are coming to Phuket during the high season, with more charter flights from Europe directly to Phuket," K. Maitree said.

"The political situation has had little effect on tourism here. The property sector has slowed a bit but tourism still remains strong," he added.

President of the Tourism Council of Thailand, Wichit Naranong, is also pleased with 2007. "Phuket is the most popular tourist destination in Thailand. We can see that Bangkok has seen a drop in the number of tourists while Phuket is receiving more visitors on the new chartered flights,

which have increased by about 10%," he said.

"Tourism in other parts of Thailand has been affected by the political situation, violence and economic woes, but Phuket and the neighboring provinces of Phang Nga and Krabi have bounced back after the tsunami," he added.

K. Wichit predicts the boom will continue, with new hotels, marinas and more popular events planned. "However, I am still concerned about maintaining good management of the environment and conservation of Phuket's natural resources. It's important to hold regular ecological activities, such as beach cleanups and employing a sufficient number of the qualified service personnel," he said.

"Another concern is high prices. I don't want business operators to put their prices too high, otherwise tourists will be deterred by unreasonable costs.

"Also, all concerned sectors need to consider infrastructure, waste management and human resources in order to cope effectively with the increase in visitors so that Phuket remains a luxury destination," he added.

Eam Thavornwongwongse, President of the Phuket Cham-

ber of Commerce, saw the development the tourism industries in nearby provinces as a boon. "Even if the number of tourists coming to Phuket drops off, the region's economy will not suffer as the tourists simply go to other destinations in Phang Nga and Krabi," he said.

However, speaking about Phuket's property industry, which is deeply intertwined with tourism in Phuket, K. Eam said, "Foreign investors have been put off by the Thai company nominee laws and the right of ownership or partnership regarding land ownership, which is still unclear as nothing official has been announced.

"The government should support foreign investors. If these investors are confident about their investment, then the Thai people will ultimately benefit. After all, foreigners can't take the land back home with them.

"Neighboring countries Singapore and Malaysia have benefited from making it easier

for international investors with tax breaks," he added.

Of the spa industry in Phuket, Chernporn Kanjanasaya, chair of the Phuket Spa Association, said that Phuket's spa industry has grown significantly over the past two years in step with the tourism industry.

However, she voiced concerns about qualified therapists leaving the industry to take up more lucrative offers abroad. "Both European and Asian tourists are attracted to Thailand's spas. The biggest problem for Phuket's spas is the lack of therapists as many qualified therapists leave to work in other countries as Thai spa treatments become more popular abroad," she said.

The day spa industry has undergone a transformation since the tsunami, she added. "Before 2005, the market was monopolized by large spa corporations, but recent years have seen more smaller boutique spas competing in the market," she said.



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Patong soccer tournament underway

PATONG: The 24th Patong Youth and People Football Tournament began December 5. The annual tournament, which has a total prize purse of 1.28 million baht, is being held until January 21.

Matches are being played at the Patong beachfront football field and the prize purse comes courtesy of Patong Municipality, which is organizing the competition.

The event is divided into three leagues, with prizes going to the top four teams in each division, as well as for the best payers of the tournament and the top scorers, who will each receive 2,000 baht.

Twenty-four Thai teams are battling it out in the Gor Gai open division, with a top prize of 209,999 baht up for grabs. The Khor Khai trophy, which is open to teams of players born in Patong, has a first prize of 150,000 baht.

The under-17 Khor Kwai division features four teams of Phuket youths who attend Patong schools.

First prize in this division is 60,000 baht.

For the Ngor Ngoo trophy, there are again four teams, this time 12 years old and under, also studying in Patong schools.

The winners will take home 80,000 baht.

Eight teams of players 35 years old and over, living in Phuket, are playing for an 80,000-baht top prize.

Matches are being played daily at the beachfront football field between 3 pm and 4:30 pm.

All-Thai bouts come out swinging into 2008

By Scott Mallon

Another year has come and gone and once again, it is time to scrutinize Thailand's boxing scene. It would be easy to list all of the negatives, but there were indeed a few positives. Probably the best thing to happen this year is the re-occurrence of Thai-versus-Thai matchups.

In the past, bouts between the top Thai fighters were a regular occurrence. Little by little, the number of bouts between Thais dwindled, until finally, the only Thais who did battle in the ring were the greenest and least skilled.

Thanks to the efforts of the Asian Boxing Council and its chairman, General Kovit Bhakdi-bhumi, Thai-versus-Thai bouts are on the rise once again. All of the bouts were highly competitive and did what they were supposed to do; determine who are the best Thai boxers.

In May, former WBC super featherweight (130lbs) champion Sirimongkol Singwancha dropped down from the junior lightweight (140lbs) division to challenge Tong Por Chokchai for the Asian Boxing Council super featherweight title.

The two fought toe-to-toe for the entirety with a weight-drained Sirimongkol using his vast ring experience to come on strong at the end of the bout and lift the belt from the champion. Sirimongkol immediately relinquished the belt and go on to capture the vacant PABA 140lb belt.



Saenghiran Lookbanyai (right) catches a left hook from Napapol Kittisakchokchai during their long-awaited bout in September.

The next battle between Thais involved the WBC number-one ranked super bantamweight Napapol Kittisakchokchai and number-two rated Saenghiran Lookbanyai. Originally scheduled to take place in March, the bout finally came off in September after three cancellations.

