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BABY CHANG

"Mr New Year", the first elephant born in Phuket for five years, is drawing crowds at Kinnaree Elephant Safari Trekking. See page 2.

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National park chief wants out

By Atchaa Khamlo

SAKOO: Charuay Inchan, the beleaguered chief of Sirinath Marine National Park, has written to National Park Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department Director Upai Wayupat requesting a transfer to another post.

The move ended a three-day protest by some 100 local residents who roadblocked the entrance to the park and demanded the abolition of increased park fees, the resignation of Mr Charuay, and free entry for children on the upcoming Children's Day.

The protesters called off their campaign at 4 pm on January 6 and the park is now open as usual.

Increased park entrance fees, which the protesters claimed were keeping tourists away and hurting their businesses, will now be reduced and entrance to the park will be free for children on Children's Day.

Mr Charuay told the Gazette that the new prices will take effect only after the director of the National Park Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department gives the order, which is expected to come no later than January 9, the day before Children's Day. The present fee structure will apply until that time.

The settlement came after negotiations between the protesters, Mr Charuay and Saran Chaisa-ard, head of Environment

Conservation Office Division 5 and representing Mr Upai.

The additional fees that prompted the protesters' campaign took effect about two months ago. They have made access to the park much more expensive – prohibitively so for many tourists who used to visit the park regularly.

The park previously charged 40 baht per vehicle, regardless of the number of passengers. However, under the new fee structure, vehicle access was still 40 baht, but there was an additional fee for each passenger: 40 baht per adult and 20 baht per child for Thai nationals.

Now, the additional fees will be reduced to 20 baht for Thai adults and 10 baht for Thai children, with variable fees for vehicles.

Fees for foreigners will remain the same, at 200 baht per adult and 100 baht per child. However, foreigners presenting a work permit will be allowed in at the Thai rate.

The new prices had sparked complaints from tourists, whose numbers dropped sharply after the new policy took effect and kept the park quiet over the recent long holiday period.

Some of the protesters were among the group of vendors operating businesses inside the park who last November refused orders from the park to remove their operations from the Nai Yang beachfront and relocate



Charuay Inchan, chief of Sirinath Marine National Park, speaking to reporters in November following protests against his decision to clear food vendors from the Nai Yang beachfront.

to a food center built for them further inland.

Park chief Mr Charuay had held talks with the villagers, but was unsuccessful in trying to persuade them to end the blockade.

The protesters said Mr Charuay earlier told them the entrance fee structure was beyond his control because he was bound to abide by rules and regulations issued by the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department.

Mr Charuay explained that the new fees were earmarked for improving the national park by cleaning the

beach, building toilets and protecting coral reefs. The protesters had caused serious problems at the park, prompting the climbdown and his subsequent transfer request.

Speaking about his decision to request the transfer, Mr Charuay told the Gazette he had already sent his request to the director and was awaiting a decision.

Regarding free entry to the park on Children's Day, he said that it was standard practice in Thailand to grant such concessions and there would be no problem doing so in this case.

Thailand Open returns

By Dan Ogunshakin

After a three-season absence, the Thailand Open is to return to the Asian Tour calendar and to Phuket. The 2009 tournament will be staged at the Laguna Phuket Golf Club from March 5 to 8.

The tournament, first held in 1965, was a regular fixture on

the Asian Tour until 2005, when a lack of sponsorship caused the competition to be placed on hold. However, the signing of a memorandum of understanding last year between the Thailand Golf Association and World Sport Group has breathed new life into the event.

With a successful track record of hosting international

class events, Laguna Phuket is understandably excited about the prospects of staging another major sporting competition.

Tim Haddon, Director of Golf at Laguna Phuket Golf Club said, "This event will generate a great deal of fantastic media exposure for Phuket both internationally and nationally. We will have days of live television coverage and we are very excited to have this event here," he concluded.





Kids who took part in Children's Day activities at Patong Beach last year received a variety of gifts. Some were even lucky enough to get bicycles.

Kids to enjoy free activities for annual Children's Day

PHUKET: This year's Children's Day falls on January 10, when fun activities for the whole family will be taking place all around the island.

At the Phuket Deep Sea Port in tambon Wichit, the Royal Thai Navy Third Fleet will welcome the public aboard the vessels Chao Phraya and the Songkhla. There will also be helicopter and parachuting displays.

Around Sri Phuwannart Park, in front of Ban Laem Chan Public Health Center, also in Wichit, there will be a number of activities taking place between 8.30 am and noon. These will include drawing and collage competitions, a poetry-writing contest, games for prizes and various performances from local schoolchildren.

Phuket Municipality has arranged a whole host of activities to take place at the Municipal Youth Health Center at Saphan Hin. Local schools and parents' associations will have their own tents, where presents, sweets, ice cream and fruit will be handed out.

There will also be a radio-controlled plane and car display, a traffic-control demonstration, a dog show, an exhibition of marine life, stage performances from local school children, an artillery display by the Royal Thai Navy Third Fleet, balloon animals and a wide variety of games and other fun activities.

Phuket Technology College will be holding hair cutting, braiding, bead-threading and brooch-making demonstrations.

In Kathu, Prince of Songkhla University will be hosting fun activities and giving out food.

Radio Thailand will be arranging activities in conjunction with Rassada Municipality.

Holiday death toll down 50%

By Atchaa Khamlo

PHUKET CITY: The province has declared its "Seven Days of Danger" road safety campaign a success, with just three dead and a significant drop in the number of accidents and injuries compared to last year.

Vice Governor Smith Palawatwichai led a press conference on Monday to release the final figures at Phuket Provincial Hall.

According to statistics tallied by the Road Safety Center set up by the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM-Phuket), there were a total of 58 road accidents over the period. These resulted in three deaths and 58 injuries requiring admittance to a hospital.

Overall, the number of accidents recorded was down 19.5% year-on-year, while the number of injured people requiring admittance to a hospital was down 23.7%.

The majority of accidents were in Muang District (43), followed by Thalung (10) and Kathu

(5). Nearly 80% of the accidents involved motorbikes, with drunk driving a leading risk factor, Vice Governor Smith said.

Santharn Sanguan-ngarm, head of the Kusoldharm Foundation that provides emergency rescue services for most of the island, attributed the reductions to good co-operation among all the agencies and organizations involved and the many road checkpoints set up around the island.

According to Kusoldharm's independent statistics, there were 62 accidents. Of these, car-on-motorbike accidents accounted for the majority (24), followed by motorbikes crashing or falling on their own (22), motorbike-on-motorbike collisions (15) and cars going off the road, overturning or crashing into utility poles or other barriers (5).

Three pedestrians were hit, one by a car and two by motorbikes.

The final DDPM-Phuket figures for the December 30 to January 5 period showed that of 59,763 people inspected at checkpoints 6,414 were found in viola-

tion of traffic law.

Of these, the most common offense was driving without a license (2,872), followed by failure to wear a crash helmet (1,239 cases), not wearing a seatbelt (1,170) and operating unsafe vehicles (427 cases).

Of about 12,500 people checked for driving under the influence of alcohol, 807 were charged. Not a single case of speeding was recorded throughout the entire period in Phuket.

Regionally, there were eight deaths reported over the period in the five Andaman Coast provinces, down 42.9% year-on-year. The most were in Trang (4), followed by Phuket (3) and Phang Nga (1). The total number of accidents (235) and injuries (306) were down 18.8% and 23.2% respectively, year-on-year.

Nationally, 367 people were killed and 4,107 others injured in 3,824 road accidents.

Interior Minister Chaovarat Chanweerakul said the death toll was lower than last year, when 401 people were killed in 4,475 accidents.

Sea claims German tourist, Thais cheat death

By Daniel Waites

RAWAI: An elderly German tourist went into shock and died in the sea off Koh Racha on January 4. The deceased, identified as 69-year-old Harald Winfrid Petpalkau, was swimming in the sea with friends when the tragedy occurred. Rescue workers could find no traces of external injury.

Mr Petpalkau's remains were delivered to Vachira Hospital Phuket, where doctors were not immediately able to confirm if drowning was the cause of death.

Chalong Police Inspector Chana Sitthimat told the *Gazette* that Mr Petpalkau suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure and other cardiac problems and one of these may have caused him to go into circulatory shock.

However, Mr Petpalkau's wife told police she suspected that her husband's death was caused by a case of cramp, Lt Col Chana Sitthimat said.

Three days earlier, a New Year family holiday almost ended in tragedy when three Thai tourists nearly drowned off Nai Harn Beach on New Year's Day.

At around 2 pm Kraisorn Petchkong, 32, his niece Krisana Petchkong, 12, and Metika Sintuwongsanon, 12, were playing in the water when two large waves crashed over them, the undertow dragging them out to sea. All three were saved following the heroic efforts of beach guards, foreign tourists and local people, who immediately rushed into the water and were able to rescue all three.

James Eden, a 33-year-old tourist from London, said he was swimming in the sea with a friend, Liam LeRoux, 29, when they heard screaming.

"We swam towards the noise and found two teenage Thai girls drowning in a rip tide. One was completely lifeless. The other still had a bit of strength left and

was bravely clinging onto her friend," he said.

James and Liam tried to pull them to safety as a group, but the current was too strong so they separated, each taking one of the girls. "We were still struggling to make progress and were getting tired from the effort of swimming while keeping (the girls') heads above water. We were very grateful when help arrived in the form of a number of guys with surf boards," he said.

"I felt privileged to be in a position to help - it is certainly the best thing I've ever done in my life," he added.

The three victims were sent to Vachira Hospital and discharged the following day without any serious injuries.

Rawai deputy mayor Theeraphong Thaodaeng said that the municipality had arranged for a six-member beach guard to work at Nai Harn over the busy holiday period.

"Because it's not monsoon season now, it's not necessary to put red flags at the edge of the beach," he said.

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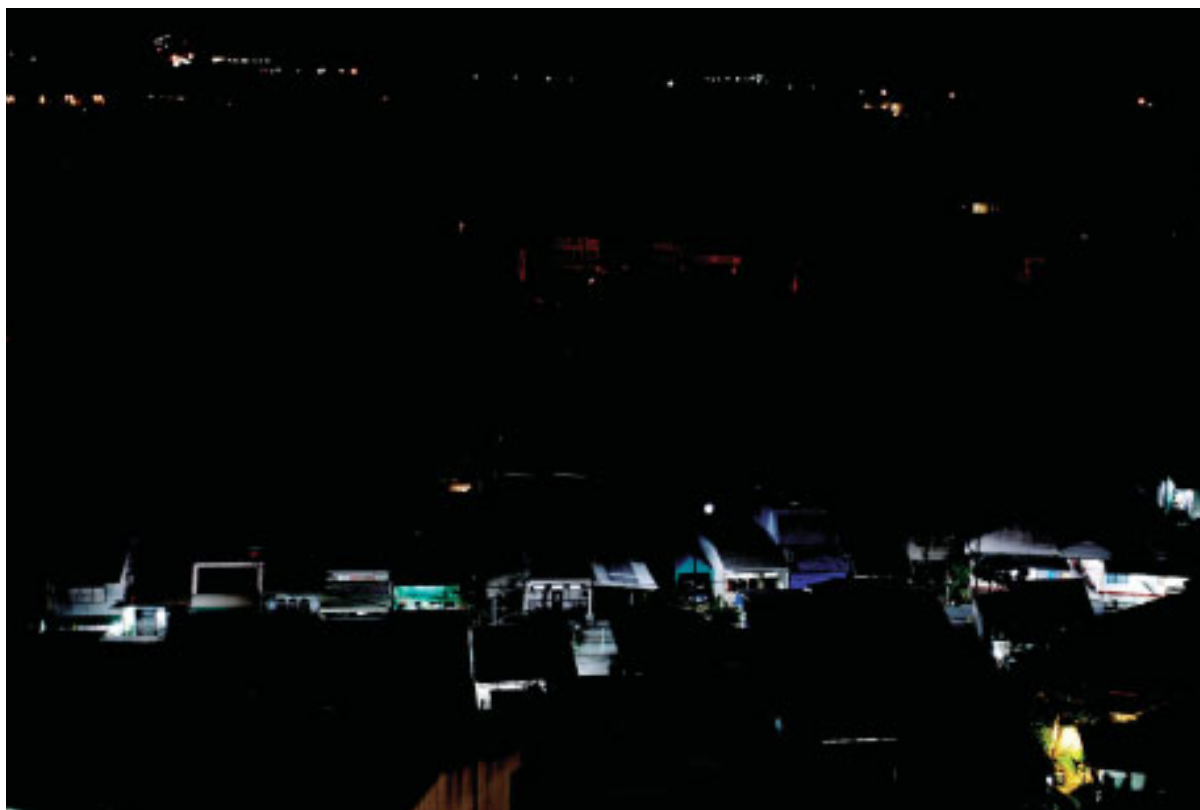
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Blackout plunges Phuket into darkness



A RARE SIGHT: Phuket City as seen from the roof of the Phuket Island Pavilion Hotel on Mae Luan Road at around 9 pm during the blackout on December 30. Photo by Sakhorn Saengtongsamarnsin.

PHUKET: On December 30, Phuket was plunged into darkness for more than two hours, from 6.30 pm until nearly 9 pm. Some parts of the island were without electricity until around 11 pm due to problems in restoring power from the South Electric Power System Controlling Center in Trang.

Somchai Chaironipat, an engineer speaking on behalf of

the center, said that a transformer malfunction had occurred, delaying the restoration of power to Krabi, Phang Nga, Trang and Phuket.

"We were already working on a plan to improve the electricity supply in the southwest region, including an upgrade of the power system in the area from Krabi to Phang Nga," he

told the *Gazette*. Mr Somchai added that plans were in place to install a new transformer at Ratchaprapa Dam, which could supply Phuket with electricity for the next 10 years. "However, we are now focusing all our efforts on resolving the current problem to ensure that such a situation does not happen again," he said.

-Atchaa Khamlo

Fire safety crackdown ordered

PHUKET CITY: In the wake of the deadly Santika nightclub blaze that claimed 64 lives in Bangkok, Phuket Governor Preecha Ruangjan has ordered stricter enforcement of fire safety regulations at entertainment venues across the island.

The measures are designed to pre-empt a similar tragedy occurring in Phuket, not only in terms of loss of life and property damage, but also because of the impact such a tragedy would have on the island's tourism industry, Governor Preecha said.

"After the fires in Bangkok I ordered administrators and re-

lated agencies to get out and conduct thorough inspections of entertainment venues, especially in terms of having adequate emergency exits and firefighting equipment," he said.

The inspections will be conducted both day and night for comparative purposes and owners will then be informed about any changes they need to make to bring their venues into compliance.

Owners who fail to comply will face prosecution, he said.

This does not apply to just nightclubs, but also to other large public buildings including hotels,

resorts and factories, which will also be subject to inspection, Governor Preecha added.

An initial round of inspections, carried out under the direction of the Muang and Kathu districts chiefs, found a number of breaches of fire safety regulations, including exits that were too narrow and a lack of firefighting equipment.

Owners would be given a short period of time to comply before facing legal action, he said.

Asked about nightspots staying open past authorized times, he said any owners found guilty of this will face prosecution.

Baby elephant born in Rawai brings hope



HAPPY FAMILY: Mother, child and mahout pose for a photo.

By Tipwarintron Tanaakarachod

for the camp, he said.

RAWAI: A baby elephant born on Sunday January 4 is attracting hundreds of visitors and is being seen as an omen of good fortune and improved prosperity for the island's struggling tourism industry in the new year.

Not long after its birth, the healthy 60-kilogram male calf was given the name *Plai Pimai*, meaning "Mr New Year", by his owners at the Kinnaree Elephant Safari Trekking camp in Rawai Village 2.

Kinnaree Elephant Trekking director Paichet "Apu" Kompaier said, "*Plai Pimai* has brought a lot of happiness to us and we will take care of him as if he were our own child."

Plai Pimai, the first elephant born in Phuket in five years, is also a great achievement

Although still exhausted from the delivery following 21 months of gestation, *Plai Pimai's* 12-year-old mother *Phang Milk* is already very protective of the calf, which sleeps beneath her just like a human child would its own mother.

Phang Milk is obviously happy having her first calf around, Mr Paichet said.

Mr Paichet hopes the cute calf will spark greater interest in elephant trekking on the island and help support the 23 mahouts employed at the trekking camp.

Kinnaree Elephant Trekking's managing director Jaroon Thaojun said business was down this high season, from about 400 customers a day to 300 on average, because of the political instability and global economic problems.

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Access all areas?

With uneven pavements, high curbs and obstacles such as telegraph poles blocking the sidewalks, it's no surprise that wheelchair users are a rare sight on the streets of Phuket. To compound the issue, many public buildings remain difficult for wheelchair users to access, and accessible public toilets are few and far between. But while these issues mean some Thai disabled people are virtually confined to their homes, others are able to get out and make a living, despite the difficulties. And there are indeed wheelchair-bound tourists coming here to enjoy the island's charms. Why isn't Phuket more wheelchair accessible? And how do the problems above affect disabled residents and tourists alike? The *Gazette's* Dan Waites and Atchaa Khamlo report.

According to the Phuket Society of Disabled Persons (PSDP), there are currently 2,077 registered disabled people in Phuket, though it estimates that 5% of the total number of disabled people have not registered because their relatives have not taken them to do so and they are unable to go by themselves. Of the total, there are around 100 wheelchair users, 20 of whom have electrically powered vehicles. The majority have

people at home to assist them with relatively few living independently, according to the PSDP.

Nalinee Bunthawadchai, 38, has been working as a finance officer at Vachira Hospital Phuket for eight years. She lost her hand in a bus crash in 1985 and five years later became confined to a wheelchair, following a motoring accident in 1990 that left her paralysed from the waist down.

Despite what she has been

through, Nalinee says, "I feel lucky I have so many friends and family always around helping me – for example, my family take me to work every day."

When asked what difficulties she faces as a wheelchair user, she complains that many government buildings such as municipal offices and police stations have no ramp or elevator, and she often needs someone to lift her up steps.

She adds, "When I want to go somewhere I have to ensure



Nalinee Bunthawadchai at work at Vachira Hospital where she has been for eight years now.

there'll be someone able to come along and help me, which means I'm always losing my chance to go places."

As the head of the PSDP, Sawai Promjinda knows more than most about the problems faced by wheelchair users on the island.

He says that the problem stems from the fact that while Thai law has all the necessary provisions in place to ensure disabled access to the public sphere, the regulations are not enforced.

"Most new buildings don't follow the rules," he says, adding that he fights constantly to have the authorities make public government buildings more

accessible.

He says that when government buildings are fitted with ramps or other measures supposed to improve accessibility, they're often not done properly, with the slope being too steep or without safety rails, for example.

He stresses how little he is listened to and cites numerous examples of buildings where accessibility regulations aren't being adhered to.

In fact, the right of disabled people to access public facilities and to receive other assistance from the State, as well as the State's duty to ensure a good quality of life for the disabled, are enshrined in the Constitution of

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the Kingdom of Thailand. The Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act of 1991 provides for the right of the disabled to receive medical treatment, rehabilitation and employment support, while the Ministry of Interior (MoI) Building Regulation of 2005 states that all new government buildings containing a certain amount of space devoted to public use, as well as certain privately owned buildings accessible to the public, such as stadiums, convention centers, department stores and hotels, have to comply with various design specifications intended to allow access for disabled persons.

Kert Stavorn is a partner at Siam Legal, a Thai firm that specialises in property law, among other areas.

He argues that despite the compulsory nature of the Ministry of Interior Building Regulation, it does not provide for penalty clauses in the event of non-compliance.

"Its regulatory force is limited only to requiring developers to incorporate the required specifications into the building plan for purposes of the Building Permit.

No post-construction exami-

nation or investigation is conducted to ensure compliance. Thus, the force of this Regulation's implementation is ineffective if not totally inexistent," he says.

Consequently, most developers in Thailand fail to comply with accessibility regulations, Kert says, although he adds that property development in Thailand is mostly concentrated on the construction of condominium buildings, which include two to three buildings in one project, and that as long as each building does not exceed 2000 square meters, the development is excluded from the 2005 MoI Building Regulation.

Despite what might seem like a daunting travel environment, many wheelchair-bound tourists do visit Phuket, and those that the *Gazette* spoke to were generally positive about their experience.

The major international hotel chains tend to understand the need for accessibility standards better than local developers.

One wheelchair user interviewed by the *Gazette* spent six weeks on the island every year from 2003 to 2006, staying at the Dusit Thani, the Hilton, Le Me-

ridian and Friendship Beach, reporting that every hotel had wheel-in showers and perfectly accessible rooms.

Walt Balenovich, a wheelchair user with polio-induced paralysis who describes himself as "North America's Disabled Adventurer" stayed at the YHA backpackers' hostel in Chalong in 2002.

He was pleased to report he was able to get around the island because "a guy whose sister worked there drove me around everywhere, at first as a taxi, then for free".

He says that one thing that could make things easier is "a modern bus with wheelchair access, stopping at all the beaches and towns like Chalong, even if only running a few times a day".

Walt says that the only places he would have liked to visit but couldn't were temples.

Englishman Simon Luttrell decided to take accessibility issues seriously when he built his hotel, the Phuket Airport Hotel, in 2006.

"I realised, well hang on, it's not going to cost us anything extra to make it accessible for people in wheelchairs if we do it now," he says. Having obtained the American Disability Association (ADA)'s guidelines on accessible buildings, he set about building what he believes is Thailand's only hotel in which every room is accessible to wheelchair users.

