Dive trip turns to tragedy

PHUKET: Freak weather conditions caused a boat carrying foreign tourists and Thai crew returning from a diving trip in the Similans to sink about 12 nautical miles off the coast of Phuket on the evening of March 8.

The boat, ‘Choke Somboon 19’ (Perfect Luck 19) was carrying 30 people in total, comprising 19 tourists, three diving instructors and eight crew members, when it was hit by a water spout at about 11 pm, causing the vessel to capsize.

At about midday the next day, local fishermen and Marine Police picked up 23 survivors from the accident who were found floating adrift in inflatable life rafts. They were taken to the Deep Sea Port at Makham Bay.

The survivors were met by staff from the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM), who gave out blankets, water and food. The survivors told the Gazette that they had not eaten since the sinking the night before. They were questioned and photographed by the DDPM as they came ashore.

Marine Police, the Thai Navy, fishermen and staff from Dive Asia picked up two bodies in each – and were presumed by Marine Police to be two bodies, although the DDPM counted for. They were named when it was hit by the freak storm.

Mr Chakri Leechuay, the captain, said that he had been working as a boat captain for Dive Asia for about 20 years and that the boat was large enough and new enough to withstand an average storm, adding that he had never experienced such freak weather conditions.

In an interview with the Gazette – prior to the discovery of the sunken vessel and the bodies trapped inside – the owner of Dive Asia since 1995, Juergen Schenker, expressed his concern for the missing passengers but defended the captain’s actions and the boat’s seaworthiness. He said that weather conditions were calm until about 20 minutes before the accident and that the vessel was well designed and could handle average storm conditions.

Mr Schenker said that his staff normally go to the pier to meet the vessel at about 8 am. However, the boat failed to arrive at the usual time and we attempted to contact the boat without success. We had a chat with some of the local captains but they did not know where our boat was, so we informed the navy and marine police,” he said.

“This was a tragic accident. I would not say of diving here that the boats are unsafe. All the people working on the boats, they are not suicidal and would not take a risk going out with unsafe boats.”

“This boat is brand new and our company has 20 years of experience which went into that boat and we had people saying they feel completely safe on board. So in that regard it’s a great loss for us and for the Phuket dive industry and we hope that the divers who come here don’t lose the trust in us or any other company,” he concluded.

At the time of going to print, operations were focused on recovering the bodies, with plans to bring them up from the wreck on Thursday to have them properly identified, and to search for the two people still missing, whose bodies were presumed to still be trapped in the sunken vessel.

Emotions run high as survivors return to the shores of Phuket. INSET: The boat ‘Choke Somboon 19’ capsized when it was hit by a water spout about 12 miles off Phuket on March 8.
Singaporean woman confesses to ordering Degioanni murder

Gov Preecha Ruangjan transferred in reshuffle

The confessed mastermind of the slaying, Goh Li Fun, in a picture taken after the 2004 tsunami disaster. Courtesy of The Electric New Paper, Singapore.

PATONG: Kathu Police have arrested six people for their alleged part in the murder of Canadian real estate developer Francis Alex Degioanni.

The suspected mastermind behind the murder is among them. Police say Singaporean national Goh Li Fun, 32, confessed she had Mr Degioanni killed after he refused to repay several million baht in personal loans.

Better known as “Diana,” the Singaporean worked as a real-estate broker in Patong. The Electric New Paper recently reported that she was in Phuket at the time of the 2004 tsunami, volunteering to help victims at Patong Hospital.

She has told police she paid four men from Petchaburi 1.5 million baht to carry out Mr Degioanni’s murder.

The two suspected gunmen were identified as Somchai Mingjaiyen, 29, and Suwan Seek, 32.

Police are still hunting two more suspects, believed to be hiding in a jungle in Petchaburi province.

Phuket Provincial Police Commander Apirak Hongtong told the Gazette that the headmen of the two men’s villages have promised to deliver the suspects into police custody.

If they fail to do so, police will have to get the men themselves, Maj Gen Apirak added.

The six suspects in custody appeared at a press conference on March 6 at Kathu Police Station, led by Police Region 8 Commander Santarn Chayanon.

Diana, who had known Mr Degioanni for six or seven years, borrowed several million baht from a friend in Singapore and gave it to Mr Degioanni as a loan, it is alleged.

She was saddled with monthly interest payments of around 100,000 baht. When she asked Mr Degioanni to pay her back, he refused and said they had no written contract, police quoted her as saying.

Her Thai friend Netnapa Withayammasophon, 37, helped her find people to carry out the murder, police said.