For the first half of the fight, Saenghiran put on a boxing clinic, baffling Napapol and tallying up an early lead. By the eighth round, sensing his opponent was tiring, Napapol roared back into the fight. In the 10th, Saenghiran, looking more and more the spent fighter as the seconds ticked by, could do nothing to stave off the relentless attack of his opponent.

Napapol was declared the winner when, with nothing left to give, an exhausted Saenghiran collapsed and was unable to beat the 10-count.

When WBC minimum-weight champion Eagle Kyowa returned to Thailand to defend his belt after seven years of living and fighting in Japan, it was intended to be his homecoming party – but challenger Oleydong Sithsamerchai had different ideas.

The bout was back-and-forth for the first few rounds, with Oleydong landing counter left and right hooks, then sliding to his right.

Kyowa advanced, relent-

less in his attack, occasionally landing his jab but missing often. By the fourth round, Oleydong looked to be tiring, his face showing signs of wear from the stiff jab of the champion.

By the sixth, Oleydong was landing combinations. He continued with his side-to-side movement, sliding out of range of Kyowa's errant punches, scoring points to pull ahead in the bout.

Realizing victory was within his grasp; Oleydong adhered to his stick-and-move game plan. In the final rounds though, Kyowa managed to bridge the gap and score on the inside. It was too little, too late. Kyowa could do nothing to save his title.

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Parlez vous pétanque?

By James Goyder

Pétanque is a sport that does not get a lot of coverage in Thailand. Originating in the south of France some 150 years ago, it made its way to Thailand and has since grown so popular that the 2007 World Pétanque Championships were held in Pattaya earlier this year.

On November 25, the Chalong Pétanque Club hosted the first of its weekly pétanque matches of the season, tucked away behind the main road, midway between Chalong Circle and Wat Chalong.

Every other week, players from Patong and Chalong compete. The host venues for the weekly competitions held every Sunday alternate between the Chalong Pétanque Club and the Sai Rolign Residence in Patong. The season has already begun and will continue until April.

For the uninitiated, pétanque is a form of boules where the goal is to throw metal balls as close as possible to a small wooden ball called a cochonnet, or jack. The game is normally played on hard

dirt or gravel, but can also be played on grass or other surfaces. The aim of the game is to throw the boule, which normally weighs between 650 grams and 800g, to end up as close to the jack as possible.

Pétanque is normally played in teams, although the number of players per team can vary. Anyone who is capable of throwing a ball should be able to enjoy pétanque. It is also worth noting that, because in pétanque the throwers' feet have to remain fixed together within a small circle, people in wheelchairs can compete without any disadvantage.

The Chalong Pétanque Club is run by Philippe Caron and his wife Nantaporn Caron.

"Everyone is welcome and we are always looking for new players. Anyone can come and play pétanque here," he said.

The Chalong Pétanque Club is located at 55/34 Soi Klumyang in Chalong Village 7. For further information contact Philippe Caron. at Tel: 087-0828195.

PATONG DARTS LEAGUE

PATONG: The Patong Darts League August-December 2007 season ended with Queen Mary clinching the title victory with a massive 9-0, 3-point win over Valhalla.

Queen Mary went undefeated throughout the season, but somehow managed to drop six beer legs. Runners up Dogs Bollocks lost only two matches, both to Queen Mary.

The league party will be at Queen Mary on January 8. Any bar interested in joining the league should contact league secretary Steen at Queen Mary as soon as possible.

At the recent captains' meeting it was agreed that the rule regarding guest players would stand from November 1 through April 30. The rule regarding a team with only five players stands, but with two important changes:

- The player playing twice must act as 2 separate players when taking part in high score in both his singles and doubles. If not, only a high score in his first match will count.
- The team having only 5 players will throw 5 times only in the beer leg, against 6 for the opposing team.

December 18 results: Offshore 4 Piccadilly* 5; Dogs Bollocks* 6 Shakers 3; Queen Mary* 9 Valhalla 0; Simply Red* 4 Beach House 5; Market Bar bye.

Final standings: 1. Queen Mary (42 points); 2. Dogs Bollocks (39); 3. Piccadilly (33); 4. Offshore (27); 5. Shakers (24); 6. Market Bar (20); 7. Simply Red (18); 8. Valhalla (9); 9. Beach House (6).

Beer legs won: 1.= Dogs Bollocks, Piccadilly (11); 3.= Queen Mary, Simply Red (10); 5. Offshore (9); 6.= Shakers, Market Bar (8); 8. Valhalla (3); 9. Beach House (2).

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Students battle it out at provincial games

By Sompratch Saowakhon

PHUKET CITY: About 5,000 students from 20 schools around Phuket took part in the Phuket Provincial Games between December 15 and 18 at Surakul Stadium.

This inter-school sports event was organized by the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (OrBorJor) with the goal to help develop the skills of the next generation of Phuket's sports stars.

The sports events were open to all students across all age groups, from primary level through high school up to university.

Students, who were between five and 18 years old, took part in a full program of track and field competition, which involved 484 separate events across all age groups.

Also on the bill were tournaments of soccer, basketball, volleyball, tennis and table tennis.

Students who finished first to third place in each event were awarded gold, silver and bronze medals for their efforts.

In the male basketball competition, open division, Prince of Songkla University, Phuket campus, took home the gold medals, beating Phuket Rajabhat University in the final. In the final female basketball competition, Satee Phuket School beat Prince of Songkla University.

Dowroong Wittaya School won the male under-14 soccer competition.

Plookpanya School took the title in the under-12 division, while Baan Bang Tao School were the victors in the under-10 category. Muang Phuket Municipal School took the under-8 title.