Many of the features that make the Phuket Airport Hotel wheelchair accessible are down to common sense - doorways wide enough for wheelchair access, sliding doors, no large steps, and lights activated by pull strings hanging low enough for wheelchair users to reach.

However, building the hotel according to the ADA's specifications created some problems Simon had not foreseen.

Before the builders poured the concrete for the first bath-



Simon Luttrell at the Phuket Airport Hotel, which he believes may be the only hotel in Thailand in which every room is fully wheelchair accessible.

room floor, Simon laid out the positions of the bathroom furniture himself, since the guidelines meant the basin, the shower and the toilet needed to be in specific positions.

"The first problem I met was that when they saw where the toilet was going to be located, they said 'you can't do that, it's unlucky for a toilet to face west', which threw me completely."

Simon had to have a Buddhist monk adjudicate over the issue, who decided that the inauspicious configuration could be permitted.

When the builders had twice laid the concrete with the furniture in slightly different places from those he had specified, Simon realised that he would have to show the builders exactly why the positioning needed to be so exact.

He tried to do so with the aid of a wheelchair, but "when I sat in the wheelchair they all shouted and said that was extremely unlucky and I'd be disabled if I continued to sit in it".

As someone who has had much contact with disabled tourists in Phuket over the years, Simon has some ideas about

what could be done to improve the situation.

One problem is that tourists don't know in advance where they are going to be able to go and where there will be obstacles.

"A good idea would be to produce a tourist map for wheelchair users to show where there is access, where there are ramps," he says.

He summarises the situation, saying, "Phuket could be a great place for disabled people if there were a little effort on the part of hotels and local government in terms of pavement construction, street furniture, lights, everything like that. A little bit of thought before they were placed in position would be a great help to people in wheelchairs."

For more information on the Phuket Airport Hotel, visit www.phuketairporthotel.com. E: phuketairporthotel@yahoo.com. T: 076-328451. M: 085-1586322.

For more information on the American Disability Association's accessibility guidelines visit www.ada.gov.



Sawai Promjinda, chairman of the Phuket Society of Disabled Persons, at his office in Phuket City.

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Extravaganza coming



PHUKET CITY: Chinese New Year celebrations will be combined with the annual Old Phuket Town festival to be held in Phuket City, with three nights of fun starting on January 31.

Activities will take place at Queen Sirikit Public Park and along Thalang and Krabi roads and Soi Rommanee, in the heart of Old Phuket Town.

Jointly organized by Phuket City Municipality and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), this year's event promises to be a spectacular cultural affair.

Cultural shows staged as

part of the Chinese New Year celebrations will reflect the important social and cultural links between Phuket and China, while the Old Phuket Town festival will once again feature traditional local culture, history, food and lifestyle.

The TAT will bring in performers from mainland China for participants to appreciate and to foster ties, especially with Phuket City's sister city of Yantai, in China's Shandong province.

Colorful street processions and vibrant celebrations will fill the streets of Old Phuket Town,

which will be closed to motor traffic and open only to pedestrians on festival nights.

The TAT will invite 179 performers from seven Chinese provinces to put on cultural performances like the dragon and lion parade and Chinese opera.

Billed as the "China Town Yaowarat Chinese New Year Festival", the event will run from January 23 to February 4 and include activities in Nakhon Sawan, Songkhla, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Ratchasima, Chonburi and Bangkok as well as Phuket.

Source: NBT

Free meditation courses in January

PHUKET CITY: Free Middle Way meditation instruction sessions will take place on January 11 and 25.

The sitting meditation session for beginners, conducted in English and free to all, will take place from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm.

An introduction to Buddhism session, open to those who register for the course, will follow after a 15-minute break.

The January sessions are as follows:

January 11: The Lord Buddha

January 25: The Noble Eight-Fold Path

The sessions will take place at the Phuket Meditation Center. To get to the center from Central Festival Phuket, head south on the bypass road and turn left into Wirat Hongyok Road at the first set of traffic lights at the sign to Wat Naka.

Make a U-turn when you see the park on your right about one kilometer past the temple, then take the next left into Soi 7 and turn left again into Soi 7/2.

For more information contact Zai (Tel: 083-9688717) or visit the website: www.meditationthai.org.

Queer News

Drug disco monk defrocked

NAKHON SRI THAMMARAT: In an interesting story that until now has not been reported in the English language press, a monk was arrested on November 17 after police discovered he had converted his cell at the temple into a mini disco and was having drug parties.

After receiving a tip off that a monk at Wat Mukhathara, in Tambon Pak Nakhon, Muang District, was using drugs in his cell, plainclothed police went to investigate.

At the temple the officers heard music and loud chatting coming from one of the cells. When they got close, they could smell cigarette smoke and krathom (a prohibited indigenous plant with a mild stimulant effect) wafting from under the door.

The officers knocked on the door. When the monk opened it, they saw five youths all in a state of advanced inebriation. The youths tried to make a dash for the exit, but were all collared by the officers. Police released the names of the monk and two laymen as Phra Chokdee Sukkaow, 29, Jakraphan Laichaphit, 21, and Kittichai Bualuang, 23.

Two other youths were also arrested, but as they were under 18, their names were not released. According to police, Phra

Chokdee's cell was decorated "like a discotheque", but they did not elaborate on the set up.

Police took Phra Chokdee to the temple abbot to be defrocked and contacted the parents and guardians of the youths, telling them to come and pick them up. After the defrocking, Phra Chokdee – or just Mr Chokdee as he is now known – was taken to Nakhon Sri Thammarat Provincial Police Station.

There he complained bitterly to Deputy Commander Col Somchai Uamthong that he should not have been defrocked as he had committed only pahjit-tee (a minor offence under the rules of the Buddhist Sangha), not pahrahchik (a grave offence).

The colonel, however, had little time for Mr Chokdee's protestations, asking of him why he wanted to stay in the monkhood when he was only bringing the religion into disrepute. Col Somchai added that many undisciplined monks like Mr Chokdee had already been defrocked, including abbots, and that he should accept his fate graciously.

He was then sent down to the cells to wait to be charged with possession and use of a Category 5 narcotic.



Firefighters use an extension ladder to lower people trapped atop the burning Sua Pa Plaza building in Bangkok on January 4. Only one person was killed in the blaze that gutted the nine-storey mixed use complex, which was home to about 100 people.

Multiple blazes mar New Year festivities

BANGKOK: A series of fires starting with the blaze on January 1 during New Year celebrations at Santika nightclub in Bangkok have put fire safety in the capital back in the spotlight.

A Japanese reveler succumbed to death from severe burns from the inferno at the club late on January 4, bringing the death toll to 64.

Keiichi Wada, 25, was pronounced dead at 9 pm at Chulalongkorn Hospital, four days after the fire at the drinking and dancing venue on Ekamai Road.

Sixty-eight of the injured victims were still receiving treatment in various hospitals as of January 5 with more than half in intensive care units.

Jongrak Jutanont, Deputy National Police Commissioner, said investigators had interviewed survivors to establish the cause of the blaze, but had yet to come to a conclusion.

The fire started on the top floor and spread quickly, one club worker said. The smoke caused panic, sending people scrambling to the front door where they had come in. Most were unaware there were three other exits.

Up to 1,000 people could have been inside when the fire broke out, the worker said.

Police did not rule out the possibility that the fire could have been caused by either stage effects used by the club, or fireworks lit by a customer, Gen Jongrak said.

The owner of the pub will face charges of recklessly causing other people's deaths and allowing customers aged under 20 into the club, after a 17-year-old high school student was found among the dead, he added.

Many, if not most of the dead were foreigners, but it was hard to know for sure as many were burned beyond recognition, he added.

The following day another fire broke out at the Raw Hyde Pub on Soi Cowboy, just off Sukhumvit Road.

Police said firefighters took about 15 minutes to put out the blaze, which broke out at about 2:30 am. Nobody was injured.

On January 5, rescuers using extension ladders and helicopters managed to save 50 people from the top floors of the Sua Pa Plaza building in Bangkok's Chinatown area.

Others were safely evacuated from inside the burning building.

The fire broke out at 8:30 pm in a mobile phone store on one of the lower floors of the building, causing residents and sauna guests on higher floors to climb to the top of the 10-storey building.

The body of Sanguan Saenkaew, 45, was found on the seventh floor after the blaze was put out.

Forty-seven people were injured and the entire building was gutted, causing fear that it would collapse.

Thai Muslims stage protests outside Israeli Embassy in Bangkok

BANGKOK: Some 800 Thai Muslims who demonstrated for two hours in front of the Israeli Embassy warned of "unexpected" incidents around the world unless Israel ceased its "Operation Cast Lead against Palestine".

The protesters wore T-shirts with message reading: "Stop Gaza Slaughter" and waved banners with the messages "Boycott Israel" and "Israel is the Real Terrorist". They were the second group to call a protest against Israel after a smaller group rallied at the embassy the day before.

Some 30,000 Thai workers in Israel were safe so far from the military operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, where Palestinian casualties went beyond 500, Israeli Ambassador to Thailand Yael Rubinstein said on January 6.

Ms Rubinstein was confident that authorities here could provide sufficient security for the embassy staff and Israeli citizens in Thailand. She urged Thailand



Thai Muslims burned the Israeli flag in front of the Israeli Embassy on January 5 to protest Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip.

and the international community to understand the situation as well as the suffering of the Israeli people. Some one million Israeli civilians living in the southern part of that country have been suffering from the Hamas's on and off rocket attacks for seven years, she said.

The strike focused only on

the Gaza Strip, where no Thais were working, she said.

Most of the Thai workers were in the eastern part of the country, far from the war zone. The Thai Foreign Ministry said earlier that some 3,000 Thai workers are in the risky area of Eshkol, near the Gaza Strip along Israel's southern border.

PM's phone hell

BANGKOK: Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has been receiving over 100 intimidating phone calls a day since his election, his aide revealed on January 4.

Sirichoke Sopha, an aide to the premier, said hate calls were made to PM Abhisit's mobile phone about 100 times a day since the House elected him prime minister.

Mr. Sirichoke said PM Abhisit mostly answered the calls himself and tried his best to explain his election to the callers.

Once the prime minister became busy with his work, Mr Sirichoke answered the calls on his behalf.

Most callers used rude and abusive language. The callers claimed they knew PM Abhisit's mobile phone number from the taxi drivers' community radio station.

Democrats prioritize push for educational reform

BANGKOK: Education Minister Jurin Laksanawisit has promised to push for implementation of the 15-year free education policy in the new academic year, promising that education reform would take top priority under his helmsmanship.

Mr Jurin has assigned the Basic Education Commission to calculate the budget required to provide 15 years of free schooling, including tuition, textbooks, stationery, uniforms and other student expenses.

The ministry should prepare for this project to take off because the government wanted it to begin in the next school year, he said.

Education development to meet the country's needs would

give opportunities to the private sector to participate in making education the core of economic development, by producing manpower that met demand from business, industry and other sectors, he said.

He would meet with industrial councils, chambers of commerce and all sectors to brainstorm a plan to produce workers with skills sought by the labor market. Higher education should produce more graduates in science rather than social science, he said.

In reality, social science graduates outnumber science graduates and this mix did not match the needs of employers and the economic development process, the minister added.

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The bomb squad of Pattani's Muang District collect evidence from a roadside where insurgents remotely detonated a bomb on December 26. The insurgents triggered the device when a military truck passed by, but it was dud and fortunately nobody was injured.

Fake bills found in the South

SONGKHLA, NAKHON SRI THAMMARAT: The reported spread of counterfeit money has reached the South, with four arrests in the lead-up to the New Year.

On December 28, a couple were arrested in Haad Yai after allegedly trying to buy plane tickets with five fake 1,000 baht notes.

Arisa Noksing, 31 and her boyfriend Suthep Kriuklai, 38, were arrested after the owner of Lovely Tour travel agency on Niphat-Uthit Road in Haad Yai told police that the pair had paid for plane tickets to Bangkok with the fake bills.

Police arrested the pair when they returned to the travel agency.

Miss Arisa told police that the money was given to her by a friend. Police searched the suspects' house on Ratana-Uthit Road, but found no more of the fake notes. Police said that they were not satisfied with the suspects' explanation of how they came into possession of the bills and would detain them while the investigation continues.

Two days later on December 30, two youths were arrested after allegedly paying for gasoline with six fake 20 baht notes on December 27.

Police reported that Suriya Kaowklapphech, 22, and Khongthon Phutthachu, 23, told them they had found the money in the market. However, police suspect the pair were involved in making the counterfeit bills.

Father and daughter drown

NAKHON SRI THAMMARAT: A seven-year-old girl drowned after being swept out to sea while playing in a channel on a beach in Sichon District on December 29. The girl's father, a policeman, died trying to rescue her in heavy seas but her uncle, who also went to her aid, was saved by rescue volunteers.

Eyewitnesses told police that Panatda Chanthong was playing with two or three other children in a channel leading from the hills behind the beach down to the sea. Suddenly a large body of water came down from the hills, knocking over Miss Panatda and sweeping her out to sea.

Her father Mr Charin Chanthong and her uncle Kriangkrai Thongsri, rushed into the sea after her, but got into dif-

ficulties in the large waves. Rescue workers pulled the men from the water, but were unable to resuscitate Mr Charin.

The unconscious Mr Kriangkrai was taken to Sichon Hospital, where he made a full recovery.

The body of Miss Panatda was found floating off the coast of neighbouring Khanom District the following day.

Mr Kraingkrai said that he and Mr Charin were able to find Miss Panatda and hold her above water for a while, but were out of their depths and were soon overpowered by waves. The next thing he remembers is waking up in Sichon Hospital, he said.

"After talking to witnesses and hospital staff, I found out that the channel that Miss Panatda was playing in runs down from Thong Yang Waterfall. Periodically, the authorities open a sluice gate to allow water from the waterfall to run down to the sea. I now know that while the children were playing in the channel, the gate was opened. That is why all the water rushed down the channel. I also heard that similar incidents have happened a number of times before. I don't know why the authorities responsible don't put up warning signs or sound a siren before the gate is opened," Mr Kriangkrai said.

Sen Sgt Maj Charin was stationed at Ron Phibun Police Station in Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province. He leaves a wife, Pratheep Chanthong and one surviving daughter.

Wife killer arrested

TRANG: Police have arrested the husband of a rubber tapper who was found stabbed to death in a plantation in Muang District on December 30. Police had to step in to rescue the man from a lynching by a group of around 20 villagers and civil defence volunteers.

The body of Phamon Duanghoi, 39, was found lying in a rubber plantation in Tambon Nam Phut at around 4:30 am. She

had been stabbed in the head and chest. Next to her body, police found a blood-stained knife and a pair of shoes which they believe belong to her husband, 42-year-old Saroj Buakhiat.

Later that morning, Muang Trang Police Deputy Superintendent Thian Balathip led a search party including the local village chief, tambon chief and some 20 volunteers to Mr Saroj's house.

At the house, officers shouted for Mr Saroj to open the door. When he refused, they broke the door down. Mr Saroj came out of the house armed with a large knife and began lunging at the assembled crowd. Villagers and volunteers armed with knives and lengths of wood then set on Mr Saroj, beating and slicing him until police stepped in. Police took Mr Saroj to Trang Hospital, where he was treated for cuts to his head, face and hands.

After Mr Saroj was discharged from hospital, police took him to Muang Trang Police Station for questioning. The suspect admitted to killing his wife after she disobeyed his order not to go out rubber tapping in the plantation she owned, police said.

Mr Saroj told police that he had previously warned his wife that if she went out rubber tapping again, he would beat her to death. He reportedly claimed that he killed his wife with a length of wood, which he then burned. Due to the nature of the victim's injuries and the bloody knife found at the scene, police did not accept his version of events.

Mr Saroj did not seem worried by the murder charges brought against him and seemed pleased that his wife was dead, police noted.

Relatives of Mr Saroj told the police that he has a history of drug abuse and mental illness, for which he had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital three times.

He regularly beat his wife, who had moved out of their house and taken their two children to live at her sister's house in Nah Yong District. However, she would come and stay with Mr Saroj when she wanted to tap rubber, relatives said.

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Oil exploration plan meets strong opposition

A civic group of residents, business owners and environmentalists were up in arms at a public hearing in Koh Tao recently to oppose off-shore drilling that could threaten marine life and livelihoods around the holiday island.

The group of objectors displayed strong opposition to the plan by Soco Exploration Co Ltd to explore an area near the island for potential oil sources, voicing concern for the effects of oil exploration surveys on the environment and the welfare of the islanders.

The exploration company already has permission from the government to go ahead with plans to conduct surveys in the sea about 65 kilometers from Koh Tao, but only on the condition that the project is endorsed by the people who will be directly affected by it.



FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND

By Max Rogers

During the hearing, which was presided over by Somnuek Much-Chika of the Energy Department, attendees heard of the potential hazards to marine life

and the impact that it would have on those who depend on the sea for a living if the exploration goes ahead.

The company outlined its plans to compensate those whose livelihoods are directly affected by the displacement and destruction of fish stocks.

Diving establishments are also actively opposing the project and are highly concerned that the equipment used to conduct the surveys will not only destroy coral but will deter visitors who usually come to the island solely for diving.

At the end of the hearing, Soco Exploration agreed to conduct further analysis in order to prevent any damage, and to demonstrate how compensation measures are to be equated after surveys are complete.

Soco Exploration plans to begin conducting the surveys by February.



The destruction of marine life through off-shore oil exploration surveys near Koh Tao threaten the livelihoods of those who depend on the sea for a living. The island is one of the most sought after by diving enthusiasts.

Drug shipment destined for Koh Phangan Full Moon Party seized at road block

SURAT THANI: Two men were arrested at a police roadblock in Chumphon province recently when police found them in possession of a large quantity of marijuana.

Police said that the two men, Phokin Untiamson, 33, and Saenguthaen Muangwong, 33, were caught with 199 kilograms of marijuana as they were transporting it to a man on Koh Phangan island, where it was intended to be distributed among Full Moon and New Year party revelers, who are mostly tourists.

Police said a roadblock had been set up intercept the traffickers after a tip off that a large quantity of drugs was being transported from Laos to Koh Phangan in Surat Thani.

After searching the suspects' car, police found the marijuana, which they estimate, has a street value of about 5 million baht.

Following their arrests, the two suspects admitted they had been hired to smuggle the drugs from Laos, taking the shipment along the Mekong River and through Thailand. They also told police that they were paid 50,000 for their part in transporting the drugs, which they admitted to having done several times before.

They also told police that the marijuana was scheduled to reach the island for the New Year celebrations, which draws the highest attendance of party goers for the year.

The men, both from Nakhon Phanom province, are being held in Surat Thani before formal charges are brought against them. Police are hoping that the arrests will lead to further sting operations to bring down dealers and leaders of the drug trafficking ring.

Belgian fugitive arrested in Samui after years on the run

KOH SAMUI: A Belgian fugitive wanted in his homeland was tracked down and arrested by Thai police last Saturday following an alert from the Belgian Embassy that 35-year-old Pascal Quirynen had entered the country.

Quirynen had been on the run for more than a year after

escaping police custody in Belgium where he had been sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for attempted murder. He was arrested at his home on Koh Samui after police received reports that the fugitive was living on the island.

According to Dutch news reports, the maximum penalty of 30 years had been sought for Quirynen after he shot a 43-year-old man in the head following a

quarrel over a parking space in Antwerp, Belgium in 2001. Although his victim survived the execution-style shooting, Belgian courts considered Quirynen "a danger to society, which must be protected from individuals who will shoot someone for the slightest reason".

Representatives from Thai Tourist Police said that Quirynen was sent back to Belgium where he will stand trial.

Daylight robbery at gold shop in busy mall

SURAT THANI: On December 16, police received reports of a robbery at a jewelry shop in downtown Surat Thani.

Police rushed to the Burapa Gold Shop on the ground floor of the town center's Tesco hypermarket to hear from the shop's staff that over a million baht-worth of gold had been stolen by a man who threatened them with a gun.

The Tesco hypermarket is

one of the province's largest and busiest shopping centers

Shopkeepers told police that a man behaving suspiciously had entered the shop and pointed a gun at them. The thief took 20 gold chains before fleeing on foot through the Lian Muang supermarket and into a wooded area near the Por Khun Thalay Road.

Witnesses told police that the man was dressed in black and

that he was wearing a hat with "police" written on the front. He was approximately 170 cm tall and had dark skin.

The robbery is the second of its kind on gold shops in the district, while several other retailers have also reported holdups.

Police are requesting people to come forward if they have any information on the gold shop heists.

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Fun Family Brunch at Hilton Phuket Arcadia – from pampering to pandas

For families looking for a care-free lunch, with kids' entertainment you can't go wrong with the current Fun Family Brunch at the Hilton Phuket Arcadia.

With an amazing balloon artiste, a rather surreal, life-size panda wandering around (more on that later), live jazz and a staggering array of dishes on display, this is the place to be on Sundays.

Sails Restaurant, the venue for this event, is poolside – meaning that if little Johnny or Lek feel like doing a double-flip Spiderman back *sauté* into the pool in between chomping on a kids'-size hamburger or mini-pizza from the children's buffet, that's entirely up to him - as long as he washes his hands before coming back to the table, that is.

There's also a huge air-conditioned interior groaning under the weight of so many buffet choices that some quick, but dizzying, mental arithmetic reveals that if the automatic sliding doors developed a problem and sighed shut, never to open again, there would be roughly enough food contained within to keep the entire brunch crowd, plus staff, well nourished for the next two weeks. Sleeping arrangements, however, could

prove troublesome. Sorry about that – just can't help it; too much post-apocalyptic literature recently.