On February 19, the shooters waited near Degioanni’s office and fired at least 10 shots with two .38 caliber pistols as soon as he arrived. The killers then ran to a motorbike driven by one of the suspects who is still at large.

Details of how the police were able to catch the gang were also revealed. Having spoken to witnesses, investigators knew the getaway vehicle headed towards Karon.

Police checked hotel records and discovered the four suspects stayed in a room near Simon Cabaret and checked out the day after the murder.

Police showed Mr Suwan and Mr Somchai’s ID card photographs to witnesses to the murder, including the victim’s wife, who identified them as the gunmen, police say.

Mr Somchai, arrested in Bangkok on March 4, confessed that all four men worked together to kill Mr Degioanni.

Mr Sumon was arrested on March 5 and others on March 6.

Mr Suwan was arrested on March 8.

The two men’s villages will have to get the men themselves, Maj Gen Apirak added.

Detectives in Petchaburi province recently reported that they were able to catch the gang after running the men down in a motorbike driven by one of the suspects, who is still at large.

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Police, not yet satisfied with the confession, continue to investigate.

Police: Englishman murdered after botched robbery

PHUKET: Governor Preecha Ruangjan is to be transferred to Phatthalung province in the north of Thailand, a source in the Governor’s Office has confirmed.

Dr Preecha, a native of Phichit province, was appointed as governor of Phuket less than five months ago under the government of Somchai Wongsawat and his now disbanded People Power Party (PPP).

The self-described “country boy” will leave Phuket on March 14 and start his new job two days later.

Dr Preecha is to be replaced by Wichai Phraisa-ngop, currently governor of Sing Buri province.

Mr Wichai, who served a stint as Phang Nga governor starting in October 2007, is expected to arrive in Phuket on March 16 and begin work immediately.

Cabinet on March 10 approved a list of 28 transfers of high-ranking civil servants, including those of Dr Preecha and Mr Wichai.

Rumors of the governor’s imminent transfer had been circulating since the Democrats, under Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, formed a coalition government in December.

Despite his brief stay in Phuket, the energetic Dr Preecha established himself as a popular governor who was widely respected by fellow bureaucrats, local politicians and the media.

For Dr Preecha’s final Governor’s Letter, prepared before the transfer order was announced, see page 25.
Briton, German arrested on child molestation charges

PATONG: A British man and a 17-year-old German youth were arrested on child molestation charges following a probe by the Department of Special Investigations (DSI) and Kathu Police.

The first arrest was of 41-year-old British national Dax Young, who was apprehended at his home on Soi Laksila, off Phraaram Road in Patong, at 6pm on March 6.

Young’s arrest was followed four days later by the arrest of the German teenager at his mother’s rented home in Rawai, where he had been living for a year.

The two accused were presented at a press conference at Kathu Police Station on the afternoon of March 10.

The press conference was led by Phuket Provincial Police Commander Apirak Hongtong and DSI officer Pol Maj Jatuporn Arunleaktawin, who spearheaded the probe.

The two men have been charged with conspiring to molest at least two schoolboys aged nine and 13.

Young has denied the charges, while the German youth confessed. Police are still investigating to determine if other young boys were harmed by the pair.

Young had befriended the young German, who spent a lot of time at the older man’s house near Wat Suwansiriwong School, Kathu Maj Gen Apirak told the press conference.

A Kenyan born UK national, Young has lived in Thailand for seven years and Phuket for at least five.

He set up soccer nets in front of the house and often invited boys from the school to play football, the press was told.

The pair enticed the children into the house with the promise of sweets and video games, then sexually abused them, police said.

Some boys went once and did not return to the house, while others returned several times.

The accused paid some of the boys sums of 200-300 baht after their visits, police alleged.

The alarm was raised when teachers at the Wat Suwansiriwong School noticed that some of the boys in their care were spending time at Young’s home.

In February, the teachers told The Mirror Foundation of its work with children, informed the DSI.

The DSI co-ordinated with social workers during its investigation and arranged for psychologists to interview boys who had come into contact with the accused.

At least two admitted to having sexual relations with the pair.

A search of both Young’s and the German youth’s home yielded a laptop computer, two digital cameras, a video camera, 128 CDs, three video tapes, two DVDs, a dildio, name cards, a hard drive, a flash drive, as well as nine Japanese-style nude cartoon books as evidence.

The photographs featured underage boys naked and engaged in explicit sexual acts, some with adults and some with other boys.