In male takraw, Samkong School won the under-10 category. Piboonsawaddee School were victorious in the un-



Students took part in a full program of track and field competition, which involved a mammoth 484 separate events across all age groups.

der-12 division and Hongyok-bumrung School were the top under-16 team. Piboonsawaddee School won the female under-16 category.

Dowroong Wittaya School were the top female under-10 players.

Samkong School took honors in the under-12 division, with Samkong School also winning in the under-14 and under-16 categories.

In petanque, Phuket Technology College won the under-18 title, while Satee Phuket School won the female title.

Table tennis saw Kraisorn

Sirinthorn from Satee Phuket School take the open singles title. Tikamporn Duwa from Satee Phuket School was the top women's open singles player.

Phuket Wittayalai School were the top male tennis team in the open division, fending off opposition from Satee Phuket School.

In the female division, Satee Phuket School beat Phuket Wittayalai School in the final.

The top under-18 track team, both male and female, during the competition was from Kathuwittaya School.

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Construction Update

by Janyaporn Morel

Tranquil living in Nai Harn

NAI HARN: Work on the second Villa Suksan development, on Soi Naya, by developer Ayudhya Real Estate Brokers, is now 30% complete. The project is expected to be complete by October next year.

The Soi Naya project follows the sell-out of the initial Villa Suksan project of four private pool villas in Soi Suksan, Rawai, which was started two years ago and completed last month.

The new development will comprise six private pool villas in Thai-Balinese style.

Construction of a third Villa Suksan project, also comprising four villas, is slated for Soi Suksan 2 in Rawai, with work to begin in the new year.

Simon Murray of Ayudhya Real Estate Brokers told the *Gazette* that of the Soi Naya project, three units have been sold, and that of the three villas still available, one has been reserved.

"Our emphasis is on good design. The homes are in Thai-Balinese style and are open plan. They have been designed to let the breeze through and the natural light in. It's very important to have as much natural light as possible as the whole design is based around that."

"Each villa is set on enclosed land and all the landscaped gardens and the pool itself are set in the center of the home. There are large expanded glass doors from the master bedroom overlooking the pool," explained Mr Murray.

"The master bedroom features an en-suite bathroom with shower area and full Western shower and bath. The living area is designed to make use of a lot



Of two designs available, one is a three-bedroom villa on a 577-square-meter plot with a 28sqm swimming pool and the other is a two-bedroom villa on a 452sqm plot.

of natural light, giving a spacious living feeling to the home," he added.

Of two designs available, one is a three-bedroom villa on a 577-square-meter plot with a 28sqm swimming pool and the other is a two-bedroom villa on a 452sqm plot. The three-bedroom units cost 12.5 million baht each and the two-bedroom 9.8 million baht a piece.

"Villa Suksan is a small community. We provide residents private facilities, such as a swimming pool, parking space and landscaped gardens. The homes have been designed for privacy so the residents can enjoy private living with the full security services we offer," Mr Murray said.

"We have attracted interest from a range of different types of buyers. We have had a lot of young couples looking for a future investment. Most queries have come from foreigners, but

we have had some Thai people showing interest as well," said Mr Murray.

"Everybody who has had a look at the villas said that they like the surroundings and the tranquility they have – and the design is based around luxury but is available at reasonable prices."

The finishing of the villas

themselves is high quality and we also an interior-furniture package, so the homes can come fully decorated at additional reasonable price," he said.

"We are very proud of this project. It's a beautiful development highlighting tranquil living. You have privacy but also the elements of a community. It's only

around 50 minutes to the airport, and around 20 minutes to the shopping malls and Phuket City.

The Nai Harn and Rawai Beaches are also close by," Mr Murray added.

The villas are available freehold or leasehold, with re-rental management available.

For more information contact Ayudhya Real Estate Brokers at 110/141 Patong Tower, Thaweewong Rd, Patong, Kathu, Phuket 83150 (Tel: 076-292265. Fax: 076-341372) or at Fisherman Way Business Center, Chao Fa East Rd, Chalong, Muang, Phuket 83100 (Tel: 076-282394, Fax: 076-282395). Email: murray@ayudhya.net Website: www.ayudhya.net or www.villa suksan.com

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Home of the Week

Rawai

Keeping it in the family

Built on a half-rai of land next to a private park, this four-bedroom home in Rawai is perfect for safe and comfortable family living.

For security, the two-story home is surrounded by a two-meter-high wall with a remotely-controlled gate providing access to a car port large enough for two cars.

Attractive granite tiles are visible upon entering the home's ground-floor living area, which comprises an open-plan dining room and living room as well as one bathroom.

The living room is slightly lower than the adjacent rooms, while the generously proportioned dining room is large enough to host a dinner for eight.

In a separate structure is a Western-style kitchen and utility area comprising a maid's quarters complete with bathroom, laundry room and small dining area.

Upstairs, there are four bedrooms and two bathrooms. One of the bedrooms could easily be converted into an office.

Much of the second story

affords impressive views of the Nakkerd Hills, including the enormous Mingmongkol Buddha image perched above.

From its balcony, the master bedroom suite has clear views of the hillside as well as a bathroom en suite with whirlpool. The upstairs is decked out with parquet flooring and each room is designed to allow natural light to flood in through large, wood-framed windows. The fourth bedroom has large built-in wooden closets with frosted-glass doors.

The bathrooms feature marble sinks and flooring, as well as designer fittings from Europe.