First stop is the sushi bar, next to the cheese counter and close to the (thankfully still operating) sliding doors.

Here, diners can choose from fresh fish, choice cuts or go for an orange-and-red, crab-and-lobster, color splash of some of the best seafood imaginable. It was then that I rounded a corner and found

myself face-to-face with a life-size panda on its rear legs. Not having Googled how to act in this situation (FYI www.howto-react-asuddenpandaappearance.com is quite helpful) the best plan of action is to courageously back away and shuffle back to my unsuspecting family who are tucking into a Thai seafood salad.

"Did you see that pan..." is interrupted by, "Papa, can you mention in your review that that this is super fresh food?" "But there was a pand..." "And what about that lamb? That was the best that I've ever tasted since the last time I was in Auckl..." "Listen everyone. I swear there was a great big panda in the salad section." "Okay, Papa, whatever. Anyone fancy some fruit?"

On the menu

WITH Wilko

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A balloon artiste is just one of many activities for kids at the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Family Fun Brunch.

Frank Visakay, an old friend and long-time contributor to the Gazette, pulled me up at a recent booze-up and pointed out that I wasn't specific enough regarding prices in my reviews. Thanks for the heads up Frank.

This particular brunch is priced at 950 baht per person, with a bottle of house wine thrown in per couple, and 450 baht for kids up to 12-years-old.

They'll murder me at the Hilton Arcadia (and probably Frank too) if I don't mention their "Fun Family Brunch Lucky Draw". Every Sunday brunch

diner is entitled to sign up and the Grand Draw takes place on the last Sunday of every month.

Even if you're not present, don't worry, you'll be notified if you're a lucky winner.

The prizes are awesome and I got instant indigestion when we didn't win one.

No one can deny that it's good clean family fun to pour Bolognese sauce onto smoked salmon fillets, throw in a couple of beef cutlets and sprinkle it all with grated Parmesan. Not ending there, add a dash of marmalade with a squeeze of lemon juice

on top to finish and baptize the creation something stupid like "Boston Gondolier's Delight". Go on, admit it, everyone does it at buffets... er, don't they? Hilton Phuket Arcadia's the perfect canvas for such culinary eccentricity and the staff members are far too polite to point out any odd behavior. Go for it, get creative. The kids will be well looked after too.

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Going Dutch – Music for the techno generation

By Tipwarintron Tanaakarachod

For a good many 16-year-old boys, New Year's Eve would have entailed a frantic effort to gain unlawful entry to their local pub or nightclub in anticipation of ringing in the New Year with an illicit brew in one hand and a fake I.D in the other. Sixteen year-old Dutch youngster Bowy, on the other hand, no longer needs to be smuggled through security to get into his club of choice since he's usually there by special invitation. But then again, Bowy is not your average 16-year-old.

Only three years into his teens, Bowy is fast emerging as an internationally acclaimed DJ, having already made a name for himself back in his native Holland. While many of his tender age would be content with the mere promise of domestic celebrity, Bowy already has one eye fixed on rivaling world renowned Dutch spinners Armin van Buren and DJ Tiesto.

"Many people know of me in Holland, but I am hoping that my name will become more internationally recognized. When I come to Thailand and people see my name on a flyer they'll say, 'There's Bowy; lets go to that party.' Today I come here for the people, but in the future I hope people will come for me."

Such teenage dreams would ordinarily be dismissed as 'adolescent fantasy', but for someone who has already rubbed shoulders with some of Europe's most successful DJs and appeared before a crowd of a staggering 2.5 million people at Rotterdam's Fast



Forward Dance Parade when he was just 15 years of age, it is, in this case, a statement well supported by fact.

Bowy began his quest to become a DJ at the tender age of 12, when he saw DJ Tiesto on the television in his home in Holland. "I saw Tiesto on TV, I heard his music, saw the audience going crazy. I went to my Dad and said, 'Poppa, I want to be a DJ.'"

Seeing the determination in their son, Bowy's parents bought him his first set of CD decks. He began playing commercial trance, like Tiesto, but between the ages of 13 and 14 developed his own

techno/house hybrid style after observing fellow DJs in clubs around the country. Bowy began making a name for himself in contests across the Netherlands, but struggled to secure club sets because of his age. Eventually, one club owner decided to take a chance on the prodigious spinner and he never looked back, growing in popularity with every set.

"People like me because I'm young. They enjoy seeing me play. I'm excited to play and they like my enthusiasm."

Meeting Bowy, it is easy to forget just how young he really is. Like many Dutch people, he is tall – which makes him appear older than he is – handsome, with shoulder-length blond hair, and projecting a maturity that belies his youthfulness. He is currently studying economics back home in Holland and converses both intelligently and politely: not a trait synonymous with most 16-year-olds.

As a DJ, Bowy is already aware of the importance of knowing his audience and how to read a crowd. "People in Holland



have different tastes to those here in Phuket. In Holland I can't play hard (music) as people prefer a commercial and deeper sound, but here I can play techno/rock because the people like it."

Despite his evident maturity, Bowy still offers glimpses that he is a teenager. Full of youthful exuberance, his comments reveal a spirit that has yet to be dampened by age and his words still resonate with the innocence of youth.

"When you follow your heart, it's the most important thing there is. If you want to be a house DJ, follow your heart and I'm sure you'll be a house DJ," he proclaims.

When asked about his popularity with girls, he first appears shy to broach the subject, but quickly recovers and explains that although he understands that being a DJ is going to make you popular with the opposite sex, he is under no illusions, "It's nice to talk with girls. When you are a DJ some people see you as a God, but I'm just a human being," he said.

Being just 16 presents

Bowy with other problems. In Holland, you have to be 18 years old to drive a car. For the time being he is chauffeured to gigs by his father.

His dad is often on hand to offer him advice about his tune selection and Bowy is mindful of the sacrifices his family makes saying, "It's hard for them because sometimes I have to play from four o'clock until seven in morning. I really appreciate what they do for me."

As he approaches adulthood, Bowy will need to draw upon all of his maturity and the support of his family to help steer him away from the dark side of the club scene, which shares a long association with drug and alcohol abuse.

But for the meantime, Bowy is happy to concentrate on his immediate future. "At the end of January 2009 I will have my first music release and hope to put out more throughout the year. I'd love to come back to Thailand, I like the Thai people. Everyone is happy – that's the good thing here."

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US Navy and Rotary Club team up for charity

By Stephen Fein

The Rotary Club of Patong teamed up with some 35 United States Navy sailors for a two-in-one charity event on January 3 that saw the sailors give the walls of the Thalang National Museum a fresh coat of paint – and make some kids from the Home & Life project in Phang Nga very happy.

The day began with about 35 volunteer crew members from the *USS Milius* spending several hours painting walls and pillars at the museum. The sailors, a small contingent of the guided missile destroyer's 300 crew members, were on their last day of shore leave on their way out to active duty from their home port of San Diego.

Rotary Club Patong public relations manager Jeroen Deknatel explained that the navy visit by the sailors was part of the US Navy's ComRel program, where volunteers from the navy come out and do something good for the community.

Fellow Rotarian Jim Domville, one of about 10 Rotarians who made it to the event, said, "They are painting the national museum because the exterior of the building has fallen into disuse. They bring in the

paint, the equipment and the manpower and do everything themselves. They have also brought in several crates of food and gifts, and that's where the ComRel project meets the Home & Life project," he explained.

The Home & Life project, in Phang Nga's Thai Muang District, was set up by mechanical engineer Bhudit "Root" Manejak and his wife Rosa after the 2004 tsunami, he said.

"Root was a mechanical engineer in Bangkok, doing very well and leading a middle-class life. The tsunami came and he volunteered, coming down with his wife. They discovered there was a whole bunch of orphans who were too young to know where they came from. They came from Isarn, but nobody could locate their grandparents and their parents had disappeared in the tsunami. So from that grew a fantastic project that they succeeded in finding sponsors for at the time – because of the tsunami – but now the larder has run bare and we are trying to help them," he said.

"They have 23 kids in their care. They are not all tsunami orphans, although a large percentage are. They are also kids who were at risk for a variety of reasons who were up in the Khao



LEFT: US Navy volunteers painted Thalang National Museum. RIGHT: US Navy's DC-1 Trevor Williams presents gifts and supplies valued at thousands of US dollars to Home & Life project founder Mr Root.

Lak area. Woody Leonhard is helping them with baking so they can make muffins and cupcakes and whatever, so they can sell them as an income source. They are making floating Chinese lanterns that they are selling in Phuket. Mr Root has been doing all of this without much outside assistance," he said, adding that the Rotary Club had only recently found out about their need for assistance.

For entertainment, the Patong Rotary service committee chairman Brad Kenny served as the master of ceremonies and introduced the Home & Life dancers, four young girls who

have obviously spent a great deal of time practicing. They skillfully executed four dances, each in a different style and with matching outfits in traditional Thai designs.

After the show it was time for chow. Woody Leonhard, computer guru and president-elect of the Patong chapter, together with his wife Add, put on a great feed for all present, with Thai food and Western fare, including delicious chili dogs.

After lunch there was a small ceremony with the US Navy's DC-1 Trevor Williams officially presenting the gifts to Mr Root. Valued at thousands of US dollars, the supplies included

food and other provisions as well as some fantastic toys such as skateboards and roller blades for the kids.

After receiving the gifts, the kids piled into two pickups while the sailors boarded a big air-conditioned bus bound for their vessel, possibly contemplating what their orders would be when they shipped out the next day.

For more information about the Home & Life project contact Mr Bhudit. Tel: 081-9513237, Email: HomeLifeThailand@yahoo.com or visit the website: www.homelifethailand.net.

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TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: Deputy managing director of the Baycliff Company MR Wanrak Likitvong (pictured at right) joined the birthday celebrations of, and offered congratulations to, Mr Ratanavudh Vajarodaya who was recently promoted to Consultant to the Special Activity Department of The Bureau of The Royal Household in Bangkok.



HEART WARMING GIFTS: Bangkok Hospital is currently running a program offering assistance to poor people of Nong Bua Lamphu province in Isarn. The colder than expected conditions this winter have made it particularly tough for those people who do not possess any warm clothing. The program is one of several that Bangkok Hospital runs over the Christmas and New Year period.



COUNTDOWN: CEO of Jungceylon Prawit Janyasittikul presided over the countdown ceremony in Patong on New Year's Eve, which featured three spectacular shows: "Surprising Jungceylon", "Smiling Beginning" and "Fire and Rain". Mr Prawit (2nd from right in white jacket) was joined by Vice Governor Smith Palawatvichai (3rd from right) and Vice Mayor of Patong Municipality Chairat Sukkaban (4th from right).




AULD LANG SYNE: Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa said goodbye to 2008 and welcome to 2009 with a Thai Fun Fair themed Gala Dinner. Mr John Kidd, the hotel's General Manager (2nd from the left), and his wife Mrs Piljo Kidd (center) welcomed returning hotel guests Mrs Ziana Vanova and her son (right and second from the right). Joining in the photo is Mrs Aom O'Carroll (left), Senior Sales Manager of the hotel.



CHEQUE MATE: Raimon Land Senior Vice President of Communications Kwanrudee Maneewongwathana (pictured 4th from left) presents a cheque for 600,000 baht to the American Women's Club (AWC). Pictured from left are AWC's Rosa Chomjandr, Dr Somsak Soorapanthu and Dr Cleopandh Soorapanthu from the Chaiyapruk Foundation, AWC 2nd Vice President Lili Chequer and AWC President Joette Berkompas.



ARTISTIC OPENING: The grand opening of VG 21 took place recently at Surin Plaza. The new art gallery specializes in modern styles of art involving the use of new and fresh techniques and materials from well known artists in Thailand and SE Asia. Pictured in the photo (left to right) are VG21's Creative Director Daling Rivera, silk artist Kachama K. Perez, and VG21 Managing Director Eduardo Valdivieso.




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Need a post-Christmas Detox?

By Tipwarintron Tanaakarachod

In recent years, Thailand has emerged as a major world center for cosmetic surgery and so called "medical tourism", as people increasingly appreciate the expertise and affordability that the Kingdom has to offer. Not only are many surgical treatments and cosmetic procedures considerably cheaper in Thailand than elsewhere but the level of standards achieved in terms of facilities, procedure and safety have come to be regarded as second to none.

Phuket has established a strong reputation as a place to come to for cosmetic surgery and now boasts an impressive range of high quality facilities serving an image conscious international clientele.

Phuket Detox operates three cosmetic surgery clinics; two on the island, in Patong and Phuket Town, plus another in Phang-Nga. The company promotes a number of treatments ranging from skin lightening to face-lifts, and collagen injections to colonic irrigation. The Phuket Town clinic employs five dedicated staff and boasts four treatment rooms.

Colonic irrigation is one of the more popular detox procedures carried out at Phuket Detox. The concept of colon cleansing is derived from the Ancient Egyptian notion of "auto-intoxication": the belief that food enters the intestine and rots, releasing toxins within the body. This was adopted by the Ancient Greeks and further developed in the 19th Century by studies in the fields of biochemistry and microbiology. "Auto-intoxication" symptoms can manifest themselves in a number of guises. Symptoms include headaches, mouth ulcers, problems with the excretory system, exhaustion and loss of concentration. The principle of colon hydrotherapy is that water entering the body removes the built-up faeces from the wall of the large intestine, which if left within the body will putrefy and produce toxins that attack the immune system. The process involves using an enema to propel water, often mixed with herbs, into the colon where, it breaks down any intestinal build-up, flushing it from the body, cleansing the system and preventing any toxins from spreading within the host.

A new treatment available from Phuket Detox, is a technique designed to remove fat cells from the body without invasive surgery. The procedure is known as "Carbonize Plus" which involves the injection of carbon dioxide into subcutaneous tissue through a minute needle, just 0.3mm in diameter. The carbon dioxide dissolves fat cells into a fluid and dilates the blood vessels. Wider blood vessels results in increased blood flow and more oxygen being transported around the body. The increased oxygen removes the built-up fatty fluid between the cells and it is removed from the body through the kidneys and urination.

In addition to cleansing and purification programs, Phuket Detox offers a comprehensive range of health and beautification treatments, including face masks, freckle removal, face massage and Botox treatments. For further information on the services offered by Phuket Detox, contact their call center on 081-7971377.



Phuket Detox offers a range of high-tech detoxification, weight loss and skin treatments, including collagen injections and colonic irrigation.



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Yacht share venture drops anchor off Phuket

By Tipwarintron Tanaakarachod

Buying a yacht is probably not something that figures too prominently on your list of New Year's resolutions. Costing around 1.2 million baht a month to maintain, plus around five million baht a year for a half decent crew, not to mention fees for berthing and the various licenses required, it is no surprise that yacht ownership remains the preserve of the truly opulent.

Or does it? Jens Reichert, the vice president of Dubai-based IFA Leisure would beg to differ. Mr Reichert recently weighed anchor in Phuket to introduce the IFA Yacht Ownership Club and talk about his brand of 'fractional ownership'.

The *Phuket Gazette* sent along land-lubbing reporter Tipwarintron Tanaakarachod to quiz Mr Reichert about the high life on the high seas and why owning one's own yacht is just not the done thing these days.

IFA Hotels and Resorts has been around for about six years and has become one of the leading developers in the Middle East, attaining prominence for audacious projects such as the Palm Jumeirah, an artificial island created through land reclamation in the Persian Gulf. IFA's yacht business was established around three years ago with a view to complementing its existing range of high-end hotel products, which includes the Fairmont and Four Seasons Hotels. The Yacht Ownership Club's philosophy can be summed up by its slogan "Living a la Carte". "What better luxury choice than staying in our hotels and using our yachts," says Mr Reichert.

Back in Phuket, Mr Reichert sets about his task. "The first thing to understand," he ex-



Vice President of IFA Leisure
Jens Reichert.

plains, "is that the Yacht Ownership Club is not a charter business. You cannot just show up and rent a yacht for a day or two. You have to buy membership. In this way, the business operates along the lines of fractional ownership."

The rules of the game are pretty simple. There are three levels or 'tiers' of membership: Silver, Gold and Platinum. When you subscribe you are accorded 'credits': 20, 40 and 80 for Silver, Gold and Platinum respectively. You can then exchange these credits for use of any one of the company's yachts, anywhere in the world. With 80 credits, costing in the region of 110,000 euros, you get to spend around four weeks on one of the company's

luxury yachts. Those taking out the top-level Platinum membership are further guaranteed the 'jewel in the crown' slot of a week in Cannes between the end of July through September.

The cost of chartering a yacht in Cannes, at around 50,000 euros, makes the cost efficiency of club membership self-evident, says Mr Reichert. "You don't have to buy a boat, there are no maintenance costs, no staffing costs, no mooring costs, and none of the risks associated with having a boat." In a nutshell, argues Mr Reichert, membership offers the benefits of owning your own boat without the stress of actual ownership and at a tiny fraction of the cost.

Another advantage is one of choice. Let's say, for example, that you own a yacht in Phuket. Having shelled out all that cash to buy it, register it, moor it, maintain it, staff it and fuel it, you can cruise around the Andaman sea and, if it's large enough, other places of interest around the wider region. But what if you fancied a foray to the Bahamas, or perhaps the South of France? Only the biggest yachts are able to relocate such distances, and even then at huge expense, guzzling, as they do, between 500-600 dollars per hour in gasoline alone. Membership of the Yacht Ownership Club, on the other hand, allows you to indulge your passion at any time you like, in

any part of the world you choose, says Mr Reichert.

Fractional ownership is not an entirely new concept in the world of big boats. Indeed, there are already two such operations here in Phuket. But, as Mr Reichert is at pains to point out, the difference between these and IFA's Yacht Ownership Club is in the number of boats available for use by its members; the local clubs have only one vessel at their disposal, while IFA has four boats located around the world for its members' use. IFA is continuing to add boats to its portfolio. In addition to the boat now available in Phuket, Mr Reichert says that IFA is planning to add a large sailing boat to its roster next year,

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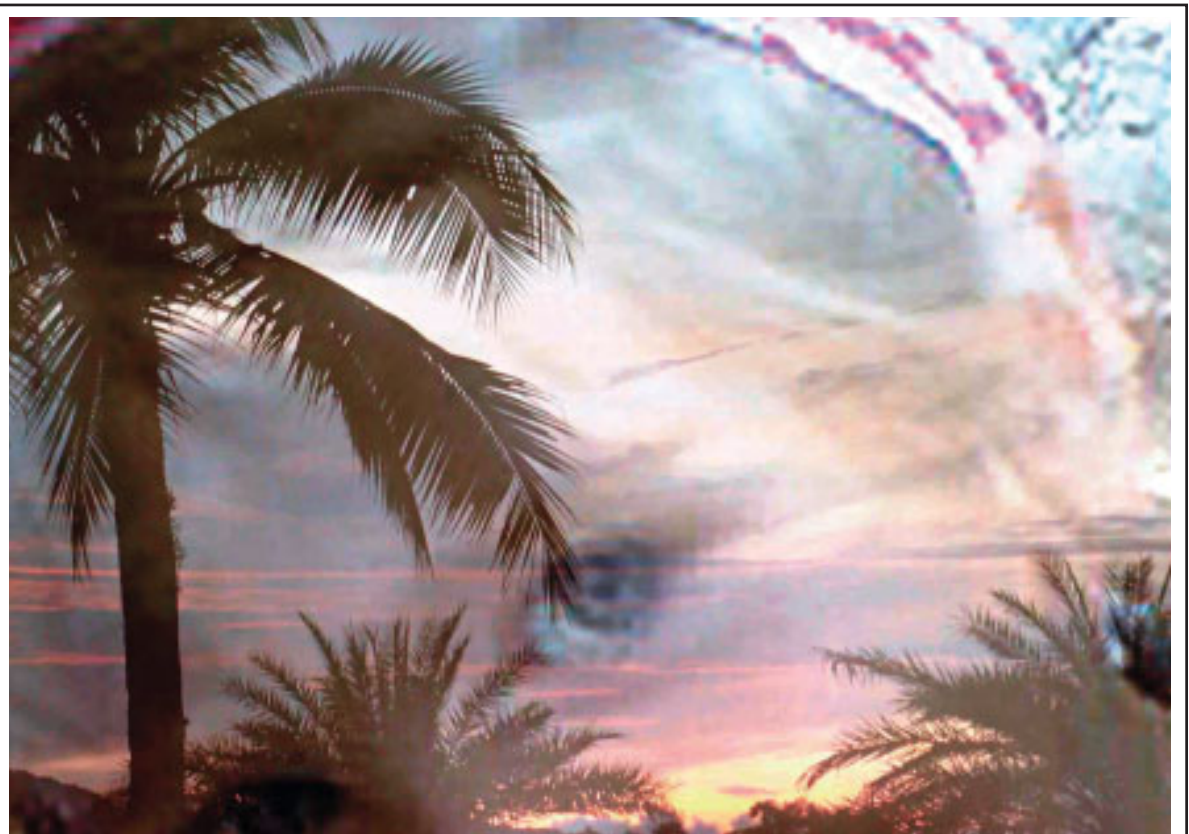
based in the Caribbean.

Clients of services such as those offered by IFA can be notoriously demanding. "Our members are considered as part-owners. We don't treat them like normal charter customers," explained Mr Reichert. "They demand much higher service levels. This is why we like to stress our levels of service, as well as our uncompromising commitment to maintenance and safety issues," he added.