The day before the press conference, Kathu Police Superintendent Grissak Songmonmark showed the media a dossier of evidence containing graphic images of a Caucasian man alleged to be Young performing anal sex on a boy whose age was estimated at no older than 12.

Following the press conference, Young was remanded to Phuket Prison while the German youth was sent to the Phuket Youth and Juvenile Detention Center.

As an adult, Young could be charged under Section 279 of the Thai Penal Code, which states: Whoever conducts an indecent act on a child not yet over fifteen years of age, whether such child shall consent or not, shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding ten years or fined not exceeding twenty thousand baht, or both.

Police conduct drug raids in Patong

PATONG: Kathu Police dispatched three groups of officers last week to conduct random drug checks on staff and patrons at nightclubs in Phuket. One group of officers checked bars along Soi Bangla, another group checked bars along the beach road, and a third group went to Phang Nga and Sirirat Roads at the south end of Patong.

The inspection teams, of about 10 persons each, included district officials and female workers from the local public health office who took urine samples at each location and tested them for amphetamine use.

The inspectors also checked the following week.

Police conduct drug testing as part of the Kathu-wide crackdown.

PHUKET: Demand for residential projects in Phuket has dropped slightly due to the global economic downturn, Real Estate Information Centre (REIC) director-general Samma Kitsin announced recently.

According to an REIC survey, residential projects ready for sale now numbered 139, or 12,334 units. Of the total, 88 are detached-house projects with a combined total of 8,561 units. Of these, 5,508 units have been sold.

Another 51 condominium projects have a total of 3,773 units, of which 2,054 units have been sold.

Foreign buyers are the main purchasers of residential property in Phuket. Many of them have delayed their decision to buy.

Samma said 51% of foreign buyers of residential property in the island are investors who hope to generate rental income or sell when the asset price rises.

Of the rest, 34% invest in properties as a vacation residence and the remainder buy for long-term stays.

Residential property priced between Bt10 million and Bt40 million per unit are the most popular with buyers seeking a vacation place or an investment, according to the survey.

Home-buyers who intend to live in the residence prefer a price of between Bt3 million and Bt5 million per unit, Samma said.

Downturn cuts demand for Phuket real estate

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Once upon a time...

In December last year, high school students aged 14-18 from around the nation were invited to submit essays written in English for the 5th annual Dublin Literary Awards for Thailand under the theme “Once Upon a Time...”.

The annual contest is sponsored by international productivity consultant IMPAC, the Embassy of Ireland, Public Care Service Co and Kerry Group. The contest was co-organized by The Nation, Nation Junior, Phuket Gazette and CityLife.

The Phuket Gazette judged 91 entries from contestants from the Southern Region, selecting Ms Joy Corshes, 16, from Quality School International and Ms Nutthawan Sriritchumalai from Phuket Wittayalai School to receive merit awards of 5,000 baht each and Ms Pawida Khraich from Phuket Wittayalai School as the region’s finalist.

Ms Pawida received 10,000 baht for her winning entry and will join other regional winners at the Windsor Suites Hotel in Bangkok on March 20 for the announcement of the overall national winner. The winning entrant will win a trip to Dublin – accompanied by one parent – to attend the senior international IMPAC Dublin Literary Awards on June 11, 2009.

Judges based their selections on the writer’s ability to come up with a unique story and how well it was presented on paper. The Gazette wishes Ms Pawida all the best in Bangkok. Here is her story as it was submitted – unedited.

I’m sitting in the room with fear. I hear his sounds and it’s getting near me. He knows I’m here. I try to do not make any noise but it’s too difficult. While the sound of finger flipping is coming closer and closer.

“Come on Neil, Come out” He said with a cold voice “You cannot hide from your whole life” “I know you are here. You cheated me. Your request is done. And where is my pay off?”

He folds the newspaper and lays it down. “It’s not difficult. I just need a key” “What key?” “The key of the owner? What about the old owner?” “With pleasure, As long as you have something to give me back” He said.

“I have money. I can make it to become true?” I asked “Yes, I am” “The contract is beginning now” he laughed and flipped finger “Steve, I want to get quadruple salary” “I thought you would never ask. I’ve been waiting for ages” He said, cleaned his Rayban sunglasses “And what things do you want to change with it?”

“My laptop” “No problem. You can prepare to be a rich man” he flipped his finger. It’s just an old one. A shoddy laptop that I saved money to buy it. I can get quadruple salary. I can buy any good quality laptop from that money.