Insulated ceilings have been designed to regulate temperatures and there are six air-conditioning units.

The home has three-phase electricity and is wired with two True Visions cable connections and phone lines. The primary water supply is from a well and 3,500-liter storage tank, though the home is also connected to the provincial waterworks system.

The home includes sturdy and attractive fixtures such as wall coverings, but is for sale unfurnished.



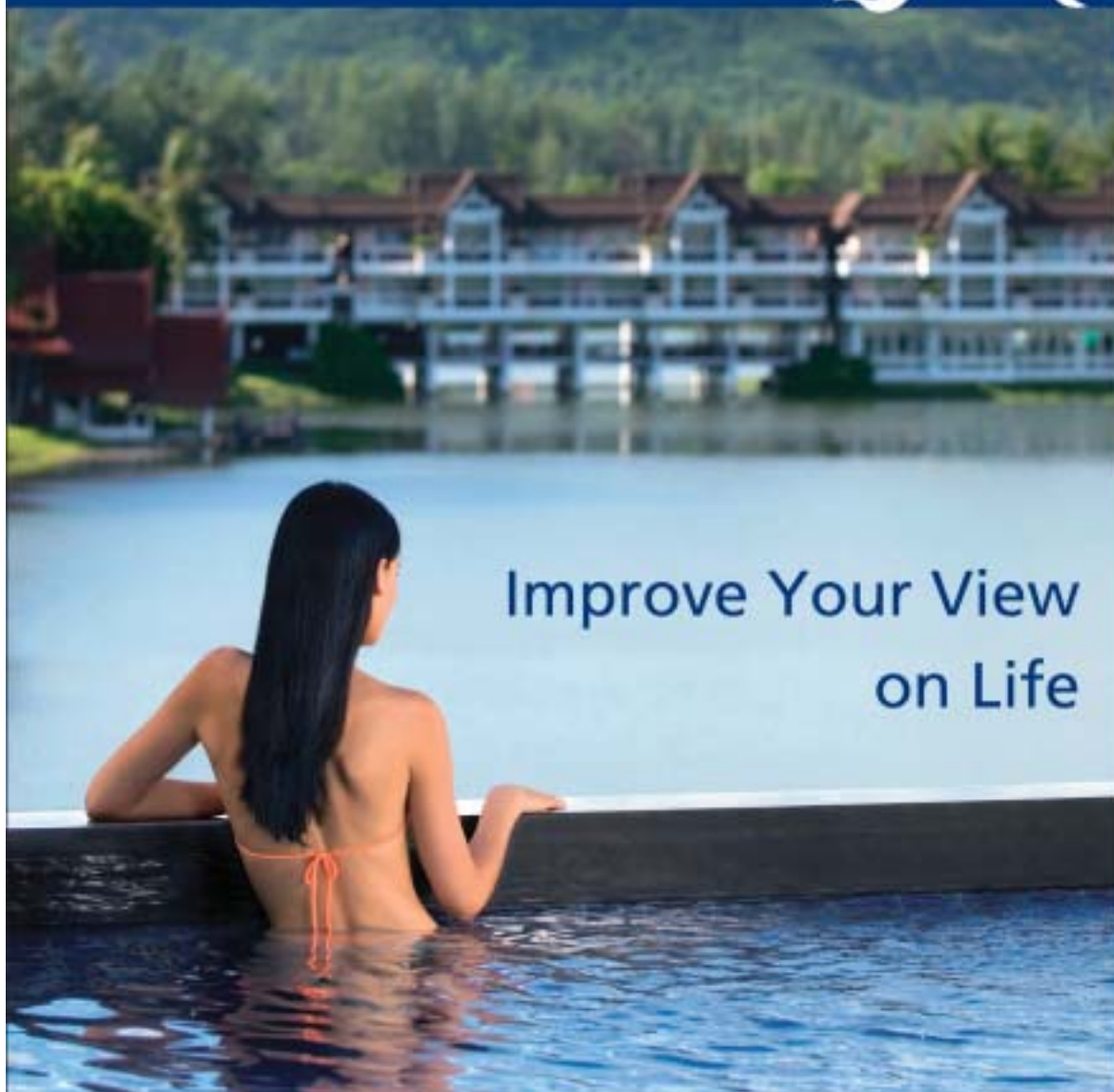
Located on Chanote-titled land near Chalong Circle, this home is available freehold for 12.5 million baht.

For further information contact Richard Lusted at Siam Real Estate. Tel: 076-288908. Email: info@siamrealestate.com Website: www.siamrealestate.com

With four bedrooms, this property in Rawai would suit a family looking to live in a peaceful area. The house comes with a Western-style kitchen and designer bathroom fittings.



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The proliferation of private-pool-villa rentals in Phuket is expanding the range of accommodation choices for both long- and short-stay visitors. Pictured is Phuket Pavilions, a villa complex in the Bang Tao area comprising 21 one-bedroom and nine three-bedroom villas.

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RENTAL MARKET COMES OF AGE

A few years ago, you could count on two hands the number of rental villas and resort condominiums-cum-resorts in Phuket. Coming into 2008, the market has developed into a significant market force and guests are benefiting from the variety of options. The expectation for the short- to medium-term future is that this type of accommodation will eat into the market share of traditional hotels.

The Phuket market has historically lagged behind Bali, its key competitor, for a number of years in terms of product offerings for short- and long-term villa rentals. While the emergence of alternative accommodation has been a shot heard around the world in most markets, only now in Asia is this type of product becoming a force to be reckoned with.