Asked why IFA had chosen Phuket as the newest addition to its global portfolio of yacht locations, Mr Reichert explained that the company had asked its current membership where they would most like to go. With the South of France, Spain, the Middle East and the Bahamas already offered, it was South East Asia that was cited as the destination of choice. Thailand's friendly people, its excellent waters and beautiful scenery made it a natural choice, he said. Also the favorable weather conditions in the region made good business sense. In the Caribbean, it is only possible to operate for about four

to five months a year, whereas Phuket's strategic location allows the company to operate nearly all year round, providing greater availability for its membership. Underlining Phuket's status as an emerging yachting hub, Mr Reichert added, "There is currently a lot of talk in the yachting industry about Phuket. A lot of our members consider Phuket a prime location," he said.

While IFA is not specifically looking at Phuket to recruit new members, Mr Reichert does expect to pick up around 10 or so. As the current global economic crisis sees a good many yacht owners looking to offload their assets, Mr Reichert sees opportunities for his business. "That's a lot of people who used to own their own boat," he remarks. "For these people, we are a great opportunity". To offer such potential customers a sample of the Yacht Club Ownership experience, IFA has devised what it calls an "Emerald Membership", which allows a prospective customer, for a fee, a once-only chance to spend a week aboard one of the company's yachts.



Combining creativity with technology and photography, Southern German native Ilse Maria Gibson creates eye-catching Andy Warhol-like imagery of people, nature and scenes of life on the sea. Ilse is a university lecturer for computer and business studies and uses her computer skills and knowledge of graphic manipulation software to create her pop art images.

She digitally transforms normal photographs into multi colored images using aspects of *Feng Shui* and psychological symbolism to select appropriate colors that match the interiors they will be displayed in.

Her collection "Vision, Life, Fiction" is on display at Spice Island Restaurant at Boat Lagoon until January 31 and also includes Ilse's fine art prints. For more information visit www.ilsegibson.com.

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Volvo powers ahead with flexifuel cars

BEHIND THE WHEEL

By Jeff Heselwood

Volvo offers two ethanol-gasoline models in Thailand: the locally produced S80 2.5 and the compact C30. At a recent ceremony held at the Bangkok Racing Circuit, Volvo Car Thailand unveiled the Volvo C30 1.8F and the Volvo S80 2.5FT. The Minister of Energy, Dr. Wannarat Charnnukul, and the CEOs of PTT, BCP, Mitr Phol, Petro Green and the Ethanol Producers Association were amongst the many VIP guests in attendance.

The event marked an important step in Thailand's development towards a more secure energy future, through the promotion and use of less polluting and more importantly, renewable bio-fuels made from home-grown agricultural produce.

Embraced by the Thai people, businesses and the government, renewable local bio-fuels will save more money for motorists, says Volvo. It will also reduce the Kingdom's dependency on foreign oil imports, which last year accounted for some 9 percent of GDP.

The C30 1.8F will unquestionably become a best-seller for Volvo Thailand. Powered by a 1.8 liter in-line four engine, running on E85 'flexifuel', the C30 produces a healthy 125 bhp (92 kW) with a torque output of 165 Nm. The 0-100 km/h sprint time is a respectable 10.8 seconds with a top speed of 200 km/h.

Paul Stokes, President of Volvo Car Thailand, said "For Volvo, the environment has been a core value of our brand for decades and so we have, from the very beginning, fully supported

the efforts of the Thai government, and particularly the Ministry of Energy, in advancing renewable bio-fuels with the aim of promoting energy security for Thailand.

"Volvo announces yet another milestone in this journey, as we will be the first car company to produce E85-compatible flexifuel cars locally here in Thailand," he added.

Dr. Wannarat Charnnukul, Minister of Energy, commented, "The government holds a central policy to promote the use of alternative energy, no matter what changes occur with the price of oil. The higher mixture of ethanol in gasoline would reduce the country's reliance on crude oil imports and cut the cost of living. It would also strengthen the country's long-term energy security and economy."

The S80 is the second generation of Volvo's large prestige sedan, brimming with world-class safety features. The 2009 S80 is no exception, adding Volvo's Blindspot Information System (BLIS), Lane Departure Warning (LDW) and driver alert technology to the locally made versions. And now the bio-ethanol 2.5 FT flexifuel engine has been added to the line-up.

A 'bio-fuel' is essentially any fuel which has been produced from organic materials, or biomass. Unlike fossil fuels, which are produced from decaying and compressed organic materials dating back millions of years, the bio-fuels of today are made from plants, including crops, organic waste or animal waste. Examples include biodiesel, derived from palm oil and methane (natural gas), which comes from manure.

In some Western countries there has been a backlash of public opinion against bio-fuels, as it has been noted that some farmers have switched from growing crops for food to producing crops for fuel production. This has raised questions as to whether the use of bio-fuels can offer a long term alternative to fossil fuels. In



Volvo offers two ethanol-gasoline models in Thailand: the locally produced S80 2.5 and the compact C30

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countries such as Brazil and Thailand, the crops which are at the center of the current debate are either not used in bio-fuel production (corn or maize), or are already produced in a sufficient surplus, providing more enough for domestic food consumption.

"It really is time for the critics of the E85 project to open their eyes and see that this is, right

now, the correct choice for Thailand. With fuel stations being opened by both PTT and Bangchak, and with both large and small imported and locally produced cars available, businesses and consumers can make the intelligent and responsible choice for both the environment and the Kingdom," added Volvo's Paul Stokes.



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EVENTS CALENDAR

Upcoming events on the island

Until February 8. Boathouse Art Gallery presents Kathy Manthei.

At Mom Tri's Boathouse from 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm daily. Phuket-based artist Kathy Manthei's unique repertoire of acrylic mixed media paintings includes the use of Chinese ink, metals – especially copper and gold leaf – and paper. Recently, she began working with encaustic (an ancient painting technique using molten beeswax) and acrylic transfers. Applying solutions to reactive metallic paints produces the rich, lustrous patina blue and green as seen on the bamboo pieces on show. Lately Kathy has also been using original images from her childhood, adding an appealing whimsy and childlike innocence to her art. For more information contact Lisa Sol. T: 076-330015. E: pr@boathousephuket.com. W: www.boathousephuket.com

January 11. Free Computer Clinic – Laguna.

Is your computer driving you NUTS? Looking for a decent Internet connection? Need to get a new computer, or fix the one you have now? Join "For Dummies" author Woody Leonhard at his weekly Computer Clinic: help, news, tips, explanations and more, all in plain English, and absolutely free. Computer novices most welcome. Bring your questions. Bring your computer. Bring your lucky rabbit's foot. Sunday, January 11, 10 am to noon, at Sandwich Shoppe Laguna (near the entrance to the Laguna complex). Sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette* and Khun Woody's Sandwich Shoppes. For more information contact Woody Leonard. T: 089-1960940. E: woody@KhunWoody.com. W: www.KhunWoody.com.

January 18. TriBallistic Triathlon Series 2009. Race 1 of 4.

Start the New Year with a bang at the TriBallistic & Phuket International Academy Triathlon Series 2009. The first of four events gets underway at the JW Marriott Resort & Spa on January 18. This great event is set to include:

- Splash & Dash 50m swim, 1.5km bike, 750m run

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

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

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January 18, Free Computer Clinic – Chalong.

From 10 am to noon at Sandwich Shoppe Chalong (1km north of Chalong Circle, near Wine Connection). For more information contact Woody Leonard. T: 089-1960940. E: woody@KhunWoody.com. W: www.KhunWoody.com. Please check the *Phuket Gazette* Events Calendar online at www.phuketgazette.net for a full list of Computer Clinics in January and February.

January 20. Punchline Comedy Club Live International Stand-Up.

The Punchline Comedy Club returns with another three top class, professional stand-up comedians. Australian Kitty Flanagan is joined by Brits John Gordillo and Roger Monkhouse. 8pm-11pm. For further information contact Boom. T: 083-6464671. E: info@phuketcomedy.com. W: www.phuketcomedy.com.

January 25. Free Computer and Mac Clinic – Chalong.

From 10 am to noon at Sandwich Shoppe Chalong. For more information contact Woody Leonard. T: 089-1960940. E: woody@KhunWoody.com. W: www.KhunWoody.com.

January 26. Chinese New Year.

The Chinese New Year starts with the New Moon on the first day of the new year and is the biggest social occasion in the Chinese calendar. It is celebrated with gusto amongst Thailand's sizable Chinese community and le-

gions of Chinese tourists from neighboring nations choose to enjoy the holiday in Phuket.

February 1. Free Computer Clinic – Patong.

From 10 am to noon at Sandwich Shoppe Patong (Aroonsom Plaza, near Andaman Beach Suites). Sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette* and Khun Woody's Sandwich Shoppes. For more information contact Woody Leonard. T: 089-1960940. E: woody@KhunWoody.com. W: www.KhunWoody.com.

February 9. Makha Bucha Day.

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

February 20 – 21. Phuket International Blues Rock Festival.

From 6:00 pm - 1:00 am at Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort and Spa. The fourth annual top music event in Phuket in 2009 features international star Eric Bibb - one of the greatest contemporary blues artists.

Eric has performed at the world's largest festivals including Glastonbury and tours the world constantly. We are extremely lucky and VERY excited to have him! California's world class New Orleans style boogie-woogie piano man Mitch Woods is also confirmed along with returning Guitar God Rich Harper. Sweden contributes with top acoustic duo Bert Deivert & Janne Zander. The Blues Machine from Pattaya and Bangkok's Cannonball will return and our very own Groove Doctors fronted by Tony 'Hacksaw' Wilson will also be back for some on-stage surgery. Decision is pending on the rest of the domestic based acts, but regardless – the 2009 show will be even bigger and better than the last!

See our website for news and updates. If you joined the party in 2008 you know you want to mark your calendar for 2009!

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact Andy Andersen. T: 086-6822639. E: info@phuketbluesfestival.com. W: www.phuketbluesfestival.com.

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ON THE MOVE

The Amari Coral Beach Resort and Spa has appointed 42-year-old German **Mr Thomas Vanderlieb** to the position of Executive Chef. Prior to his appointment Mr Vanderlieb was employed as Executive Chef at the Amari Trang Beach Resort and Spa. Mr Vanderlieb brings 25 years of culinary experience from as far afield as Germany, Austria, Ireland, England and Saudi Arabia.



Ms Sally Ho has been appointed Director of Finance at Sheraton Grande Laguna. A native of China, Ms Ho joins Sheraton Grande from Laguna Grande Company Limited where she was employed as Senior Manager – Finance & Administration. Prior to that, she was employed as Manager of Financial Planning & Analysis, Otis Elevator Company in Sydney and China.



Maître Cuisinier de France **Mr Jean-Noël Lumineau** has been appointed by M.L. Tri Devakul to oversee his restaurants in Phuket: The Boathouse, Mom Tri's Kitchen, Mom Tri's Oasis and Mom Tri's Boathouse Regatta. Since 1981 Chef Jean-Noël was executive chef of Château-Hôtel Le Prieuré in Anjou, one of the Châteaux of the noted Grand Etapes Françaises.



Corporate bonds – A cautious route to wealth



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

With the markets currently in such turmoil, a good vehicle for investment now is corporate bonds.

So, what is a corporate bond? With companies frequently needing to borrow money, two of the primary sources of capital are equity, through the issuing of shares, and bonds, which are fixed interest borrowings.

Corporate bonds are typically of 5–10 years' duration and normally guarantee the payment of interest relative to the ruling rate of interest applicable to the time frame involved. One other major factor which impacts on the interest rate payable is the credit rating of the borrowing company.

A company with a mediocre credit rating will be required to pay a significantly higher rate of interest than a company that has a top flight credit rating.

Credit ratings are set by independent credit-rating assessment companies such as Standard & Poors and Moody's. Cynical readers will no doubt point out that in many cases over recent years, banks issued dubious "commercial paper" with high-quality credit ratings. These readers are indeed correct; abuses of the system did take place. However, these instances have served to make the credit-rating agencies even more mindful of their fiduciary responsibilities. Other major parties that use bonds to raise funds are governments, and these bonds can be up to 50 years in duration, although two, five and 10 years are more common.

Most bonds, be they government or corporate, are seldom held to maturity; they can and are frequently traded during their lifetime. The capital value on maturity is always known in advance and if, for any reason, the issuer is unable to repay the capital the bond is deemed as being in de-

fault. Bond markets are subject to all the emotional fluctuations of other markets (currencies, stockmarkets, commodities, etc).

The reason in favor of investing in corporate bond funds is down to the general behaviour of credit markets over the last 18 months. When panic set into credit markets, investors rushed towards what they perceived as total safety, namely government bonds – especially those of governments that were regarded as being ultra safe.

The US Government is traditionally looked upon as being the safest place to "hide".

For most of 2008 corporate bonds were considered out of fashion; markets, when in panic mode, often become totally illogical. Yields on corporate bonds soared just as prices of the same bonds slumped.

When markets move to extremes it is often, after research, that the best bargains are to be found. These bonds offer investors high yields combined with the potential for significant capital gains. It is not a strategy for a long period of time, more a medium-term investment.

It is wise to want to invest in a corporate bond fund rather than trying to purchase the bonds of one or a small number of companies. Any reasonably competent bond fund manager knows when one or more of the holdings in a bond portfolio is coming under stress – normally subject to a credit downgrade – which will impact on the value of the relevant bond. In addition, bond managers are able to use wide-

ranging research and diversification. These are ideal investments for income purposes.

There are ramifications that must be fully understood to make use of the proposed strategy. A large number of offshore funds is deemed to be suitable only for professional and/or experienced investors. Simply by me or my company having a contract with a group in this category does not magically mean that any client of mine becomes an experienced or professional investor. There is a simple solution, which is to use "wrappers" or "platforms" which are issued by a wide variety of offshore insurance companies.

This is not an expensive process; there are no upfront charges levied by an insurance company. Insurance companies have contracts with virtually every fund manager and in addition, negotiate very substantial discounts on entry costs to funds. In many cases this results in no entry costs at all. This is often called a "no load" fund. Unfortunately, people often have a habit of searching for funds that are "no load" and performance becomes secondary. The insurance company approach means that nearly every fund becomes "no load" or a miniscule load.

Insurance companies also offer entry into funds that normally will not deal with the public or require very substantial entry amounts. The world, post 9/11, requires that each fund manager should be satisfied regarding proof of an investor's source of wealth, residency and so on. This makes it very difficult for indi-

vidual investors to negotiate these areas. In addition, all fund managers accept that insurance companies are both professional and/or experienced investors, which opens up so many more opportunities for individual investors. The most an insurance company will ask for is a signed form for their own compliance purposes.

Most areas of investment in corporate bonds, high yield bonds or any combination, including equities, hedge funds and commodities, are subject to change. Therefore, investors need to be able to switch their investment strategies from time to time.

With compliance issues being a factor when investors change strategies, it is much more convenient to have a "wrapper" where the choices run, literally, into thousands. The alternative is to stick with the previous company.

In reality, it is extremely unlikely that any one company, regardless of size, is the best in every area. A wrapper gives investors the ability, at little or no cost, and the flexibility to move and change portfolio composition and strategy without facing compliance issues and delays.

In addition, in the event of death, it is simple to deal with. The alternatives for beneficiaries can be an additional nightmare with substantial expense.

It simply makes life so much easier.

Richard G Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial-planning service and has over 25 years experience in this field. He can be reached at Tel: 076-381997, Mobile: 081-0814611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th Website: www.global-portfolios.com

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"ONCE UPON A TIME"

Welcome to the 5th Junior IMPAC Dublin Literary Awards for Thailand 2008/2009

Topic: "ONCE UPON A TIME"

Language: English

Length: 800-1,200 words

Age: Between 14-18, up to December 1, 2008

Opening date for submissions: December 1, 2008

Closing date for submissions: January 15, 2009

Winners announced: February 20, 2009

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- *The Nation*, Hat Yai office...for all southern provinces except Phuket, Krabi and Phang-Nga
- *Phuket Gazette* for Phuket, Krabi and Phang-Nga

2 Northern region contest: *CityLife*, Chiang Mai

3 Northeastern region contest coordinator: *The Nation*, Khon Kaen office

4 Bangkok contest (including Central & Eastern region): *The Nation*, Bangkok

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1 The winning author in each region will earn Bt10,000 and there are two merit awards per region of Bt5,000.

2 The overall national winner will win a trip with one parent to Dublin*, where they will attend the senior international IMPAC Dublin Literary Awards. The top award is the richest literary prize in the world. While in Dublin, the national winner will take part in a reading with the senior winning author.

**The Dublin trip for the Thailand national winner is compulsory. If the national winner cannot go, the trip will be awarded to the next winner who can go.*

Writers from the Southern Region should send entries to:

Managing Director
The Phuket Gazette
367/2 Yaowarat Road, Taladyai, Muang, Phuket 83000
or by email to: DublinAwards@phuketgazette.net

For more information, please contact Khun Jib at 076-236555
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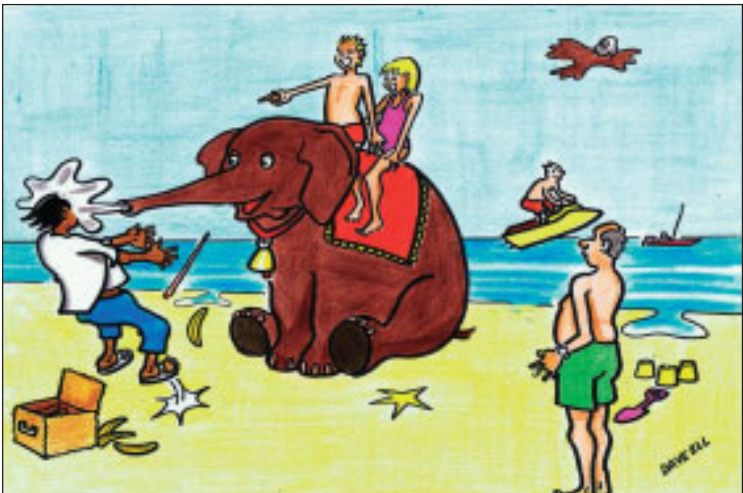

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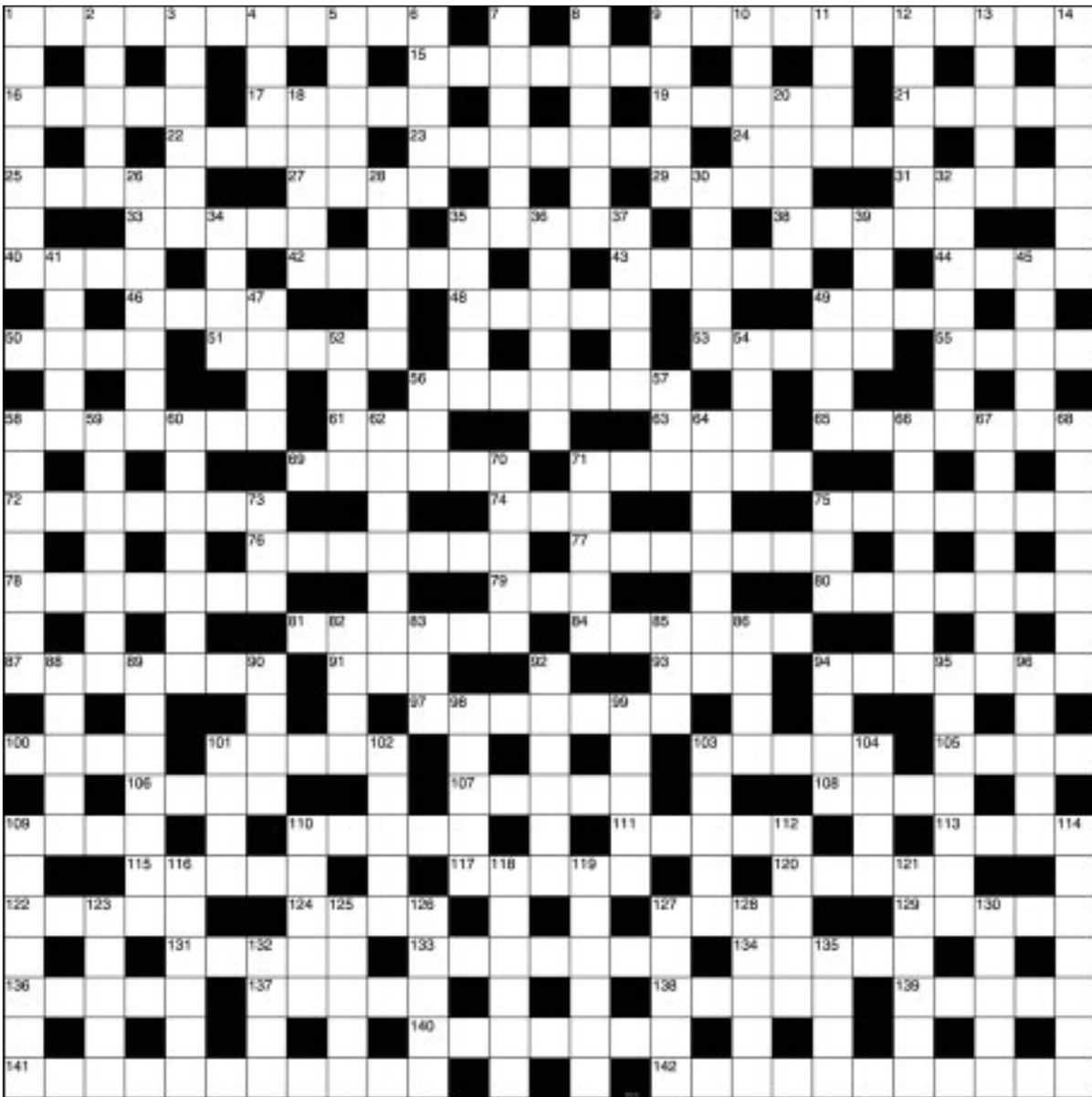
PUZZLES