Two weeks later “Steve I want to be a company owner” I looked at Steve. He was reading a newspaper “Can you make it to become true?” “With pleasure. As long as you have something to give me back” He turned the newspaper to the next page “Wow! Cell phones today can wash dishes. I have to buy one”

“Hey, Could you please talk to me first? How can I be the company owner? What about the old owner?”

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How easy it is! I just bought this book but I won’t read it. I will come back and tell this stupid shopkeeper that I am disappointed I will my get money back triple.

“Are you sure that you will pay back for triple” I didn’t believed at first

“Certainly” he flipped his finger “But believe me you won’t return it” he laughed

It wasn’t a surprise that I accepted this deal in no time

At first I decided not to read it but it was something in my mind that told me to read it and a big alteration will happen to my life

Most of the stories were ordinary fairytales that started with “Once upon a time” The prince helped the princess from the dragon and lived together forever. How silly it was wasted lots of time. I was about to drop it if I didn’t see the last chapter. There was only one sentence in the last chapter. Only one sentence “Every wish will become true just mark the sentence and rip it” I didn’t understand what does it mean. Mark the sentence then rip it? It couldn’t be wrong, because I will get my money back anyway. So I picked the pen beside my bed, marked it, ripped it out

And he appeared at that time

A tall handsome guy in a suit with a tie, wore sunglasses, carried a suitcase was walking through the wall into my bedroom

“What’s up? Do you want to do business now?” It was the first word he said to me “Who are you? How do you get in my bedroom? “ I had frightened “What business? What are you talking about?”

“What question do you want me to answer first?” he laughed “Call me Steve, It’s not important who I am but I can give you everything”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I mean I can give you everything you want” he opened his suitcase and picked out two pieces of paper “Not only things you want but I can make events you want to happen to become true”

“But there are two rules” He showed me two paper and wave it in the air “Tell me then”

“The first rule you can stop anytime you want. I will disappear from your life instantly”

“What about the other rule?” I asked him

“After I make your request become true you have to give me something back but it’s necessary that it’s something personal. You got that thing by yourself not ask from me or anyone”

“Can you give me everything?” I asked “Everything means everything” he removed sunglasses and stared at my eyes “Are you interested?”

“Yes, I am”

“The contract is beginning now” he laughed and flipped finger Three weeks later I started the first request

“Steve, I want to get quadruple salary” “I thought you would never ask. I’ve been waiting for ages” He said, cleaned his Rayban sunglasses “And what things do you want to change with it?”

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SOUTHERN STARS: Managing Editor of the Phuket Gazette Nick Davies congratulates the top three Southern Region entrants of the Dublin Literary Awards for Thailand on March 6. Pictured are runners up Ms Joy Corthesy (left) and Ms Nutthawan Sriretchalalai (right) and national finalist Ms Pawida Krachai (center).

make him disappear from everyone’ memory”
“Exchange with my car then”
Steve flipped his finger “Good morning new company owner” I laughed
“Steve I really hate the Microhard company owner. Do you know that company is quickly progressing” I said seriously “He sneered at me every time I met him.”
“It’s that so?” said Steve, picked my mother’s ring up “Do you want him to die? In exchange for this ring”
My mother gave me this ring before she left this world. I really love it. But it was useless to keep it for this moment. She left me a long time ago. I prefer the Microhard company owner die.
“I agree”
Steve flipped his finger and threw the ring up in the air. The ring doesn’t belongs to me any longer.
I found that my request will become true after Steve flip his finger.
Time passed slowly, the request that I asked Steve are part of my life.
The richest company changed with my old cell phone
The most successful and famous businessman changed with my old credit card
The most beautiful house changed with my old narrow rented room
The richest company changed with all of my money before I met him.

Time passed slowly, the request that I asked Steve are part of my life.
I found that my request will become true after Steve flip his finger.

There was silence between us. Steve continued to recollect my memory.
“Steve, Could you please take something else instead? Anything but my soul” I tried to convince him
“Ha ha of course, But what?” asked Steve
“Dude, The fact is I don’t want your soul anymore. The soul of a greedy human like you”
He opened his suitcase and picked two pieces of paper out.
“Do you still remember the rules?”
The tall handsome guy in a suit with a tie, wore sunglasses, carried a suitcase was in front of me “Give me your soul now”
I took a deep breath. The tall handsome guy in a suit with a tie, wore sunglasses, carried a suitcase.
“Come on Neil, Come out” He said with a cold voice “You can not hide from me your whole life”
My body was shaking with a fear. I didn’t say a word.