Looking at the Bangkok hotel market, there has been a huge shift in serviced-apartment projects in the past few years. Properties that were once catering mainly to long-term travelers are now competing with hotels for leisure and business guests.

International chains such as Ascott (along with its Citadines brand), Oakwood and Marriott have multiple properties in the city. Local products including Centrepoint, Emporium Suites and Lebua have created strong followings in an increasingly crowded playing field.

The trend towards lifestyle investment, along with real-estate speculators looking for ongoing rental yields and usage rights, has driven the movement towards the villa and resort-apartment rental market.

Branded residences at the Banyan Tree, Sheraton and Mövenpick, together with new products including The Yamu, Jumeirah, Shangri-La and Taj offer villas and resort apartments



PROPERTY WATCH

By Bill Barnett

for sale which will in turn be rented out to guests.

This trend does not stop at hotel projects. The successes of BYD Lofts, Aspasia, Lersuang Club, Baan Chai Nam, Sri Panwa and Katamanda provide a strong case for this type of product shift.

A number of local agents are focusing on this trend with PIP's Phuketvillarentals.com one of the pioneers. Newcomers Phuket Villas & Homes, Phuket Marbella and Shibumi offer niche rental operations for rentals of private villas and condos.

As a selling point for holidaymakers, in many cases it's a great value proposition trading up to a private pool villa or serviced condo, which has greater facilities and amenities, as well as space versus the relative confinement of a single hotel room. In an age of customization in all consumer segments, this is certainly going to be one that will continue to refine and grow in the coming years.

In terms of long-term rentals, the resale and rental markets have not displaced new products in the past but, given the development of critical mass in the marketplace, this is bound to change. The increased supply of rental products will make rental rates more standardized in the market and easier to for potential occupants to compare.

The same can be said for the resale market, which up until now has not had a large market presence because buyers have tended to favor new properties. As more products enter the fray, this will no doubt change. In the future, long-term rentals will account for a sizable presence of housing consumers.

Freedom of choice is a great thing and a more developed market means greater options for more people. It will be interesting to see how the holiday rentals affect the hotel products out there in the coming year and if they enhance or displace existing business.

Bill Barnett is managing director of C9 Hotelworks (c9hotelworks.com), a Phuket-based hotel and residential property consulting firm. With more than 20 years' experience in the region, he has played an active role in some of the island's biggest developments.

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Gardening

by Bloomin' Bert

Get the name right, guys – it's a clitoria

Ladies are a curious lot. We gentlemen will never quite understand them. Any bloke who thinks he's got his head around the female psyche is either deluded or drunk. The male of the species can never win – the rules are as simple as that. They should be really, because women wrote them.

Picture the scene: Your wife has whittled down her dress selection to just two. She has decided that you're about to be given the massive responsibility of making the final choice.

"So which one, then?" she asks. You know that you're doomed from this point on. With a resigned sigh, you suggest that the red dress would look gorgeous on her.

"So you hate the blue dress then, do you?" she responds. You then foolishly come back with something like, "No, actually, love..." and realize that trying to defend your criticism of what you now realize is her favorite blue dress is futile.

Try not to call her by the wrong name, too. That never seems to go down particularly well,



The clitoria is known for its stunning blue flowers and its relentless ability to climb on anything it can wrap itself around.

for some reason.

I'm not known for my tact with ladies or anybody else for that matter, which has turned me into a bit of a coward. Gardening types tend not to write about anything that really matters. I wish I had the gumption to say something that made people lis-

ten or that was in some way contentious or controversial.

Gardeners have been this way for centuries. They're content to sit back and watch the world go by, gratified with the fact that little they say is ever going to make a difference.

Gardeners usually give

plants predictable names. Much respect, then, to an 18th-century botanist named Linnaeus. He took one look at a new type of tropical pea plant and named it clitoria. He obviously wasn't bothered in any way at the thought of ruffling a few feathers in the gardening world – the shape of the plant's flower leaves little to the imagination.

There are about 70 species of clitoria in total, the most common in Thailand being the clitoria ternatea, or butterfly pea. Thais know it as the *anchan*. Some cunning linguists may argue that the ternatea part of the name comes from the ternate leaves that are sometimes in groups of three, as the term is often used to describe a compound leaf that is divided into three more or less equal parts, but no, it actually comes from the fact that it was first discovered on the Indonesian island of Ternate.

The closest thing we have to the butterfly pea in the West is the sweet pea. This one behaves in a similar way – it's an amazing climber. I have one of those dividing walls with a kind of concrete lattice near the top. My next-door neighbor decided to put a few butterfly peas in pots on his side, with bamboo poles for them to climb.

Over one of several beers one night, he asked me if he pushed the tops of the plants through the trellis towards my side of the wall, if I'd be willing to poke them back towards him. As it was his turn to go to the fridge, I agreed. That was a few months ago. Now I can't redirect them towards him quickly

enough. The former concrete wall is now peppered with vivid purple flowers on both sides.

They climb by clinging to whatever they can get hold of and wrap their tendrils around anything in their reach, thickening their stems until they're strong enough to climb a little further.

The petals are a kind of deep purple and the flowers are about three centimeters across with yellow stripes in the middle.

Unlike most flowers, the part of the butterfly pea flower that dusts insects with pollen is in the top, rather than underneath. Once the flowers have done their job of attracting insects to fertilize them, they wither away to be replaced a few days later by a seed container – the peas in the pod.