Spot the Difference



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





The BIG Crossword

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Across

1. Personally inscribed (note)

9. Broadcast

15. Spring (from)

16. Child's swollen gland disease

17. Aesop tale

19. Lament

21. Specialised (market)

22. Weapon of mass destruction (1-4)

23. Evaporated (5,2)

24. Diameter halves

25. Long narrow crest

27. Positive votes

29. Dedictory verses

31. Jobs

33. Covers (gift)

35. Dwarf

38. Walked back & forth

40. Kill

42. Tremble

43. Odds or ...

44. Globes

46. Ark builder

48. Wise people

49. Seaweed variety

50. Ice-cream cornet

51. Pleasure boat

53. Tibetan priests

55. Which

56. Eyelid hair

58. Door lock aperture

61. Precious stone

63. Fashionable, ...mode (1,2)

65. Eluding

69. Reclining seat, ...longue

71. Genetic aberration

72. Singer, Cat ...

74. Misery

Down

75. Breakfast batter cakes

76. Simple story lesson

77. Greet

78. Indianapolis state

79. Cereal grass

80. Imposing building

81. Detests

84. Respectable

87. Contraptions

91. Umpire

93. Uncle Sam (1,1,1)

94. Brawn

97. Car's cooling system strap (3,4)

100. Until (2,2)

101. Noise

103. India's Taj ...

105. Perfume ingredient

106. Picked up the tab

107. Outspoken

108. Ewe's offspring

109. Snow monster

110. Sheikhdum, Abu ...

111. Truck

113. Misfortunes

115. Horrid

117. Holds out

120. Times past, ...days

122. Shelf

124. Avid

127. Sure thing, ...cert

129. Prove wrong

131. Mature

133. Wild marjoram

134. Islam centre

136. Baghdad native

137. Beasts of burden

138. Artist, ...Picasso

139. More cunning

140. Role model

141. Cowboy fighters

142. Raised the white flag

Across

67. Malice (3,4)

68. Engine seals

70. Large jugs

71. Cried (of cat)

73. Therapeutic bath

75. Rhyme, ...Willie Winkie

82. Roughage

83. Illegal field position, ...side

85. Minor wound

86. US space agency

88. Cider fruit

89. Searching blindly

90. Equipped with horse shoes

92. Chinese calculator

94. Dinner or lunch

95. Mix

96. Art stand

98. Smithy block

99. Sits idly

101. Seven deadly ...

102. Hang

103. French queen, ...Antoinette

104. Placed

109. Yapping

110. Dutch levee banks

112. Sing alpine-style

114. Stitched surgically

116. Antenna

118. Sports stadiums

119. Hikes

121. Obliterated

123. Sketched

125. Happen next

126. Snouts

127. Tranquillises

128. Beer colour

130. Purchaser

132. Distress

135. Arrive

Solution on next page

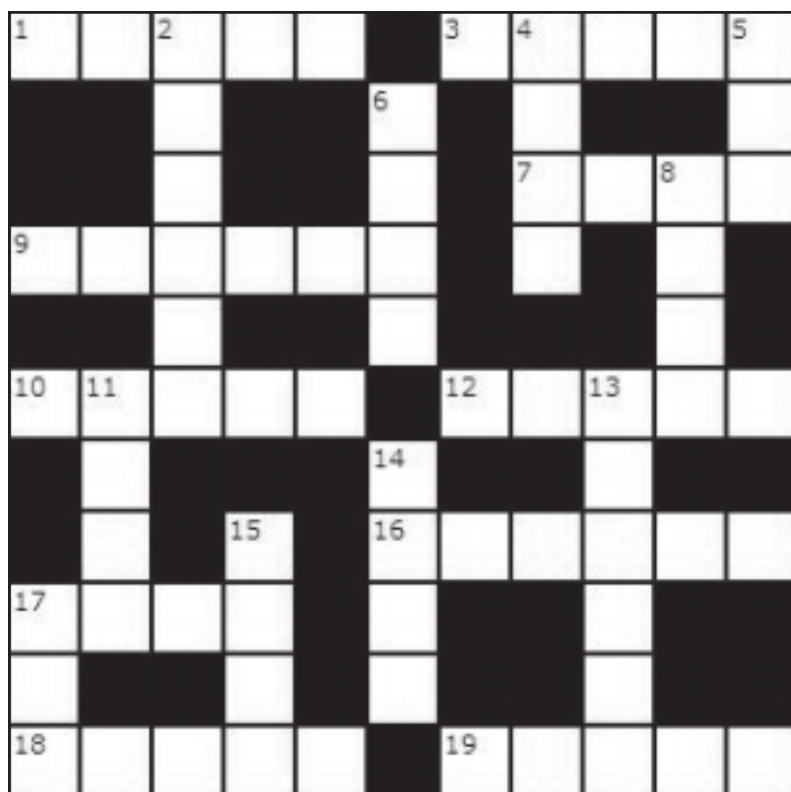
su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

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

The principle of Sudoku is very simple: each row, each column and each "box" of nine squares within the puzzle must contain all the numbers from 1 to 9 with, naturally, no repetitions. Guess if you will, but each Sudoku puzzle can be solved using logic alone. Beware: this puzzle has only one solution, which is on the next page.



Quick Crossword

Across

1. OK by the law
3. Horrible
7. Sacred garden
9. Basic
10. Footballer,... Rooney
12. Award
16. Something cold
17. Keyboard error
18. Nothing in it
19. Robbery

Down

2. Moody
4. Space
5. ...and Yang
6. For cooking
8. Volcano
11. Not here
13. Ten years
14. Actor,... Murray
15. Misplaced
17. On your feet

Solution below

Get your brain in gear with the MONSTER QUIZ

1. What is a charpoy?
2. What is or was a battledoor?
3. People who suffer from battology are afflicted by what?
4. What does inexorable mean?
5. What is skraelings another name for?
6. What does the word eponymous mean?
7. What is a Becquerel?
8. What or who are Tisiphone, Megaera, Alecto?
9. Where would you find Uighur spoken?
10. ASL, BSL, Auslan, NZSL and SASL are all type of what?
11. Approximately how far is the Earth from the Sun?
12. Who recorded the album Silent Alarm?
13. What countries does Belize border?
14. Who was Alexander the Great's teacher?
15. Why was the 2006 Superbowl larger than usual?
16. Ishihara tests are used to determine what?
17. What company was once known as Quantum Computer Services Inc.?
18. How many legs does a lobster have?
19. Which birthday did Google celebrate last year?
20. The Sea Parrot is more usually known by which more common name?

Answers below



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Puzzle Solutions

Solution to this week's Quick crossword



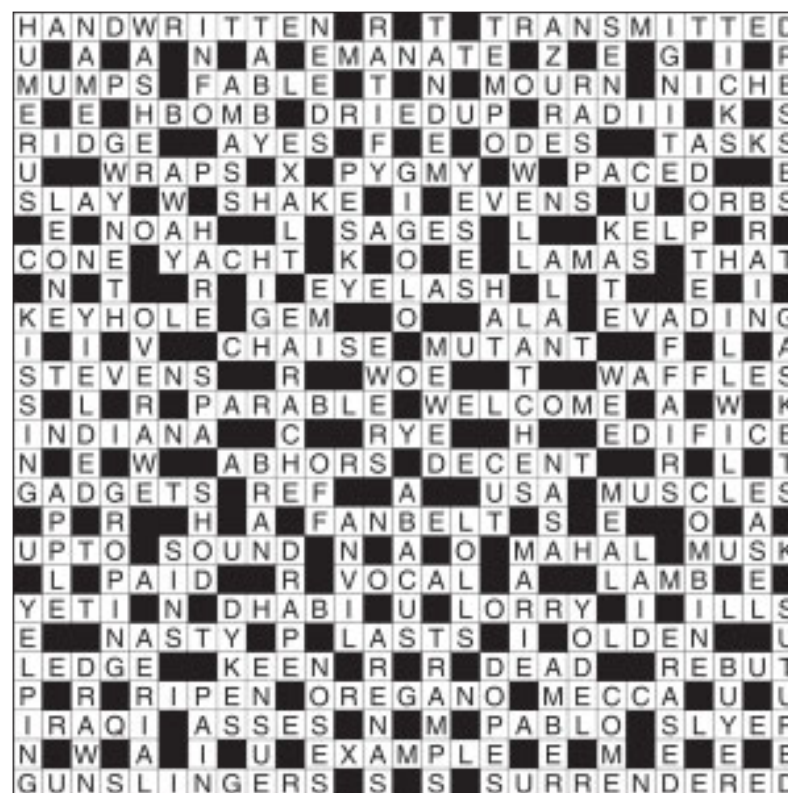
Monster Quiz Answers

1. Bed; 2. Badminton racket; 3. Stuttering; 4. Unrelenting, unyielding; 5. Native Americans (Viking name); 6. Named after (with the same name); 7. SI unit of radioactivity; 8. The Furies; 9. Western China; 10. Sign languages for the deaf; 11. 149.5 million km; 12. Bloc Party; 13. Mexico & Guatemala; 14. Aristotle; 15. As it was the 40th Superbowl it was called Superbowl XL; 16. Colour Blindness; 17. America Online; 18. Ten years; 19. 10; 20. Puffin.

Solution to this week's Sudoku puzzle

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

Solution to this week's BIG Crossword



Solution to this week's Cartoon Puzzle



Go east, young man...



Off the SHELF

By James Eckhardt

I moved to Abu Dhabi five weeks ago to work on the editorial desk of a new English-language newspaper called *The National*.

When colleagues in the press room discover that I lived in Thailand for 30 years, they invariably ask, "Do you speak Thai?" To which I respond, "I learned Thai the hard way. I married one. Then I had four kids who reinforced the lesson."

Carleton Cole learned Thai the hard way too, working as the first foreign busboy in a Thai restaurant in St Louis, Missouri.

He would go on to live in

Thailand, marry a Thai, land a job at *The Nation* newspaper and roam around 10 countries in Asia writing travel stories.

Destination Asia (Bangkok Books, Bangkok, 2008) is his first book.

I was Cole's colleague at *The Nation*, even sharing a desk for some time.

I read his book in manuscript form and contributed this blurb, "[The author] romps through Thailand, Cambodia, India, Ladakh, Sikkim, Nepal, Japan, South Korea, Brunei and Laos. This reader happily traipsed along. Cole's sharp eye and gentle humour make for travel writing at its best."

I've read a lot of Asian travel books, but Cole's has a unique feature: he tells you from childhood how he developed his fascination with Asia.

He used to hang out with two Indian brothers who gave him his first taste of Asia through its food, art and music.

As a high school student, he took vacations by train through China and Russia.

He collected a Teaching

English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) degree in San Francisco and then took a temporary job as an English teacher in Bangkok. At this point, he had read everything he could about Thailand.

"More than anything I could have done to have found Thailand, it seemed that the country had found me," he writes. "Somewhere along the line, Thailand simply struck me as the most intriguing and most practical option for indefinitely enjoying a taste of classical Asia, while still featuring an air of mystery, and offering modernity too."

He got his first passport in 1995. "Little did I know that a decade later, the pages in my passport would be filled with the standards of Thai bureaucracy: non-immigrant visas, police reports on the passport holder's address as registered with the police, and re-entry stamps, which I used in travelling to a dozen or so countries, as well as the colourful entrance stamps and visas for several countries."

Through his reading about and working with Thai people Cole felt, "I had come to feel at

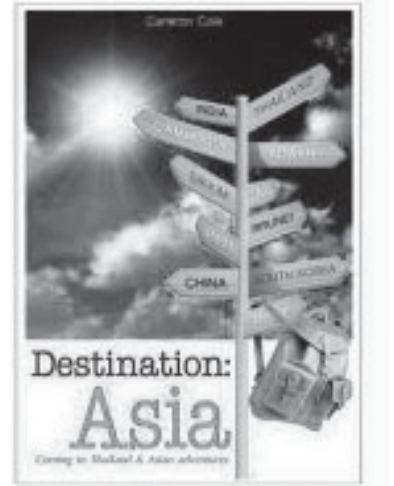
ease with the hat trick of *mai pen rai* (never mind), *jai yen* (cool heart), and *kwam sanuk* (fun)."

In Bangkok, he had fun right from the start. Formerly a teetotaler, he relaxed with beer and gin and tonics with his fellow teachers after class.

His rich students were attracted to him and soon he was patrolling around the streets in their BMWs. Here he met his future wife Sutamon "Mai" Lertmanorat.

"We shared an Asian-style outlook on accepting things that can't be changed, and rejoicing in our time together, appreciating each moment to the fullest," he writes. "At all times, she had a Buddhist air about her, respect for the religion and philosophy instilled in her at a young age. As in the case with many Asians, she put her family first when making important decisions in life. She did not take her frustrations out on others, and instead soldiered on as best she could. For this, I greatly admired her."

Their romance survived a two-year absence at graduate school back in the US and Mai



would prove to be an ideal companion in his travels around Asia.

After publishing three stories about Cambodian culture in *The Nation*, Cole was offered a job in 2000.

The last sixty pages form the meat of the book, namely, his travels through Asia.

Cole takes a long time to reach this point with some aimless meandering and the occasional clumsy turn of phrase, but overall, his love for Asia shines through and you're happy to take the journey with him.

A toothbrush or a soft cuddly toy?

In this regular new column, the *Gazette's* agony aunt, Madame Mali, answers readers' questions about the right (and the wrong) things to do in relationships, especially those between Thais and foreigners.

It really is 'up to you'

What was wrong with my Christmas gift?

Dear Mali,

I gave an electric toothbrush to a Thai friend for Christmas, thinking that this would be a gift I would like to receive myself.

However, from the disapproving look on her face, I think she did not appreciate it.

Did I do something wrong?

Tom Lewis
Karon

Mali replies:

Dear Tom,

Oh Dear! There are some gifts that really should not be given as they might be misinterpreted.

Although you may have thought this to be a useful gift, the recipient may well have assumed that you were hinting that she had bad breath, or that her teeth were in need of cleaning.

For the same reasons you should not give anything else that might be considered a hint as to the recipient's lack of personal hygiene.

When in doubt stick to something safe like a soft cuddly toy.

Mali replies:

Dear Franck,

Yes, this is quite normal as your Thai wife is merely giving you, her husband and presumably the bread winner, the opportunity to make a decision for both of you.

However, inherent in the phrase "Up to you" is the consequence of your decision if you get it wrong. There will be times when your answer could be the wrong one.

For instance, if you asked if your wife would mind if you went out drinking all night with your friends, she might reply, "Up to you", but hidden in that reply is the hope that you know the answer she wants to hear.

So in this case the answer may not, in fact, really be up to you!

Why is it always up to me?

Dear Mali,

I am a European man married to a Thai woman and I have noticed that my wife will never give me a decisive answer when I ask her opinion, always saying, simply, "Up to you".

For example, when we go to a restaurant and I ask her which dish she prefers she will invariably leave the choice to me, even though I can sometimes see that she does not approve of my choice. For example, if I order steak she does not eat it.

I find this lack of communication so frustrating. Is this normal behavior?

Franck Johansson
Rawai



If you have a question to put to Madame Mali about love, sex or relationships, send an email to askmali@phuketgazette.net

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Phuket could do more for wheelchair users

The Thai Constitution clearly stipulates that the state shall ensure a good quality of life for people with disabilities and work to improve their ability to live independently.

To this end, a comprehensive set of regulations require that government and private buildings such as stadiums, convention centers, department stores and hotels be accessible to people with disabilities. These form a fine regulatory framework, but it is questionable to what extent these measures are implemented in reality.

Sidewalks in many areas of Phuket are a hotchpotch of uneven surfaces, high curbs and open manholes, with obstacles such as signs and utility poles blocking the way. These are an annoyance for the able-bodied, but for wheelchair users it means Phuket sidewalks are mostly unnavigable. With no alternative, many users are forced to try their luck on the open road, the dangers of which are well known.

Furthermore, there are no buses with wheelchair-access and very few accessible public toilets. Many government buildings make little provision for wheelchair access and when they do, they do so half-heartedly, providing ramps that are too steep or lacking handrails. This is to say nothing of the countless small stores that bar wheelchair access with steps or narrow doorways.

Residents are not the only people affected. Phuket's tourism industry is crucial to its prosperity, and in these difficult economic times the island needs every visitor it can get. But while there are many disabled tourists visiting the island each year and enjoying their stay every bit as much as the average visitor, many are doubtless put off by the reputation of Thailand's streets and lack of accessible facilities.

All of this is not to suggest that Thais have no compassion for people with disabilities. Disabled travelers generally report the attitude and help they receive from their Thai hosts in glowing terms. Still, the fact that residents are so willing to help disabled tourists overcome the challenging environment in Phuket is not a reason to retain the status quo.

Part of the blame for the situation rests with Thai law: although the regulations clearly state what is required, few provisions are made for enforcement of the rules. Public officials and developers who are ignorant of the regulations remain so; those who are not know that there will be no penalties if they ignore them.

These problems cannot be solved overnight, and gradual progress is being made. But the *Gazette* would welcome signs that the authorities on the island are taking these issues seriously.

- The Editor



Letters

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

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

Sincerest thanks

I am writing on behalf of my brother-in-law Thongchai Wongsuwan and his two friends, whose lives were saved by a Caucasian man about 30 meters off Karon Beach on New Year's Day. Thongchai and his friends came back home to our home in Phuket City at about 7 pm, quite shaken by the experience but very grateful to the man who saved their lives.

Thongchai said he and his friends stopped off at Karon Beach for a swim in the late afternoon during a New Year's Day tour of the island. One of their group, a young woman, got pulled out into water too deep to stand in and started to panic. Thongchai and another friend went out to try and help her, but found themselves in trouble too. They called for help and a "farang" man managed to pull all three back to the beach safely, one after the other. They said they thanked the man profusely, but didn't get his name or nationality. Whoever you are, our family would like once again to offer our most heartfelt thanks for your heroism and preventing 2009 from getting underway with a terrible tragedy.

Fein Family
Phuket City

two years now, I have had the misfortune to witness a number of accidents. What is it going to take to persuade the 'powers that be' to install traffic lights and allow each entrant into the circle an allocated slot from which to exit into the main road?

The idea to cone off the monument during rush hour periods has reduced the danger of traversing the roundabout, but it has allowed on-coming traffic to drive faster, making it increasingly difficult for other motorists who are trying to pull out. This is dangerous for both sets of traffic.

It would be safer for all concerned if a system of lights were installed similar to the set at Samkong junction by the big Tesco Lotus.

Louise Darlow,
Bang Tao

Trashing Phuket

There are countless people living in Phuket who dedicate their lives to make the island the very best it can be for all; locals, expatriates and tourists alike. Despite the best efforts of so many there is a small minority who seem determined to undermine the good work of these honest, hard-working people.

The Rassada pier is a busy transport hub for many tourists traveling to the islands around Phuket and is often the final glimpse of the island that travelers have. The pier seems to have become a dumping ground for some folk, and not only is it sullying the natural beauty of Phuket, it is endangering the sea and marine life that many travel to Thailand to enjoy. If the last

thing holiday-makers see is a big pile of rubbish, it may become something they associate with Phuket and influence their decision about returning or not.

In Thailand there is an apt proverb which roughly translates as "Don't dump on your doorstep". There is nothing to be gained from turning Phuket into a rubbish dump – and everything to lose.

Warisareeya Malila
Rassada

Littering beach vendors

On my first visit to Thailand, one of the many things I enjoyed about this fascinating country was the vendors on the beach, who offered an array of delicious, freshly cooked snacks at unbelievably low prices. When I returned a couple of years later I cajoled my friends into trying some of these gastronomic delights and they too were hooked.

Since then, I have come to reside in Phuket and although I still love the food vendors, I am becoming increasingly disillusioned at their refusal to clean up after themselves. I'm not a tree-hugging eco-warrior by any stretch of the imagination, but I hate to see Phuket's beautiful beaches destroyed by litter. All it takes is a little care and consideration when serving tourists on the beach.

I don't wish to see the end of the vendors, as many of my finest meals have come from their fabulous offerings. I simply wish to see them tidy up afterwards.

Sarah Gallagher,
Surin

Heroines' Monument mayhem

The traffic situation at Heroines' Monument gets worse with each passing week. It amazes me that such a busy junction does not have a better system for controlling the flow of traffic.

Having lived on Phuket for

The Phuket Gazette

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Planning for the year ahead



The Governor's Letter

While many took holidays or returned to their home towns over the New Year break, Phuket Governor Preecha Ruangjan remained in Phuket to oversee the province during what is usually the island's peak tourist season. Despite the tourism industry coming under pressure from the impact of a string of national and international crises, Governor Preecha is upbeat about the future of Phuket as a popular tourist destination. In this week's Governor's Letter – the first of the New Year – Governor Preecha looks back at how Phuket coped with the issues faced in 2008 and outlines some of his plans to shape the province in 2009.

Although Phuket tourism last year didn't reach the peak recorded in 2007, Phuket managed to pull through satisfactorily despite the impacts of the flagging world economy and Thailand's ongoing political crises. Phuket was listed as the Number 1 province for tourism compared to other popular tourist destinations around Thailand, such as Chiang Mai, Chonburi, Petchburi, Hua Hin and Koh Samui.

Economic and political crises don't have such a huge impact on tourism, but tourism immediately suffers whenever there are issues of public security. People simply stop coming if they don't feel safe, whereas a destination experiencing an economic slowdown is a plus in the eyes of its foreign visitors.

Every country is affected by its own crises, but what matters in regaining the trust and confidence of visitors is how quickly and efficiently the issues can be dealt with and cleared up.

During the festive season at the end of 2008 and leading into 2009, there were campaigns to reduce accidents and deaths on the roads, which helped improve that aspect of public safety.

With a new government in place, the outlook for the future of Phuket is good. As long as the political situation remains stable for the next three to six months, I am confident that the province and central government will be able to work well together toward mutually beneficial goals.

Working together, we can gradually raise the province's status. Improvements won't be immediate but we will tackle issues on a step-by-step basis.

It's a good sign that most Phuket-based businesses have not had to downsize or lay off any employees recently. Some smaller business may be suffering temporarily, but overall it looks as if business will continue relatively unhindered in the new year.

Weekly tourist arrivals went up considerably during the Christmas and New Year period. Based on those figures, it would seem that – if all goes well – tourist numbers in 2009 will at least be an improvement on those of 2008.

Phuket will be offering more international facilities and activities in the coming year. Plans for 2009 include promoting Phuket as a world-class diving destination and the expansion of sports facilities in the province.

Divers from around the world will be convening here in May to firmly establish Phuket as a favored destination with the global diving community. Divers are generally wealthy so they represent a good source of income for Phuket.

Phuket is also in a position to host sports such as beach volleyball, which went very well last year, so we need to bring more international beach and water sports events to the province.

We also continue to promote Phuket as a tourist destination that is rich in history and culture. To this end, the Tin Mining Museum is nearing completion now and will give visitors a better understanding of the island's past and how tin mining initially brought wealth to the province. Surprisingly, Phuket also has a well-established farming industry, including harvesting rice crops, which is also being made more accessible for tourists to experience hands-on.

Other grass roots experiences for tourists to be promoted include traditional lifestyles on and near the water, such as fishing and ecological tours of the mangrove forests. Basically, tourists will be offered a greater choice of adventurous activities that will give

them more intimate and memorable experiences and will help to establish more repeat tourism.

In collaboration with the Airport Authority of Thailand (AOT), there are plans to increase the number of direct flights to Phuket. The first flight of XLAirways, France's direct shuttle service from Paris, touched down at Phuket International Airport on December 22. It was carrying 367 passengers. We aim to encourage more direct flights from European and Australian cities in the near future.

Summing up, it's important to be positive when faced with crises and to view them as opportunities that can be turned to our advantage, rather than letting them get you down. The year ahead is a good opportunity to start afresh and build on the good things we already have.

Teamwork among departments is key to achieving these goals, with each department being responsible for specific areas that when combined effectively bring about positive development. The Tourism Authority (TAT) is out there targeting specific markets with promotions of the various activities on offer in Phuket, and the Ministry of Sports & Tourism is playing its part in es-

tablishing more sporting events and facilities on the island.

To establish Phuket as a diving province we are working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Thai Diving Association (TDA) and Confédération Mondiale des Activités Subaquatiques (CMAS), otherwise known as the World Underwater Federation.

I will also focus on each locality in turn with the aim of helping each to establish their own direction vis-a-vis tourism, and I hope the island's resorts will continue to play their vital roles in supporting these efforts with event sponsorship, promotions and discounts. Resorts in Kata were heavily involved in organizing the Beach Volleyball last year and I am happy to discuss other similar projects proposed by the island's hotels and resorts.

In parting, I'd like to wish *Gazette* readers a happy and prosperous New Year, and to join me in considering the real meaning of happiness, which comes from the heart and is achieved by knowing one's limitations. If we all strive for happiness derived from living within our means, then collectively we can look forward to a successful new year.

Gasohol, 91, 95?

I was recently asked why I don't run my car or motorbike on gasohol. I drive a 2007 Toyota Yaris. I could not answer for the following reasons:

1. I not read the Thai owners manuals to see if the car or bike can use the fuel.
2. I cannot read the fuel pump hoses in Thai at the filling stations.
3. Is it the 95 filler hose?
4. Most Thai garages / dealers say don't use it.
5. My Yamaha motorcycle garage says don't use it (I have a 2007 Nouvo).

Please explain the mystery of the fuel grades here in Thailand and tell me what I can safely use without damaging either the engine or the warranty.

Thank you.
Graham MacMillan

Jeff Heselwood, motoring columnist of the *Phuket Gazette* replies:

Dear Graham, Most late model cars, like your 2007 Yaris, will run happily on 91 octane or gasohol. Gasohol contains around 15% ethanol or a similar compound.

Performance will not be enhanced by running 95 octane, so save your baht and run on 91 or, if it is available where you are, gasohol.

I cannot give a definitive answer regarding the Yamaha as I do not know enough about bikes, but my instinct is that it is probably not E15-capable (gasohol) as it is a relatively unsophisticated design, i.e. not particularly modern. I would stick to 91 octane.

Issues & ANSWERS

Why such a high customs fee?

I recently went to Singapore to have a family ring repaired as it couldn't be fixed here in Thailand. Following the repair, the ring was sent back to me in Thailand by Federal Express courier.

I subsequently received a call from Customs, who demanded a 15,000 baht customs fee. Why would I have to pay 500 dollars for my own ring, which is thirty years old, having paid for repair and freight costs from Singapore? Who's pocket is this going in? Just one more thing to annoy expats in Thailand.

Mike Hart

Khun Phinij Kijjaroenkha, Inspector at Thai Customs Replies:

In this case, Thai Customs deemed it to be an imported ring from Singapore. This occurred because you did not notify Customs that you were taking the ring out of Thailand to have it repaired. If you had registered your ring with Customs upon leaving, when you had your ring sent back to Thailand our inspection staff would have known not to charge any tax. Rings and accessories are taxable at a rate of 20% of the price of the item (including VAT).

Our suggestion is that the next time you want to take something out for such a purpose, you should register it at the airport or with Thai Customs. They will then take a photograph of your product and forward the registration to the Thai Customs system.

Phuket Customs Department: 454, Phuket road, Tambon Taladyai, Muang, Phuket 83000, Tel: 076-211105, Fax: 076-211106, Email: 48070000@customs.go.th. Website: www.customs.go.th.

The Loser's Guide to Lovemaking



The last time I made love to a woman, she got a puncture and all the air came out. Deflated but undeterred, I patched her up with my bicycle repair kit and got straight back on the horse, so to speak. It is the wisdom that I attained from these ground-breaking experiments in the art of advanced love-making that I wish to share with you amateurs here today. Accordingly, I proudly present my top ten tips for a truly legendary lovemaking experience.

1 Mood. The correct mood is an essential forerunner to any memorable mating experience, so don't ever make love when your team is involved in a penalty

shoot-out with the Germans. You risk using up all your best lines and a prodigious amount of exotic lotion only to end up watching a replay of the 1979 FA Cup Final on the TV in the spare room.

2 Location. The bedroom is no stage to be frittering away a talent like yours. Besides, that's where your wife is sleeping. For an episode of unbridled passion your lady will truly treasure, it is important that you explore new and exciting places to practise your art. Suitably pulsating venues include:

1. Polling booths
2. Yankee Stadium
3. A hearse
4. Traffic lights
5. Venezuela

3 Alcohol. Alcohol is an important ingredient either for you or your partner, depending on who is the less ugly. A bottle or two of Jack Daniels will serve to loosen your inhibitions, which will come in handy if you decide to try a bit of karaoke half way through. But beware, too much alcohol can have a debilitating effect on your performance, making it difficult

to sing anything by Celine Dion. Try to avoid tequila, unless, of course, both of you are extremely ugly.

4 Relaxation. Anxiety is almost the number-one cause of below-par love-making. It is, therefore, paramount that you relax, lest you risk utter humiliation and endless self-recrimination, not to mention the sadistic jokes that your partner will post about you on the internet. There are many helpful tools that can help you relax just prior to the big event, such as:

1. Sheep shearing
2. Mud wrestling
3. Defrosting the fridge
4. Ping-pong
5. Bursting bubble-wrap

(Must be done with your partner for maximum effect.)

5 Responsive. A considerate lover is a good lover. When you are in full flow and your partner tells you that the ceiling needs repainting, it is pointless to soldier on, hoping that she will remember you are there. You must be able to recognize and respond to the signals she is sending and get up and paint the ceiling. An un-

dercoat should suffice, given how late it is.

6 Appreciative. When making love, it is important to compliment your partner on her performance, even if it isn't really up to snuff. After all, she is almost certainly doing the same for you, so it seems only fair, when you think about it. This way, you can both walk away from the ordeal feeling good about yourselves, even though you were both rubbish.

7 Sensitive. After one or both of you have finished, do not immediately start looking for your Y-fronts and the car keys. Spend a little time together, talking about the ceiling or perhaps world peace. This will mark you out as a man of class and distinction and possibly qualify you for a discount next time. Take the time to relax and wind down. Perhaps smoke a cigarette – unless, of course, you are making love in a public building, in which case you could chew gum – unless, of course, you are in Singapore, in which case you might finish painting the ceiling.

8 Chivalry. When making love you must remember that you are not at the Harrods sale. Shouting and jostling for the best position is not considered appropriate behavior. Nor is choosing the posi-

tion which affords the best view of the television. If she wants you on the bottom you must acquiesce gracefully and not complain about being "played out of position".

9 Honesty. As the woman, it is her prerogative to fake anything she likes but, as a gentleman and man of honor, you must hold yourself to a higher standard of truth and honesty. The only exception to this otherwise inviolable rule is if she asks you, "Have you started yet?"

10 Maturity. Despite the wisdom I have imparted to you here today, there is a better-than-average chance that you won't get it right first time. Do not be discouraged by your failure to satisfy your woman. It's not the end of the world.

It is, however, the end of your wild night of passion – unless you can come up with a plausible excuse and request a "re-run". If she marks you down as an underachiever you must accept her decision with grace and dignity. Asking for a second opinion or a review of the video evidence will not serve any useful purpose at this juncture. Resign yourself to "a bad day at the office" and get on with finishing the ceiling.

In The Stars

by Isla Star

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Certain Capricorns will be feeling a little low as the second half of January commences. On a cheerful note, Taurus would like to bring some sunshine into your life. Even if you're not in the mood – or position – to become romantically involved with this person, a good friendship is forecast to begin. If your birthday is due this week, the year ahead promises to be less complicated than the one passed.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): At work, an ego-boost is predicted when Aquarians have a chance to prove what they can really do. Although you prefer to be the one calling the shots, it would be best to listen to those with more experience before making unrealistic demands. Later in the month, appropriate rewards will be forthcoming. A romantic dilemma is predicted this weekend – sparks fly when someone from your past reveals that they still have feelings.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): A fishy situation comes to the surface at work early next week and this could cause Pisceans to lose sleep. Careful consideration should enable you to see a way out and a fire sign colleague is ready to help. Wednesday is the most auspicious day for meaningful discussions. A romantic relationship becomes too close for comfort and you will be relieved when the person in question has some direct questions this weekend.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): Arians asking for financial backing this week are advised to have an irresistible business plan on the table. Someone born under the sign of Virgo will take more convincing than you anticipate. After a lull, the social scene demands your attention again, but you will probably be content to spend intimate moments with your partner this weekend. Those who are single find out that Leo likes what they see.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Your ability to calm troubled waters could be tested when dealing with bureaucracy early next week. Taureans will find this matter easier to navigate on Thursday when the stars encourage you to remain more patient. Where

tially stressful output – the second half of January is forecast to become busier than you imagine. The number four can bring good fortune on Tuesday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): A friend's need for consolation this weekend threatens to take up too much of your precious free time. Geminis are advised to retreat from the world by heading for a quiet place where no-one knows they are. After the middle of the month, your schedule becomes less tangled. Romance is best left simmering, rather than brought to the boil too quickly. Wear a piece of green agate to encourage balanced contemplation.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): You are able to rest on your laurels this week after a hectic start to the New Year. Cancerians who would like the opportunity to move house are advised to consult a fire sign friend who recently changed residence for useful tips. Expect to enjoy intimate moments this weekend with someone who has been playing hard to get, but this is still not the right time to ask for more commitment.

LEO (July 24-August 22): A work-related agreement should be carefully scrutinized before you take irreversible steps. The stars suggest that some Leos could have cause for regret if they believe everything they hear. You will be particularly susceptible to flattery around the middle of this month. A family problem is the possible cause for your inability to focus, but this issue should be solved by the end of next week. The number two is lucky on Tuesday.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Virgoans who feel they are invisible in the world of work will find astral backing to make their presence felt strongly this week. Others will be taken aback by your courage and you are advised to ask for the moon. Where affairs of the heart are concerned, this is also an auspicious time to tell someone of your interest. Sunday is the best day for arranging a surprise romantic date.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Your tendency to make mountains out of molehills is forecast to cause irritation this weekend. A partner or close family member will show their feelings in a way that takes you by surprise. Librans who are willing to admit that their hot temper can get out of hand should benefit from an honest discussion and the offer of help. A money transaction early next week should be carefully monitored as mistakes are highlighted.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Scorpios have a chance to show their caring side this week when a friend is in need of help. Your own problems will suddenly seem minimal when you learn of this person's plight. During the second half of January, your monetary worries will ease anyway as the stars support any attempts to boost income. Romance is also forecast to provide pleasure – a date on Sunday confirms that your heartthrob feels the same way.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): An unexpected visit from a close friend is a breath of fresh air this weekend for stressed Sagittarians. Sharing your concerns will show you that there are more ways out of a predicament than you have been able to envisage. While romance remains low-key, there are signs that a fledgling relationship will take off later in the month. Wearing the color hot pink can encourage a brighter outlook on life.



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work is concerned, the price of success should be weighed against poten-



Buying a new computer

By Leons Kovisars

Are you considering buying a computer? If so, it's worth giving the purchase a good deal of thought beforehand as this can save you a lot of money – as well as much regret later. Most people overbuy, choosing a computer system with more features than they require, while at the same time not getting what they need for a good computing experience.

Define your needs

What will you use the system for? Will it be for home or office use, where a desktop system is most useful? Or will it be for travel, requiring a portable? Be aware that while a powerful laptop may seem the best “one size fits all” solution, there may be options that better satisfy your individual needs.

Most home computer jobs require very little computing power. Common tasks such as writing a note or word processing document, working with spreadsheets, sending email and accessing the internet (including Skype-based telephone calls) require only a fraction of the power of just about any modern computer.

Watching a DVD will use more, but still not very much. On the other hand, video editing and authoring will use all the processing power available, and 3D gaming requires serious computer power and a very capable graphics processor (GPU), features not provided by mainstream systems on display at local vendors.

So, think about what you plan to use your system for and what software you will need. With this list in hand, you're ready to go shopping.

What to buy?

The decision is a branching process. The first question is: desktop or laptop? Laptops are an all-in-one solution and they are portable, although some of them stretch the limits of portability. Desktop computers win on just about all other counts, notably cost, selection of components, comfort during extended use, and service/upgrading.

Sitting in a comfortable position with a sturdy keyboard and a large, high-resolution screen makes it easy to focus on the work at hand – I am typing this on a portable on a rocking boat heading for Singapore, wishing I was sitting in front of my desktop. You may well need a portable, either as your primary computer or as a travel unit. How much are you going to use your system?

The amount of usage for a typical “road warrior” business traveler is still very much the same as for the average home user. Weight and bulk should also be a major consideration. For a



low-cost, lightweight solution, the new “netbooks” are the obvious choice: good keyboard, 10-inch screen, wireless access and Bluetooth – what's not to like? They don't include CD/DVD read/write devices but will play good quality audio and even movies if they are stored as video files on the internal drive or a USB stick.

Some travelers will need a larger laptop, particularly if their work requires visual presentation of a slide show or video demo. Laptops with screens up to 17 inches in size are readily available. These are very effective in booth and hotel room presentations, obviating the earlier alternative of searching for a local TV set to attach to the laptop to serve as a monitor.

This external monitor approach is unreliable and resulted in unconvincing pitches for many a traveling salesperson. A large-screen laptop can be bulky but will be effective and reliable.

What software to use?

Just about every computer sold will come with a “free” package of software. The operating system (OS) is the foundation, and will most likely be Microsoft's Windows (good old WinXP, the dreaded Vista, or the upcoming – any day now, for sure – Win 7), Apple's highly-touted OSX (currently Leopard version, with Snow Leopard lurking in the wings), or the very capable Linux (Ubuntu, Red Hat, as well as many other flavors).

Set aside quasi-religious discussions about which OS is best; let's accept they will all do the job – just about any job – for almost every user. Windows costs about US\$130-200 for retail versions (the computer maker pays maybe one-third of retail price). Apple OSX is about US\$130 with upgrades (typically annual and semi-mandatory) at the same price. Linux OS, on the other

hand, is free and you can spend the savings on extra toys.

Application software (apps) is needed for non-trivial computing tasks. Some apps are free, while others come at a very high price. The “free” apps pre-loaded on the computer are there because:

1. They are truly free and useful (not many fall into this category)
2. They are limited-time promotions there in the hope that you will pay for extended versions
3. The apps maker paid the computer maker to include them
4. Few (none?) of the free apps included with Windows computer systems are worth keeping. Some are outright nuisances, others just useless space-wasters. The following is a list of the apps you're going to need (with some truly free options):

1. Security software: firewall, antivirus (AV) and anti-malware software. Windows Defender (by MS) is a good firewall; Avira is recommended for AV; Comodo for anti-malware
2. Internet browser: Firefox is highly recommended
3. Email client: try one of the web-based versions (Gmail, Yahoo, etc); Thunderbird (from the makers of Firefox) is highly recommended

4. Audio/visual: Windows Media Player is excellent, but needs some additional codecs to play some video formats, eg. AVI. An internet search will find many good codec packages

5. Office apps: MS Office jumps to mind, but so does the price (US\$200-500). Don't get the “unofficial” black-hat versions, but do try Open Office v.3, supported by Sun and thousands of geeks. Totally compatible with the MS product and free

6. Graphics: Adobe's Photo shop is well known and very pricey. Try the free alternative: GIMP

7. Note that Open Office, Firefox and many others are available in Apple and Linux versions. Avoid pirate versions of proprietary software – aside from the legal and ethical implications they're more trouble than they're worth.

Viruses and other malware are common issues and the installed versions cannot be registered and updated with the maker's improvements and bugfixes. Your data is the most valuable thing on the computer and keeping it protected will simply make your life easier.

Where to buy?

It is advisable to buy your com-

puter at a store near your home. Modern computers have very reliable hardware, but problems do occur and having a local service center can be a major help. A USA or European warranty may be of little use in Thailand.

The first week of use is the most critical – weak components will fail very quickly. You may well have opted for a custom build by a local shop, which often provides better support than a major company with a service center in Bangkok.

Be aware of local practices different from those in your home country. Getting your money back for a defective product is very, very difficult; an exchange for same or similar product will generally have to do. For special orders, cost-free changes will be very difficult. Keep the receipt and be sure the warranty is dated and stamped by the shop.

I have found that PowerBuy (several branches in Phuket) and IT City offer good choice, price and service. The price of almost any electronic item will be the same across Thailand, and if you saw a system in a shop in Bangkok you will most likely be able to get it in Phuket, on special order if needs be. You may have to pay shipment costs, which are rarely more than 100 baht for computer items sent by overnight delivery.

Informed buyer

Consider your own computer usage, and buy on that basis, not what the salesman is pushing. Use good free software for your applications and computer security. Buy near to where you live and keep the receipts. Smile while buying, this is Thailand.

Leons Kovisars has been working with computers for over 40 years. He lives in Phuket and is a regular at Woody's Computer Therapy Workshop every Sunday morning.



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Beneath the WAVES

By Dan Ogunshakin

Scuba diving is one of the main reasons why many tourists visit Thailand, and with Phuket being one of the gateways to the world famous Similan Islands, many people head to the island in search of top-class diving. Hot spots Patong and Chalong host a huge number of dive shops, while many of the smaller, less dive-oriented resorts have schools that offer instruction and dive guiding in a wide variety of languages. The options available to novice and experienced divers alike are abundant and can be sampled through day trips, liveaboards, recreational diving education or technical diving. Over the coming weeks in "Beneath the Waves" we will explore some of the pleasures and practicalities of the wonderful underwater world of scuba diving.

Learning to dive still ranks as one of the best decisions I ever made. As a boy, I often dreamed of being able to breathe underwater; taking my open water diving course offered me the opportunity to fulfill that childhood desire. Descending into an alien iridescent world, inhabited by an array of weird and wonderful species and historic wrecks is a supremely exhilarating experience that little else can rival. The feeling of weightlessness and freedom is one that only an astronaut could know. My first experiences were so captivating and inspiring I felt compelled to go further, becoming a qualified instructor to help share my experiences with others.

Learning to dive can be a nerve-racking experience. The concept of breathing underwater

Taking the plunge: learning to dive



LEFT: A 1:1 student/instructor ratio, although unlikely, is ideal for a novice diver. RIGHT: A green turtle is one of many wonders you can see beneath the waves near Phuket. Get in the water!



is totally foreign to the brain as we consciously place ourselves in an environment that we don't belong to. Yet, despite this, it is, in fact, a relatively simple thing to do.

When starting out, there are a number of factors that one should consider before taking the plunge.

The first consideration is which dive organization to learn with. The Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) is the most well known of all certifying agencies and often the one that people feel most comfortable with. I've spoken to many potential students about other organizations only to be told, "I want to do my PADI." Or, "I've heard that certain countries will only accept PADI certifications, so that's the one I want to do."