The seeds aren't the most complicated things to grow. You need to wait until the pods have turned a gray-brown color, then crack them open as you would do with regular pea pods and remove the seeds inside. Soak the seeds in water for about four hours before sowing them about 10cm apart in some moist potting compost. The resulting plants will be blooming in as little as six weeks.

The butterfly pea needs full sun to partial shade. In theory, it likes to be shaded from the hot afternoon sun. The plants tend to get leggy quickly, so pinching off over-adventurous tendrils helps keep them bushy.

Linnaeus has a lot to answer for. You really have to admire a gardener who is also a cunning linguist. Oh, and gents – try to get your wife's name right.

Want to know more about a plant in your garden?
Email Bloomin' Bert at: bert@bloominbert.com



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Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

LUXURY IN NAI HARN



Immaculately finished villa from a renowned Phuket developer. Class, quality, style. 3 bedrooms, all en suite, garden, pool, sun deck, auto gate and security. 42" wall-mounted LCD, home theater fixtures, fittings, linen, etc. True UBC cable, Internet. Fully furnished, professionally managed, ready to move in. All you need is the key! 14 million baht. Email for more photos. Tel: 087-2982028. Email: timothy.ross@financialadvice.com.sg

GREAT OPPORTUNITY

Due to health problems, I am offering two houses for quick sale - one on half a rai of land and another on 1 rai. Both located in a good residential area 5 mins from the Laguna resort. Buy both for 15 million baht. Call Bepy for more information. Tel: 081-8930692. Email: toto@phuket.ksc.co.th

HILL LAND FOR SALE

12 rai overlooking Loch Palm golf course, lake and entire valley with 180° view. 1.9 million baht per rai. Contact K. Noi. Tel: 087-2698492.

COCONUT ISLAND LAND



for sale. 4.5 rai, Chanote, hillside, panoramic sea view, close to beach. 14 million baht. Please call K. Bouddha for more information. Tel: 089-2900484.

CONDO FOR SALE

In Patong Tower, mountain view. There are 2 units available now. One corner unit, 75sqm, fully furnished at 5 million baht. And, middle unit, 62sqm, unfurnished, at 3.5 million baht. Also there are more unfurnished mountain-view units available for sale. For more information, please email sales@phuketislandrealestate.com

MISSION HILLS LAND

3 rai of land for sale in the heart of Mission Hills Golf Course. An ideal location for villas or small resort. Tel: 081-8912926, 081-8911826. Email: info@baanboosakorn.com

PATONG SEAVIEW CONDO

Freehold studio with pool. 2.3 million baht or lease. Tel: 081-7823231. Email: guntmit@aol.com

PATONG OCEAN VIEW CONDOMINIUMS



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HOUSE IN RAWAI

3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 8x4 swimming pool. 6.2 million. Photos available. Tel: 089-6666726. Email: lasonth@ksc.th.com

OCEANVIEW PLOTS IN BANG TAO

Beautiful view, ready to build. Large plots in a quiet location. Starting at 3 million baht. Call Tel: 086-2670157. Email: bannuaton@yahoo.com

RIVER CITY GUESTHOUSE



by Andaman Sea, Phang Nga. 7 rooms, 3 bathrooms, kitchen, 5 aircons, restaurant, car park, sat TV, Internet. Private boat slip in front of your door! Sale: 680,000 baht. Tel: 081-9796011. Email: stefanmariaschmitz@yahoo.com

NOW OR NEVER

Land and house in Chalong, exclusive residence, 2-story house, 780sqm big garden with pool. 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, Western kitchen. Includes all appliances, aircon and much more. 11.6 million baht (negotiable). Urgent sale, owner returning to homeland. Contact at Tel: 076-282542, 089-7244246. Email: pattochan007@hotmail.com

SEAVIEW, FLAT LAND - RAWAI

Access from main road. 20 x 80m (1 rai). Company available, no transfer fee. Only 15 million baht. Tel: 081-7888280. Email: mauram7@hotmail.com

TOWNHOUSES AT LOCH PALM

3 townhouses for sale: 2-bedroom, part-furnished; 2-bedroom, fully furnished; and 4-bedroom part-furnished with swimming pool. Tel: 081-9390176. Email: beaver@tsf.net

LUXURY VILLAS



Close to Laguna. Best negotiable price. Brand-new. 1,100sqm land, 4 bedrooms, pool, lotus pond & garden. Contact K. Gai. Tel: 081-7344324. For more info, please visit our website: www.phuketgreenlandvillas.com

AMAZING BEACHFRONT LAND



2 rai, Naka Yai island, 42m of beachfront, amazing white sand beach, clear water, next to Six Senses' new resort and the Jumeriah Island project. Facing west, great sunsets. 15 million baht per rai. Tel: 086-2788300. Fax: 076-383978. Email: izzy_shifale@hotmail.com

BANG TAO HOUSE

for sale. 2-story, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, big pool, automatic gate, 5 aircons, sat TV, Internet. Tel: 084-8516121. Email: phuketmat@yahoo.com www.phukethome.ws

RAWAI BAYVIEW CONDO STUDIO

27sqm or 54sqm. 360,000 baht and upward. In front of a bank and 300m from the sea. Tel: 086-9408914.

LAND AND HOUSE



Lakeside pool villa in Land & Houses Park. 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, aircon and Western kitchen with appliances. Tel: 081-8921715.

AFFORDABLE LUXURY



Immaculate villa. Private area, big lush garden, pool, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, big living room, Scandi kitchen, huge patio, fully furnished, contemporary Bali-Thai style. Living area: 450sqm. Land: 1,400sqm. Near Heroines' Monument with scenic hill view. Chanote. 14 million baht. Tel: 084-6907057.

SEA VIEW 2-BEDROOM

apartment on top floor, north Patong. 20 steps to beach. Freehold for 9.7 million. Contact for photos. Tel: 086-2765117. Email: jihshand@gmail.com

KHAO LAK LAND

for sale. 4 rai in prime location on main road to Ranong, on corner of public road, access to Pak Wib Beach. 8 million baht for quick sale. Tel: 081-6065772.



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20 MINUTES FROM PHUKET INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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AGENTS WELCOME

Property Gazette

BEAUTIFUL NAI YANG LAND



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MODERN UNIQUE RESIDENCE

An unusual modern property with a variety of uses. Includes 3 suites and swimming pool. 9.5 million baht. Tel: 081-7888280. Email: mauram7@hotmail.com

HOUSE FOR SALE

Nanai villa, Patong. Exclusive villa, Thai-style, high standard, fully furnished, swimming pool, 200sqm living area, 2 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms. Address: 154/13 Nanai Rd. 16 million baht. Tel: 083-1767676.

KAMALA HOUSE: ITS A MINX!



1,100sq ft, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms (1 en suite), fitted kitchen, huge terrace and carport on 4,300sq ft of private land in gated community with clubhouse & pool. 10-minute walk to beach, 9km to Patong, 30 minutes to airport. 7.9 million baht, freehold. Tel: 852-98169116. Email: szivhk@yahoo.com

RAWAI HOMES WITH POOL

93sqm or 186sqm. 1.5 million baht and up. 250m from the sea. Tel: 086-9408914. Email: chotip07@yahoo.com

BIG TOWNHOUSE

in Rawai. 9 Rooms: 180sqm. Garden: 70 sqm. Balcony: 50 sqm. Aircon. 2.5 million baht. Tel: 084-4454614.

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RAWAI POOL VILLA

400sqm land, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 400m to the beach. Price: 7 million baht. Tel: 084-0579266. Email: chotip07@yahoo.com

POOL VILLA IN NAI HARN

3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, full aircon. 4.9 million baht. Tel: 076-288047, 081-8941660. Email: cottrell@loxinfo.co.th

INVESTMENT PROPERTY

Patong Beach, run as 5-star hotel, 100m to the beach. Income guarantee from the developer. Sales contract at 300,000 baht. For more info please contact K. Oi. Tel: 045-30272542. Email: oi1@rocketmail.com

EXCLUSIVE RESIDENCE

A beautiful 3-bedroom villa in an exclusive area on Kata Hill. Sea view, pool, etc. All set in a beautiful landscaped garden. Includes all furniture. 18 million baht. Tel: 081-7888280. Email: mauram7@hotmail.com

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150rai, Chanote, panoramic sea view. From 2.3 million baht per rai. Contact for more information. Tel: 089-7727012. Email: se_rim@hotmail.com

KARON LAND FOR SALE



15 million baht per rai, Chanote, hillside, panoramic sea view, quiet area. Tel: 089-7727012. Email: se_rim@hotmail.com

CHEAP PLOT

Good size at 340sqm. 15m frontage road, easy access to airport, Phuket City and beaches. Only 1.2 million baht. Call Tel: 087-3863388. Email: lebijouvillas@yahoo.com

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FAMILY HOUSE



Thai-contemporary, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, study, swimming pool, 3x6m small garden, full aircon, Western kitchen. Ideal location, 1.2km from Bang Tao Beach and close to the new Tesco-Lotus in Bang Tao. 6.9 million baht. Tel: 087-3863388. Email: shanya.arman@gmail.com

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FOR SALE

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Kata Ocean View CONDOMINIUM From 4.7 M

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Property Gazette

4.2-MILLION BAHT BARGAIN RAWAI



2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, open-plan living room, large garden. Tel: 084-8446476. Email: dildalarge@yahoo.co.uk

A BIGGER SPLASH



This new mountain-view Bali-style home has it all, 3 beds en suite, big living room with open-plan western kitchen, central aircon, separate guest suite, double parking. All surrounding a huge 62sqm sculptured ceramic pool. The 200sqm plot is set within a small gated resort. Lots of extra land available at only 3,250 baht/sqm. Mountain side location near Wat Chalong. A Bangkok company is included in the 6.5 million baht. Contact at Tel: 086-5930986 for more information.

HOUSE FOR SALE

Situated in desirable Choafa Thani, this 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom (2 en suite) house with living room, kitchen/dining, study, garage and laundry room is in a secure compound. Backs onto water and has mature garden. ADSL and UBC installed. Price: 7 million baht, negotiable. Tel: 084-8439579. Email: bimvool@aol.com

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Hillside, 15m pool, shady garden. Unique! Private! Nice! Call Tel: 076-388236, 089-7275407. Email: cosmo campbell@yahoo.com For further details, please see our website at www.villa-sale-phuket.com

2 SEA VIEWS

4 rai spectacular roadside highland with views of Phang Nga Bay and Phuket Bay, 5 mins Mission Hills, Ao Po. Perfect for large private house, hotel or condos. Nor Sor 3 Gor. 20 million baht. Tel: 087-2675376. Email: anitawhooley@gmail.com

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- * Laundry room
- * Dining room with one dining table
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1.5 rai house lots near airport and Mission Hills golf course. Chanote, underground electric. 1.06 million baht, full price! Only 2 left! Contact Chris Fisher at Tel: 086-9421930.