The latter, of course, is false; any certifying organization

recognized by the Recreational Scuba Training Council (RSTC) is acceptable worldwide. However, people often feel reassured with what is familiar and this is one reason why PADI continues to be so successful. There are, however, a number of other organizations to choose from, including, Scuba Schools International (SSI) and the *Confederation Mondiale des Activites Subaquatique* (CMAS), to name but two. The two most frequently chosen around the world are PADI and SSI and realistically there are only a few subtle differences between their entry level courses. All agencies ensure thorough training before certification. Research each agency and choose the one you feel comfortable with.

Next up, you need to choose a dive school to train with. This is where things can become a bit tricky, as there are so many outfits to choose from. Both PADI and SSI have schools that proudly advertise their 'Five Star' center or 'Platinum' facilities. These should not concern a nov-

ice diver as they relate to the professional training sections of the school. A new diver can receive as good if not better training from a school that doesn't offer instructor courses as one that does; much depends on the individual instructor.

When choosing a shop, appearance counts for a lot. If the shop is well presented with smart, attentive and enthusiastic staff, chances are they will be as professional under the water as they are above it. Ideally, it is best to learn with an instructor-to-student ratio of 1:1. However, since this is often not possible, aim for no more than four students to one instructor and ask if your instructor will have a certified assistant present; the added presence of another professional can only be reassuring to a new diver.

Ask to see the equipment you will use on your course. As with shop and staff appearance, good equipment is a reassurance. Equipment that looks well maintained and well looked after is another sign that the school is being run professionally.

Individual anxieties are often the final troublesome areas. Beginner divers often have problems regarding a host of issues. Common points of concern revolve around fears and phobias, physical concerns or peer pressure. A simple way to confront these issues is to speak to your instructor and tell them what is troubling you. You will often discover that your instructor has taught many people who had similar worries or, in a number of cases, suffered the same anxieties in the past that you do now. Your instructor should be approachable, friendly and understanding. If they are sympathetic to your plight, you know you're in safe hands.

Armed with some useful insights into entry level diving, you can make an informed decision regarding which organization to train under, which school to take your course with and should you have any doubts, who to ask for help. Remember, it's normal to feel nervous before learning to dive; just don't let it stop you from taking that first step.

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Phuket to see its first-ever Fly-in



Airpark developer and flying buff Robert Suchard – delighted with the progress of Phuket Airpark. The buff(alo) on his shoulder is a reminder of the wallowing herd permanently based at the airstrip.

The current state of the world economy notwithstanding, Phuket continues to develop facilities and amenities to rival those of just about any other major tourist destination in the world. This month, flying enthusiasts and those who just like to watch can celebrate the opening of the island's new airport for private planes, a 500 meter grass strip at Phuket Airpark in Pa Khlok.

The event will be marked by a three-day Fly-in that is expected to generate a great deal of interest as it's the first such event ever to be staged here. Friday, January 16, will see the arrival of about a dozen single-engine aircraft from Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines.

On Saturday, when the public is more than welcome to attend and there is no admission charge, the schedule is chock full of events. The day starts at 0830 with a Muslim blessing ceremony followed by a breakfast of goat curry with nan. At 1000 there will be a Buddhist ceremony, and then comes a real treat for local kids: a brief flight in a microlight – free of charge!

In the afternoon, there will be live music and a series of exciting aerial games. The first of these will be a 'spot landing contest' in which each participating pilot makes three landings aimed at the runway number, with the overall score determined by the accuracy of each attempt.

But the organizers have

saved the best for last. In the finalé, each pilot carries a passenger armed with a small bag of bakery flour. They pass low over the airstrip, whereupon the passenger aims and releases the 'flour bomb' on a trajectory for a well defined target. That target will be none other than local real estate practitioner and Airpark promoter Wayne 'Red' Graham – in the flesh! The queue for wannabe (passenger) bombers is expected to be long.

Saturday ends with a BBQ dinner that may or may not offer, additionally, Roast Red Graham.

In the words of the airport's prime mover, Robert Suchard, an owner of multiple aircraft, "Flying is *sanook* [fun], and we hope that this event will prove it to the Phuket public at large, particularly to those who may never have attended a Fly-in before."

Sunday is slated to be an open day for anyone who might like to simply stop in, chat with the pilots, including the legendary Tom Claytor, and generally get acquainted with Phuket's latest and most welcome amenity.

To get to the Fly-in, simply drive to the Heroines Monument, take highway 4027 east (toward Cape Yamu) for 6.3 kilometers, and turn right into the airport.

The event is organized by Phuket Airpark and sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*.

For further information, see www.thephuketairpark.com

– John Magee

Laguna International Marathon on track



Following the success of the third Laguna Phuket International Marathon last June, in which more than 5,000 people from at least 40 countries took part, organisers have announced that plans for this year's marathon are on track with the fourth in the series of annual events scheduled to take place between June 12 and 14.

Initially established by organisers Go Adventure Asia to celebrate how the people, businesses, and the landscape of Thailand had recovered and were moving forward from the 2004 tsunami disaster, the race now sees entrants coming to compete from around the world.

In addition to the main 42km race, runners compete across a range of distances, including half and quarter marathons, a 5km walk and the 2.5km Kids Run.

Registration for the 2009 marathon opened on October 1 and organizers estimate that this year's race will see a substantial increase in the number of participants with more than 6,000 entrants expected to take part.

The Laguna Phuket International Marathon also gives the event's sponsors the opportunity to promote their products and services; VIP hospitality and trophy presentations as well as the legendary Pasta and Farewell Parties.

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Following the success of the Haven Lagoon Luxury Condominium Project's 1st phase, which is now nearing completion and almost sold out, Thakrana Development Group is pleased to announce the start of phase II:

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Construction

Surin

A boutique addition to Surin underway

By Khunakorn Terdkiatkhachorn

In April 2008, construction commenced on the Sansuri boutique apartments and penthouses. The development is located in the Surin Beach area, one of Phuket's most desirable addresses. Situated near Phuket International airport, three championship golf courses, two world-class marina's and the beaches of Surin and Bang Tao, the Sansuri is set to join the plethora of high-end resorts that combine great location with quality design.

Built on two rai, Phuket Boutique Development is developing 29 luxury, pool or sea view, open-plan apartments and three penthouse suites across six floors, from which potential owners will have the option to purchase five properties of varying size and price.

The ground floor apartments, covering an area up to 187.69sqm, feature a pool and garden view, three bedrooms and two bathrooms at a starting price of 13.92 million baht.

Floors two to five offer a variety of apartment sizes with prices ranging from 9.72 million to 18.8 million baht. Potential owners can choose a one-, two- or three-bedroom residence with pool and garden views on the second floor and sea views on the remaining floors.

The penthouse suites present panoramic sea views, three bedrooms, three bathrooms and a private eight-meter infinity-edge swimming pool with a spacious sun deck area. Prices start at 32.64 million baht.

In addition to the contemporary apartments, Phuket Boutique Development is constructing a number of facilities to help inspire a "relaxing soulful ambience".

The Sansuri will feature a 19-meter pool with stylish pool bar, luxurious main lobby and lounge



with full time manager, large terrace with sala bar, Japanese spa with herbal steam sauna, massage sala and Jacuzzi.

A car park is situated underneath the property and provides one space per apartment. The property maintains 24-hour security as well as closed circuit television.

Construction of the Sansuri is due for completion in April 2010 and the developers have already sold 35% of the units. A total of

49% of the floor area is being made available for foreign freehold and securing an apartment requires a 100,000 baht reservation fee.

MAIN IMAGE: Situated with its back to the hills and surrounded by lush palm trees, the Sansuri offers stunning views of the Andaman sea.

INSET: A stylish pool bar is planned in the communal area.



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Decor

Modern art in Surin



VG 21 plans to hold about three to four exhibitions per year, which will feature the work of artists from Thailand and SE Asia as well as from New York, London and Paris.

A aficionado of modern art will welcome a new arrival on the scene in the shape of VG 21 Gallery, which held its grand opening recently at Surin Plaza. The gallery was established by business partners Eduardo Valdivieso and Daling Rivera.

Managing Director Valdivieso explained the reasoning behind opening the gallery. "VG 21 is really an extension of our existing business. We have been doing interior design for villas in

Phuket for the past three years," he said.

After coming and spending a year in Phuket some five years ago, Valdivieso and Rivera moved to Chiang Mai, where they made the acquaintance of a number of internationally renowned artists.

After returning to the island and developing a successful home decor and interior design business, they came up with the idea of setting up a gallery, which would enable them to exhibit ob-

jects from some of the product designers they were working with in their home decoration business, as well as provide a platform to exhibit the works of the artists that they had met on their travels.

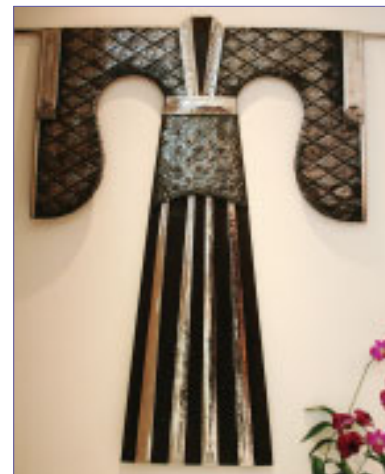
"We know so many artists who are not promoted yet in the south of Thailand but who are recognized internationally. So we extended our business and opened a gallery," explains Rivera.

VG 21 plans to hold about

three to four exhibitions per year, which will feature the work of artists from Thailand and SE Asia as well as from New York, London and Paris.

Not content with just exhibiting the artists' work, Valdivieso is planning to bring the artists over to attend each showing.

"The difference between most galleries and our exhibitions is that we will bring the artists here so that people can get to meet them and understand their art in a better way," he explains.



Kimono design by Daling Rivera.



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PROPERTY





PROPERTY WATCH

By Bill Barnett

Managing Director of
Phuket-based hotel &
residential property consult-
ing firm C9 Hotelworks.

Bill has more than 20 years' experience in the region and has played an active role in some of the island's biggest developments.

www.c9hotelworks.com

As we move into 2009, the world is becoming an even scarier, goofy and baffling place for property pundits young and old. As a property consultant and developer myself, it's easy to get caught up in an endless cycle of doom and gloom, so I've decided to tickle the ribs a bit and believe that it is better to laugh than cry into our beer glasses.

In the age of Wikipedia and the spawning of high-power acronyms and terminology for international finance, I'd like to take a moment to explain some of the more widely used and often cryptic phrases that have become commonplace in our daily lives.

HISP. The average number of hours per day spent surfing the internet by bored real estate sales staff who have no walk-in clients, phone calls, emails or any form of contact with the outside world. Also referred to as KCBRES.

BFF. "Best Friends Forever" or the last words said between property and hospitality staff being downsized in the current economic turndown. Not to be confused with BS (please see separate entry).

UPSIDE. A common term often used in conjunction with the phrase "capital appreciation", which is now as outdated as Latin. However, the phrase might stage a comeback on shows like "Celebrity Apprentice" or host a reality TV show on the E Channel.

New Phuket Wikipedia Entries

Acronyms induced by the economic slowdown



The last Elvis sighting was in Phuket on New Year's Day. Only his mask and snorkel were left behind.

TRAC. Short for "The Russians are Coming", which is something akin to the return of Jesus Christ and widely believed to be the last great hope in the form of nouveau-rich yahoo's carrying briefcases of money, ready to buy million-dollar villas at the drop of a hat and partying like it is still 1985.

Last sighted at the departure lounge in Survarnabhumi Airport muttering comments about the downfall of a lawless society.

TOYOTA. The Japanese automobile manufacturer is one of the world's largest industrial giants, who in 2008, recorded only their second year of losses in an otherwise starred history.

Industry analysts have pointed to the rapid decline in sales in Phuket's niche Vios-and-Fortuner market as somehow triggering the global downturn.

VIOS. The first car of choice for newly enriched real estate sales personnel, which they rush out to purchase after receiving their first commission cheques, thus making the leap from two wheels to four and entering the Thai credit stream.

FORTUNER. A tugboat-sized SUV – most often a prelude to new arrivals who are lured into "living the dream" in Phuket – the purchase of which is closely followed by a villa, townhouse or condo.

KCBRES. The defunct Latvian political ideology for Transgender Unification. Also stands for kilowatt hours consumed by bored real estate staff surfing the internet, Yahoo and MSN messaging and sleeping at their desks in air-conditioned offices. Current estimates are that the combined daily-load factor for these actions is equal the entire electrical consumption of Sierra Leone.

365. Days left until 2010, when they say things will be better, or not.

PETRO DOLLARS. The phenomenon of overseas investment in Thailand's property market by oil-rich Middle Eastern sheiks, bolstered by the illusion that oil was set to reach US\$200 a barrel and a belief that Dubai was as indestructible as Batman, Spiderman and Shrek all rolled into one.

Last seen leaving the country on an AirAsia flight as oil prices dropped to less than US\$40 a barrel.

ELVIS. The King of Rock and Roll. Has no relevance whatsoever to this article and as far as we know is still dead and buried at Graceland.

MADE OFF. Commonly used as a nick name for Bernard Manoff, whose financial demise triggered the vaporisation of a US\$50-billion-dollar investment fund.

Bernard is currently working on the self-help book *The Dummy's Guide to Small Business Accounting* and is thought to be shopping his life story, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

BS. If I have to explain this one then we are in deeper than anyone ever imagined.

REALICIDE. The act of a real estate developer, agent or disappointed investor taking his own life after his internet connection is shut off for non payment and his Fortuner runs out of petrol,

which now houses a family of 14 Burmese laborers and their pet water buffalo, Boo.

The most common method used to commit realicide is to ride a motorcycle with no working lights on Phuket's roads in the pouring rain without a crash helmet while talking on a mobile phone.

MONEY. A strange and widely-used method of payment used in exchange for goods or services, which was once coveted by many in the property industry, but is now on the verge of extinction.

Small money sanctuaries have been set up in remote outposts across many nations in the hopes of breeding larger populations through hedge funds, exotic investment instruments and complicated inter-connected stocks... Woops that's where we came... Oh dear.

To sum up the current state of affairs, in the words of the departed Rodney Dangerfield, "Don't take life too seriously otherwise you'll never get out alive". There is no doubt that we are under a global hailstorm but there are few places that are any better than this lovely island.

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Home of the Week

Kata

Villa Koosang Koosom makes for a 'perfect match'



Natural light pours into the airy living space of this stylishly appointed 16.9 million baht home – ready to move into and fully equipped with modern fittings.

Located on the south side of the picturesque resort of Kata towards Kata Noi, is the Villa Koosang Koosom. The name translates as the “perfect match” and the property has the potential to be the dream home many seek.

This custom-built villa is only four months old and is now available at the greatly reduced price of 16.9 million baht, with the option of a financing package.

This large, contemporary villa affords the potential owner stunning views of the surrounding hills and the Big Buddha, now a prominent feature on the island's skyline. Built in a quiet area of Phuket, the Villa Koosang Koosom backs onto a ‘green’ area and, with no plans for further construction, provides beautiful and tranquil surroundings.

With four bedrooms and four bathrooms, the villa is ideal for a family, while the open-plan design and the high cathedral-style ceilings of the dining and living areas make it the perfect venue for entertaining guests.

The floor-to-ceiling windows are the standout feature of

the ground floor, allowing natural light to come streaming in. Whether relaxing in the living room, enjoying a snack in the dining room or preparing a feast in the kitchen, the windows of Koosang Koosom will ensure you have ample light. The impressive windows open out to a 12-meter infinity-edged pool and a spacious deck area, perfect for soaking up some rays.

The kitchen, of German design, uses granite to top the counters and bold red doors on white cupboards to add color. Furnished with SMEG appliances, the kitchen is fully stocked with the latest mod-cons. A stylish breakfast bar, capable of seating six, finishes the area with a flourish.

The first floor, up the impressive spiral staircase, contains three of the four bedrooms and is dominated by the huge master bedroom – the fourth sits on the ground floor, with en suite bathroom and access to the pool. The master bedroom, with its vaulted ceilings, also features an en suite bathroom, plus a two-person Jacuzzi, LCD TV and a balcony



overlooking the pool. The other two bedrooms, perfect for the kids, share a three-piece bathroom.

In addition to the stylishly furnished rooms, the Villa Koosang Koosom is laid entirely with Maka hardwood floors and features a maid's room with a private entrance, a home theater

with 50 inch LCD TV and surround sound, an office, parking space for two cars and a separate area for motorbikes.

To complete the luxurious appointment of the villa, a secluded four-person Jacuzzi, with dining area, sits atop the roof, offering views of the garden, the hills and the Big Buddha in total

privacy, allowing owners to while away the days in style.

For more information contact Kay at Phuket Andaman Real Estate. Tel: 076-245966. Email: kay@phuketandamanrealestate.com Website: www.phuketandamanrealestate.com



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Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

BIG COLONIAL HOUSE



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LAND AT PA KHLOK



49 rai, nice flat land. Chanote, 2.5km from Heroines' Monument. 1.7 million baht per rai. Tel: 083-180 2143.

HOUSE & FURNITURE FOR SALE

Single house, 60sqm. 2 floors, 3 bedrooms and 3 toilets. In Chaiyapruet Village at Land & House, Chalong. Good location and entrance from By-Pass road. Built 2 years ago. Tel: 084-627 7001.

FREEHOLD PATONG

New condo, private road, security, 2 pools, fitness quality and good potential for profit. Tel: 083-391 8720.

CHANOTE, 29 RAI

at 1.6 million baht per rai. Nice and cheap land 12 minutes from Phuket airport. Located 200m from main road, electricity/ water well/ road access to the land. Good for housing project. Tel: 081-539 9269. Email: talayjan@yahoo.com

NEW STUDIO APARTMENTS IN RAWAI

4 new apartments with shared swimming pool. Kitchenette, Bathroom and Terrace. Only 1.9 million baht. Tel: 084-0639223 or 081-7888280

FREEHOLD, RAWAI



27sqm, studio, furnished, 200 meters from the beach. Asking 580,000 baht. Tel: 086-940 8914. Email: rawai1@yahoo.com

SEA VIEW 3.2 RAI

at north end of Bang Sak Beach. Take Thap Tawan beach road to Bang Sak Beach Resort, 6km south of Takuapa. Tel: 081-894 7644.

ON THE BEACH

2-bedroom apartment in north Patong. Foreign freehold, top floor, swimming pools. 9.7 million baht. Tel: 086-276-5117. Email for photos. Email: jihshand@gmail.com

IDEAL LOCATION IN PATONG

1 rai 1 ngan (2,000sqm) of street frontage land in Patong - close to Phuket Palace Hotel for sale at 50 million baht. Contact John. Tel: 076-294393, 089-724 1505. Email: unique_property@hotmail.com

NAIYANG GARDEN VILLA

1 rai with 4 houses. 7 bedrooms and bathroom, swimming pool, fully furnished. 2km to beach, 5km to airport. Sale only 8 million baht. Tel: 081-891 9346. Email: sumon@ridethailand.com

1 RAI LOTS

in gated community. Ocean view. East coast, Pa Khlok. Starting at 3.5 million per rai. Royal Coast Company Ltd. Tel: 076-353926, 081-693 2791. Email: eam1008@mac.com

LOOKING FOR AN INVESTMENT



in Phuket & Phang Nga. Seaview land/house. Tel: 081-539 9269. Website at: www.janproperty.com

DOUBLE VILLA IN KATA



Panoramic sea views - 5 bedrooms, 466sqm living space, 36sqm pool with Jacuzzi, 4 minutes from Kata Beach. Ready to move into. Only 24 million baht. Email: allservices29@gmail.com

NEW HOUSE

for sale/rent. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, True TV, internet, 300m from Heroines Monument towards Pakhlok. Sale 3.7 million baht. Rent 20,000 baht per month. Tel: 087-264 6808, 083-174 3880.

PATONG TOWER 63 SQM

Renovated, freehold, 2 rooms, terrace, nice view, pool, 200 meters to beach. Furnished, TV, WiFi, 2 aircons. 4.7 million baht. Tel: 086-976 0809.

LAND IN MAIKHAO

7 rai, 1.7 million baht per rai, near Westsands. Chanote and public road. Tel: 083-633 4994.

HOUSE IN KAMALA

Price reduced to 3.9 million. 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom, next to Print Resort and Kamala Beach. Tel: 086-277 3381.

PERFECT LAND FOR SALE

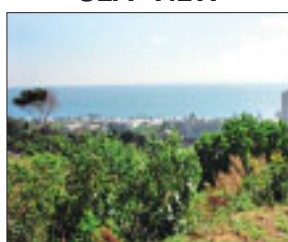
on the main road to Cherng-Talay and Surin. 43 rai, 1ngan, 85sq wah. For sale by owner. 5.5 million baht per rai. Tel: 081-956-2406. Email: phatsarar@gmail.com

VILLA + LAND



for sale. Quick sale near Heroines monument, 12.9 million baht + clear land 2.5 million baht. Tel: 084-690 7057.

PANORAMIC SEA VIEW



Karon land for sale. 15 rai. Chanote title. Hillside, panoramic sea view, quiet area. Very good location for business. 15 million baht per rai. No agents. Please contact by email: allservices29@gmail.com

NICE PLOT

near Layan Hills Estate and pool villas project. Chanote title and road access on 4 sides of the plot. 4.5 million baht. Tel: 081-539 9269.

PERFECT LAND

Nearly 2 rai at Bang Tao. Very good location for business. 18 million baht. No agents. Tel: 086-944 2065, 087-689 9679. Email: tasuwan@hotmail.com

CAPE PANWA CONDO

2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 116 sqm, luxury quality finishing. Freehold 5 million baht. Tel: 087-279 6700.

www.Phuket-villa-property.com

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TOWNHOUSE IN THE PROJECT 'THE INDY'



at the entrance to BIS. Townhouse is at the corner and adjacent to the project's public garden. 2 floors, 6.5 meters wide, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms. Land: 32sq wah. Tel: 089-472 9118.