VILLA WITH POOL

Land and House park, 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, European kitchen. 6.9 million baht. Tel: 081-0918908. Email: stein_dokset@hotmail.com

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- ◆ 8 rooms apartment on 2, 3, 4 floor.
- ◆ Chanote title, electricity

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Spacious, detached house on 260sqm of land in quiet estate with swimming pool and 24hr security. Centrally located in Chalong, within minutes of Phuket City, shopping centers and beaches. 2-3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, Western-style kitchen, large living room, all fully furnished. Quick sale, price only 2.95 million baht! You will not find anything better under 4 million. Contact K. Harry. Tel: 089-6639669. Email: andrekant@hotmail.com

HOUSE FOR SALE

2-story, 4-bedroom house in Chalong. Western kitchen, aircon, quiet area. 3.4 million baht. Tel: 081-9795755.

THAMAPRAO LAND LOTS

7, 500 baht/sq wah. 100sq wah, ready to build on. 1km from mission hills. Tel: 084-0526400, 081-4669597. Email: narin@phuketvillage.se

SEA VIEW LUXURY



freehold condominium, 2 bedrooms, 167sqm. 14th floor, corner apartment with panoramic sea views of Karon Beach from all rooms. 14.5 million baht. Call Jeremy at Phuket Landsearch. Tel: 081-8916174.

SEAVIEW POOL HOUSE

in Rawai, 3 bedrooms. 12.5 million baht. Contact for pictures and info. Call Tel: 085-7839062. Email: docucolumns@hotmail.com

BAN SAKHO LANDLOTS

10, 000 baht/sq wah. 100sq wah, ready to build. 2 km from Nai Thon Beach. Tel: 084-0526400, 081-4669597. Email: narin@phuketvillage.se

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Nine-rai private island for sale. Ten-minute boat ride from Phuket/Koh Siray. White sand beach, lush, perfect little getaway! 15 million baht. Tel: 085-8807954. Email: lukeremmers@yahoo.com

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in Soi Naya, Nai Harn. 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hot water, living room, kitchen, 3 aircons, 2 telephones, cable TV, furniture, garden, 60sq wah. Price: 2.7 million baht. Call Tel: 089-4716904, 085-7864509.

RAWAI 2-STORY HOUSE

160sqm, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Sell for 1.6 million. 350 meters from sea. Call Tel: 086-9408914. Email: chotip07@yahoo.com

BALI BEACHFRONT

or mountain house, 4, 990 euros, 10 year/freehold 29, 990 euros. Krystal Court Penang, 158sqm townhouse, 99, 990 euros.

LAND FOR SALE

Kathu, next to Loch Palm golf course. Chanote, 3 plots-1,260, 1,335, 1,557sqm. Each plot sold with company if required. Tel: 080-1435178. Email: kathulang@gmail.com

RAWAI-NAI HARN



Spacious new pool villa, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, hi-spec, good road, private. 10.5 million baht. Tel: 081-4751404. Email: chris_carlier@yahoo.com

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Near Laguna Phuket - good for residential projects 22 Rais (Nor Sor Sam Kor) close to mainroad, water & electricity access. THB 7 ML per rai and can buy half plot. No need to fill soil! Tel: 081-5399269. Email: talayjan@yahoo.com

LAND FOR SALE

22 rai (Nor Sor Sam Kor) near Mission Hills Golf Club and hotels / residential area road & utilities access. Owner has done project lay out easy to start. THB 2.5 ML per rai. Tel: 081-5399269. Email: talayjan@yahoo.com

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Property Gazette

Properties For Rent

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BUNGALOW FOR RENT

2-bedroom bungalow for rent in Cheng Talay, short or long-term with maid service available. Tel: 081-8912926, 081-8911826. Email: info@baanboosakorn.com

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CONDOS FOR RENT

in Rawai, renovated, aircon, TV. Call Tel: 086-9456650. Or Email: phuketcomfortcondos@hotmail.com

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Great location near Lotus. 3 stories, 10mx15m, 8 parking spaces in front. Showroom, 4 offices, 4 bedrooms, 3 toilets, 5 aircons. 70,000 baht per month. Tel: 089-1951394, 081-9583135. Email: astec99@yahoo.com

EXCLUSIVE RENTAL
Close to BIS school, 24hr security, 5 bedrooms, 2 parking spaces, pool, maid's room, family and child friendly. Available now. Tel: 081-4077403.

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2 bedrooms, UBC, parking, garden 20,000 baht/month. Tel: 084-0579266. Email: chotip07@yahoo.com

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2 bedrooms, kitchen, living room, dining room, laundry room, fully furnished, aircon in every room, carpark, swimming pool (shared), tropical garden. High-speed Internet and UBC satellite TV included. 25,000 baht per month, minimum 6 months. Tel: 087-1057320. Email: stefan@phuketit.co.th For details, see our website at www.chalongparadise.com

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4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, UBC, ADSL, private pool. Rent: 45,000 baht per month. Tel: 084-0579266. Email: chotip07@yahoo.com

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Living room, 2 bedrooms, 2 kitchens, 2 bathrooms, roof, terrace, 2 aircons, little garden, ADSL, telephone. Loch Palm Club. Long-term: 20,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-202725, 081-8916632.

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3-door, 1994 model, automatic, red. Contact K. Mon. Tel: 076-288561, 089-8755477. Email: k_sripanya@yahoo.com

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