INEXPENSIVE HOUSE LOTS

Chanote titles. East side, electricity, 1/3 to 1 rai, price from 850,000 baht. Tel: 086-942 1930.

PATONG CONDO 56 SQM

freehold. Western style kitchen and bedroom, balcony, large pool and car parking. End unit. Ready to move in. 3.8 million baht. Tel: 076-293149, 081-824 1385. Email: jbiwo@csloxinfo.com

QUICK SALE

Only 5.1 million baht, near Laguna. Thai-style home. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, kitchen, living room. Tel: 087-893 8590.

LAND BETWEEN CHALONG/RAWAI

for sale. 2,788sqm with chanote title. Price 6.8 million baht. Tel: 089-885 4517.

PARICHART VILLAGE, CHALONG



35/20 Soi 1. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 aircons, some furniture, 50sq wah, garden. For sale or for long-term rent. Must see. Contact Nina. Tel: 087-689 9679. Email: tasuwan@hotmail.com

HOUSE IN RAWAI

for sale. Corner unit, 26 sq wah. Price 990,000 baht. Tel: 086-952 9517. Email: condo tel@web.de

KAMALA SERVICED CONDOS

1 bedroom, 75 sqm. Common pool, hotel service, 3 floor unit. 2.3 million baht. Ground floor unit 2.4 million baht. Tel: 087-272 0303.

LAND KAMALA 2,200 SQM 9.9 MB

4 plot + house. Elec & water. 900m to the beach. Tel: 076-292596, 086-267 8477. Email: tourniechristian@hotmail.com

3 BEDROOM POOL VILLA RAWAI

for sale. Big bedrooms, full kitchen, big garden + private pool, aircon, secure, great location. Tel: 085-783 1890.

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Property Gazette

LUXURY VILLA IN KATA HILL

3 bedrooms, landscaped garden, swimming pool, jacuzzi. Includes all furniture. Only 18 million baht. Tel: 084-0639223 or 081-7888280

SEAVIEW LAND



4 rai prime sea view land for sale in Kata. Reduced to 9.8 million per rai. Tel: 081-273 5047.

AO POR LAND FOR SALE



150rai. Nor Sor 3 Gor, sea view. Priced from 2.5 million baht per rai. No agents. Please contact by email: allservices29@gmail.com

COCONUT ISLAND LAND



for sale. 4.5 rai. Chanote, hillside panoramic sea view, close to beach. 14 million baht. Please call K. Bouddha Tel: 089-290 0484.

4 RAI SEAVIEW PLOT AO POR

Gently sloping hillside land along Ao Por beach road. Tel: 076-528014, 087-2705959. Email: gary@dublanco.com For further details, please see our website at www.aoporphuket.com

LAND IN PHANG NGA

for sale. 9.8 rai working fruit farm, 300+ trees, 5 fish ponds, 2 farm houses suitable for fishing park, 5 kms Phang Nga, 45 mins Phuket airport. Chanote title deed 5,800,000 baht Tel: 086-274 0056 English or 085-151 0823 Thai.

SHOPHOUSE IN PATONG

for sale. On Rat-U-Tit 200 Pi Rd. 13 million baht. Fully furnished, 7 bedrooms. Contact Khun Ae. Tel: 089-472 9895.

BEAUTIFUL NAI YANG LAND



9.5 rai, beachfront. 5 minutes to Phuket airport. Asking price: 120 million baht. Chanote. Must see. No agents. Please contact via by email: allservices29@gmail.com

NEW HOUSE IN NAI HARN-RAWAI



for rent. 3-story villa, sea view, hill view, garden, pool, 4 bedrooms with 2 en-suite bathrooms, 6 bathrooms, ADSL. Jacuzzi. Big living room, kitchen/dining, laundry room. 5 aircons. 8m x 3.5m private pool. 2 parking spaces. Tel: 081-677 9837, 089-646 4786. Email: sync_koji@hotmail.com

TWOVILLAS RESALE

Private pool villa, fully furnished, 1-4 bedrooms. Location: Nai Harn/Bangtao. Price starts at 6.5 million baht. Tel: 076-289900, 081-970-0742. Fax: 076-613114. Email: sales@twovillas.com

CHEAP LAND SALE

7 Rai Maikhae Beach. Chanote, public street, 1.9 million baht. Tel: 080-719 3785.

PHUKET COUNTRY CLUB

Duplex renovation project directly on 15th fairway for sale. Reduced 'fire sale' price. See website, then call or mail for further details. Tel: 081-894 1994. Email: tom.fekete@gmail.com Visit http://www.fairway15.com

PHUKET COUNTRY CLUB



Duplex renovation project directly on 15th fairway for sale. Reduced price. See www.fairway15.com Tel: 081-894 1994.

CHALONG SHOPHOUSE

New building with 5 big A/C rooms, ground floor comprising of shopfront and kitchen with main road access, cable TV, internet, tel line, etc. Potential for business. Contact Wiyada at 083-593 4490. Email: cj2820@yahoo.com

KHOK KLOI HOUSE

2.9 million baht, 4 years old, 118sqm house on 904sqm plot. Quiet area, 3 bedroom, 1 bathroom, big kitchen, aircon, phone line, 2 car covered parking. Chanote. Tel: 081-728 4821 or 081-693 2759.

MAI KHAO HOUSE

for sale. One-story single house, 3 bedrooms with built-in furniture, big dining room and kitchen, large garden with big trees, area 305 sq wah. Only 5.5 million baht. Tel: 089-697 0928.

GOLFVIEW ROOM + GOLF MEMBERSHIP

5th floor Golf View Condo. One bedroom. 58 square meters. Includes golf club membership. Tel: 089-488 0955. Email: together@myway.com

SURIN BEACH

Land on Soi Haad Surin 2 for sale. 2.2 Rai, 5 min walk to Surin Beach. Tel: 082-411 2138.

COMMERCIAL RAWAI

88 sq wah, 32 meters frontage on busy Sai Yuan Rd. 4.9 million baht. Good investment. Tel: 085-794 2675.

HOUSES, BANGTAO

for sale. 2-3 bedrooms, from 3 million baht to 14 million baht. Tel: 087-268 8752. For further details and photos, please visit our website at www.phukethome.ws

QUICK SALE

5 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms at 4.5 million baht. Tel: 081-894 2009.

NEW BUILDING FOR SALE



in busy area, Soi Sai Nam Yen, Patong Beach.

- * 4-storey
- * 8 apartments on floors 2, 3 and 4
- * Chanote title
- * Electricity, water
- * 2 minutes to the beach

Asking price:

52 million baht.

Tel: 087-2709093, 081-8687676.

Beach Front Land For Sale Khao Lak/Phang Nga

45 Rai chanote title. Ideal for hotel or residential. Adjacent to 18 hole golf course. Near tourist attractions. Paved road access to major highway. 40 mins from Phuket International Airport.

Direct Sale by Owner
Tel: 086-378 4841
paradiseland.phangnga@gmail.com

BEACH FRONT GUESTHOUSE

for sale, lease or rent! Tel: 076-340454, 081-892 0761. Fax: 076-290221. For further details, please see our website at: www.phuket-apartments.de

LAGUNA AREA

Townhouse, 200 sqm, 2 bedrooms with office/storage. Sale: 14 million baht; Rent: 70,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-719 3960.

3 BEDROOM HOUSE

for sale or rent. 3 bedroom, 2 bath full furnished. 2 km from Heroines monument. 17,000 per month. Sale 2.6 million baht. Tel: 083-103 6578.

KHAO LAK VILLA

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Condo in Blue Canyon Home 1

Location : Thalung
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Type : Condominium
Area : 154 Sq.m.
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Price : THB 19.5 M
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Baan Suan Naramit

Location : Rawai
Type : Thalung
Area : 540 Sq.m.
Br/Bth : 5 Brs 5 Bths
Price : THB 12.8 M
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Property Gazette

LUXURY POOL VILLA



Large 600 sqm pool villa, 5 mins to Laguna, 4 bedrooms, fully furnished. 16 million baht. For sale or rent. Tel: 081-734-4324. For further details, please see our website at www.phuketgreenlandvillas.com

LAND MUST SELL



190 metres of beach frontage, 7 rai (can split) with view of Yacht Haven Marina, secure title. Road access, electricity, water, ready to build. Best investment. For sale at only 35 million baht or best offer. Must sell. Tel: 081-343 0777.

OFFICE FOR SALE IN PATONG

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4 plots of land on Koh Sireh, park view, 480sqm each, beach, Chanote title, concrete road access, 300 meters from new yacht marina. Asking for 1.5 million baht per plot. Tel: 081-536 9252. Email: sppcnx@gmail.com

URGENT SALE

House in Kathu. Good price townhouse. 2-story, 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom. Tel: 089-288 8519.

VILLA IN NAI HARN

3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, western kitchen, aircon, room for pool. 3.9 million baht. Tel: 076-288047, 081-894 1660. Email: cottrell@tttmaxnet.com

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First class modern bldg. Furnished, all amenities. 62sqm, 280' view city/ocean/mountain. Quiet, yet walk to everything. 4,275,000 baht. Tel: 080-797 5263. Email: caltirol@hotmail.com

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NICE HOUSE FOR SALE

Maneekram Village, between Central Festival and Chalong. 609.20sqm 2-story house with swimming pool. 3 bedrooms with balconies, aircon, 3 en-suite bathrooms with hot water, dining room, kitchen, parking and garden. Use of Village Clubhouse facilities. Rent: 65,000.-baht. Sale: 15 million baht. Tel: 081-892 4735. Email: noksk@samart.co.th

AGRICULTURAL LAND

for sale. 120 rai of agricultural land for sale, 20km from resort area of Khao Lak. Total price 3.84 million baht. Please telephone 087-020 0191 for further information.

NAI HARN POOL VILLA SALE!

Beautiful house, only 5 years old, on 850sqm of land. New 60sqm swimming pool, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, European kitchen, living room. Fully furnished. Two terraces, garage, carport, nice tropical garden. Very quiet location. Chanote land title. 6.9 million baht. Tel: 076-388633, 086-682 9709. Email: weidner@loxinfo.co.th

3 BEDROOM POOL VILLA

in Rawai for sale. Big bedrooms, full kitchen, big garden with private pool, aircon, secure, great location. Telephone: 085-783 1890.

LAND PLOT FOR HOLIDAY HOME



Project Baan Nam Khem, 24 units, mountain & lake view, amid a green cashew nut plantation, 10 min. walk to pristine beach. Price: 1.2-2 million baht/plot. Contact Maneerat. Tel: 081-812 0388. Email: mgrueneberger@yahoo.de

SEA VIEW CONDO 7.2M BAHT

Spectacular sea view, 100 sqm. 2 bedrooms, 5th floor. Security entrance, corner unit, wrap-around glass windows, parking, roof top pool/bar, furnished, phone, DSL, 40" HDTV, washer/dryer, deluxe kitchen and trim. Overlooks Patong Bay. Tel: 076-340792, 087-882 2858. Email: scuba1959@msn.com For further details, please see our website at http://www.phuket-tropical-realestate.com/more_detail.php?id=111852

3 BEDROOM POOL VILLA RAWAI

Full aircon, fully equipped, kitchen, 24 hours security, great location. For sale. Tel: 085-783 1890.

PATONG GUESTHOUSE



5 rooms with bathrooms for sale. Can use for a business or restaurant, Nanai Rd. Price 8 million baht. Tel: 081-676 7709.

RARE SEA VIEW LAND

Small plot of west coast sea view land for sale. Three Rai, (4,800sqm) already subdivided into one-rai plots, each with Chanote Title. All three plots offered together. Mai Khao, north of airport. Best value for Sea-view property in Phuket; perfect for development. 10.5 million baht per rai. Tel: 076-350063, 081-476 1515. Email: start@arcwin.com

VILLA + 2 HOUSES IN PATONG



Villa, 4 bedroom, private pool and good views. 2 houses with 8 small apartments, 700sqm. Freehold land. 40 million baht. Tel: 089-290 9567. Email: lars.micksater@comhem.se For further details, please see our website at www.brommathaihouse.com

CHALONG SEA VIEW

2-story twin house, 36 sq wah, 3 bedrooms with airconditioning, garden, sea view and mountain view. Only 3.5 million baht. Tel: 089-697 0928.

SARIYA HOUSE



320sqm plot. 2 story luxury villa with sea view. 3 bedrooms (1 pool-side and 2 with balconies overlooking pool), 3 en-suite bathrooms, fully-fitted kitchen with top-line convection oven, spacious open-plan living and dining area, large jet stream swimming pool, roof-terrace with stylish sala & double car-port. Fully furnished with air-conditioning.

- Price: 13.6 million baht
- Type: Villa
- Location: Soi Kery off Sai Yuan Rd., Rawai/Nai-harn
- Contact: Khun Kob
Tel: + 66 (0) 895892662.
Email: sariyapat-t@hotmail.com
Website: www.siriyahouse.com

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Property Gazette

Properties For Rent

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KATA LUXURY APARTMENTS

New, fully furnished, 1 or 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, full aircon. Large Western teak kitchen and bath, 130sqm, large seaview terrace, pool, parking. Weekly, monthly and long-term rates available. Serviced also available. Tel: 089-592 6890. Email: north8west98@yahoo.com

ROOMS / CONDO FOR RENT

I have rooms from 18,000 baht per month. Call me (Maria) or email for details. Tel: 084-845 0003. Email: m@bayproject.com

SINGLE HOUSE

for rent. Thalung monument, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Tel: 081-537 0033.

RAWAI HOUSE / FLAT

for rent. Fully furnished, swimming pool, ADSL. Direct from owner. For further details, please see our website at www.ferienthailand.com

HOUSE FOR RENT



Near suanluang, 1.5 km from Central festival 86 sq wah, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 1 bathtub, fully furnished, 5 aircons, European kitchen, resthouse, garden, Call Mr Mongkon. Tel: 084-062 8040.

LUXURY MANSION

for rent in Rawai. 4 large bedrooms. Fully equipped, Western and separate Thai kitchen. Full aircon, huge indoor and outdoor living area with private pool. Tel: 085-783 1890.

HOUSE FOR RENT

3 bedrooms, 2 toilets, 2 aircon units. Internet, cable TV, garden & car park. Five minutes to Laguna. Tel: 084-051 1955, 084-190 8555. Email: sornin_s@yahoo.com

THAI VILLA AND POOL

In Nai Harn 1km to beach, very quiet location, stunning view, 2 bedrooms, en-suite Jacuzzi, open-plan lounge, diner, European kitchen, private garden with parking. Long term: 40,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-270 5126. Email: mervyn.crocker@yahoo.com

NEW CONDO

28sqm, furnished, 1 bedroom, aircon, TV, ADSL, fridge, kitchen. Great location on Thepkasatri Rd. 12,000 baht per month (negotiable). Tel: 076-310334, 081-893 6414. Fax: 076-310296. Email: bb_powerz@yahoo.com

PATONG TOWER CONDO-A BEAUTY



Beautiful Patong Tower beach condo with stunning 280° panoramic views of the sea, hills and town. Large outdoor patio and wrap-around balcony. Comes completely renovated, with Internet and washing machine. Available from October 12. Tel: 011-86-13816344147. Email: txxt@yahoo.com For further details, please see our website at www.patongtowerrental.com

FOR RENT PATONG BEACH

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for rent. 3 bedroom, 3 bathroom, European kitchen. 5 minutes to Patong, close to Loch Palm Golf course. Fully furnished, 2-story, big balcony. Tel: 081-4400101. Email: nahja@yahoo.com

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- Previous sales experience
- Personality and smart presence

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- Kitchen Furniture
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ELECTRONICS SALE

DVD Players, Recorders, Titles, Home Theatre sets, etc. Email for details. Tel: 089-908 7350. Or email: wagner_fin@hotmail.com

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RECUMBENT EXERCISE BIKE

Want to buy a recumbent exercise bike in good condition. Can collect if the right bike found. Tel: 081-892 7948. Email: jypenman@phuket.ksc.co.th

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Fri 7 PM

Patong Hospital - Patong
Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun at 7 PM

Chalong Health Clinic - near Chalong Circle
Tues 1 PM

Sirin Beach - Sirin
Thurs 9 AM

Krabi Hospital - Krabi
Wed 1 PM

(additional Krabi meetings on request by contacting 084-4463103)

Scandinavian Speaking Meetings

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Tel: 086-9440460 Swen, 082-2785980 Nor

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Julie Cook (UK) will be in Phuket from December 26 until January 9. Will be available for readings during these dates. Well known on various radio and TV shows in the UK. For information/booking please call after 26 December. Tel: 083-389 6137. Email: welshwytych@hotmail.co.uk

FLUENCY IN GERMAN

Teach until you use this language fluently. Tel: 081-250 4264. Email: sayfine@me.com

RELAX AND ENJOY

When you want a massage, please call Khun Jan on 084-729 9938. Massage in your home.

NORWEGIAN TRANSLATOR

to translate from English and/or Danish into faultless Norwegian, long term. Tel: 089-971 4154. Email: jun_levillage@gmail.com

Personals

NEW FRIEND 2009

Nice-looking farang would like to make friends with a good Thai lady. Email: tanewius@yahoo.com

BACKGAMMON

Retired businessman looking for backgammon players in Phuket. Tel: 081-577 8443.

SPORTY GENTLEMAN

Charming, true, home buddy, is looking for a nice female to spend free time together. Email: mack_th@yahoo.com

Pets

NICE POMERANIAN

Very, very cute pomeranian must go due to allergy. Good breed, nice looking, 3 months old. Tel: 085-158 7638, 085-158 7638. Email: pierre_hammar@yahoo.se

AMERICAN PIT BULL

Beautiful red nose Pit Bull puppy. Female, 12 weeks old, fully vaccinated. Must be seen, 10,000 baht. Please contact Khun Noi at 087-146 6622. Email: cj2820@yahoo.com

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ISUZU MU7, 4WD

Black, 4 months old, 2,540km. Price 950,000 baht. Tel: 087-281 4024.

G-WAGON - FOR SALE BY EXPAT

2004 model. Good condition, 2.8L turbo diesel, automatic, 4WD, leather interior, and CD stereo. Full insurance, 490,000 baht. Tel: 076-260468. Or email: ops@theestategroup.com

TOYOTA FORTUNER

2007, auto 4x4, full insurance, 3.0cc diesel, airbag, ABS. Rental for long term (6 months): 40,000 baht per month, or 12 months: 35,000 per month. Tel: 089-591 9998. Or send email to chonmapoom_k@yahoo.com

RANGE ROVER '04



Blue/blue, excellent condition, includes license plate #9 (value 220,000 baht), o.n.o 43,002km. Price: 3.9 million baht ono. Tel: 089-866 2121.

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2006, silver, auto, diesel, full options, 3.0, 90,000kms. Please call for more information: 086-167 4607.

FORTUNER 2006 AUTO

Diesel, silver Lenso alloys, DVD, special reg no. Toyota warranty plus immaculate. 950,000 baht. Tel: 085-784 0569.

FORD RANGER 4X4

Hurricane, turbo. Full options, year 2004. Only 48,000km. 4-door, manual gear, sound system: 40,000 baht. Dark blue. Excellent condition. 450,000 baht. Tel: 081-8919461.

VIGO 4WD 4X4 2005

G, manual, complete & top condition, extras, service book. Price: 560,000 baht. Tel: 087-294 5737.

SUZUKI CARIBIAN

Economical red Jeep, good condition, 1 year registration, aircon. 100,000 baht. Tel: 076-319457.

VIGO 4WD 4X4 2005

G, manual, complete & top condition, extras, service book. Price: 560,000 baht. Tel: 087-294 5737.

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Near-showroom condition. 185,000 kms. Carryboy and Sony CD/MP3. 310,000 baht. Tel: 086-949 9255. Email: mikdevhot@hotmail.com

ISUZU D-MAX 2004

Top of the line D-MAX. 4WD, 4 Doors, 3L, many extras. 425,000 baht. Tel: 086-942- 1969. Or email: laclisque@gmail.com

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Motorbikes

BIKES FOR SALE

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HARLEY DAVIDSON

1. HD 2004 Sportster 883 cc, black, bike book. Price: 350,000 baht.

2. HD 2008 Fatboy 1584 cc, 96 qb, gold and black, bike book. Price: 1,100,000 baht. Tel: 081-691 9346. Email: sumon@ridethailand.com

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Looks good and runs well. Green book and photos avail. 110,000 baht ono. Tel: 087-077 9816. Or sent email: williet98248@hotmail.com

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Vios, short or long term. Tel: 081-555 7421.

P.M.P. CAR RENT

New cars for rent - Toyota Vios, Yaris, Fortuner, Wish and Honda Jazz. Tel: 087-264 6808, 083-174 3880.

TOYOTA FORTUNER

2007, auto 4x4, full insurance, 3.0cc diesel, airbag, ABS. Rental for long term, 6 months 40,000 baht per month or 12 months 35,000 baht per month. Tel: 089-591 9998. Email: chonmapoom_k@yahoo.com

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Frame: OCLV 120 Carbon Aero

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- Wheels: Bontrager Race Lite

- Shifters: Shimano Ultegra STI, 10 speed

- Front & Rear Derailleur: Shimano Ultegra

- Pedals: Shimano Dura Ace 7800 Pedals.

Tel: 086-945 0370. Or mail: harald20@hotmail.com

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WANTED

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