Once upon a time, I realized how important sufficiency is.
Once upon a time, I realized that it ended like this due to myself.
Once upon a time, I found that he could give me everything I wanted as long as I had something to change with.
Once upon a time, I found a wonderful book. It brought a guy into my life.
Once upon a time, I realized that it ended like this due to myself.
Once upon a time, I realized that it ended like this due to myself.
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Once upon a time, I realized that it ended like this due to myself.

Steve flipped finger.
I felt relived. There was plenty of things I got by my self. I must get everything I want.
“Steve can you make Man-Ultraviolet win this season?” I asked him one day while we’re watching the live football match at home.
Man-Ultraviolet is my favorite football team. I decided on this request after Man-Ultraviolet lost many matches this season.
“Anyway, Do I still have something to change with you?”
“Hmm yes, you do” Steve removed his sunglasses for watched the match clearly. “But I wonder if you really want to change it?”
“Change it. If you could make Man-Ultraviolet be the winner” I assured
“Steve I really hate the Microhard company owner. Do you know that company is quickly progressing” I said seriously “He sneered at me every time I met him.”
“I used to think you will stop someday when you have everything you want. But that day never come” I didn’t say anything. Every word he said was true.

Steve gazed my eyes like the winner.
“Never mind. I’ll get the profit this time” He laughed
“Dude, The fact is I don’t want your soul anymore. The soul of a greedy human like you”
I couldn’t answer his question because I had nothing to change except my soul.
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March 15 marks the culmination of Thalang’s eight-day annual celebration, held in memory of two of Phuket’s most significant historical figures.

In 1785, Burmese troops invaded Thalang, but their advance was halted and ultimately crushed. Much of the recognition for defeating the invading force was attributed to two heroic figures – Lady Jan and Lady Mook – who became famously known as Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Sri Soonthorn.

A monument to the two women was erected in 1967 at the intersection of Thepkrasattri and Srisoontorn roads. As the celebration draws to a close, the Phuket Gazette looks back at the contribution these two ‘heroines’ made to the island of Phuket.

By Tipwarintron Tanaakarachod

Like her elder sister, Lady Mook – the second child of the family – was smart, courageous and adorable. She also married, to Phraya Pimon-Aya (Khan), who would later become famously known as Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Sri Soonthorn.

From the marriage Lady Jan bore two children, a girl, Prang, and a boy, Thien. Following the birth of her son, Mom Pakdibhuthorn tragically passed away. Lady Jan would later rearrange a marriage with Mom Pakdibhuthorn.

The daughter of Jom Rang Baan Kien and Ma Sia, Lady Jan was the oldest of five children. She grew up to become a beautiful, generous and courageous woman, loved and adored by her parents and relatives. When she came of age, her parents arranged a marriage with Mom Pakdibhuthorn.

The war lasted about one month. In the face of seemingly overwhelming numbers, the weakened Burmese troops finally retreated on March 13, 1785, a date which later became known as Thalang’s “Glorious Day”.

After the war was over, King Rama I bestowed noble titles on Lady Jan and Lady Mook’s courage in defending Thalang Town. King Rama I bestowed noble titles upon Lady Jan – Thao Thep Krasattri and Lady Mook – Thao Sri Soonthorn.

The two heroines ruled Thalang Town together, and Thalang became peaceful once more.
Srisaket stricken by historic drought

Srisaket: The northeastern province of Srisaket has declared nine of its 22 districts drought zones, and the Moon River in neighboring Buriram is at its lowest in 10 years.

Srisaket governor Senee Jittakasem dispatched water tankers to nine of the province’s 22 districts where ponds and streams had dried up: Phu Sing, Sila Lad, Nam Kliang, Rasi Salai, Non Khun, Benjakul, Prang Ku, Khukhan and Phrai Bueng.

Gov Senee expressed concern that the dry spell would be long and other districts might be declared disaster zones.

The 10-kilometer Alang Brook in Phayu district was reported dry after five hot months with no rain, affecting some 2,000 families in four villages that depend on it for drinking and irrigation water.

One resident said the Alang hadn’t dried up like this in 45 years and villagers had started to dig wells or buy water from tankers.

Hmong seek help from NHRC

PETCHABOON: Hmong refugees in Phetchaboon’s Ban Huay Nam Khao on March 9 called upon the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to stop what they describe as forced repatriation to Laos by the Thai military.

They accused the Thai military, which oversees the camp of blocking food supply to them to push them to join the repatriation program.

Hmong leader Lee Sue said the Thai authority also arrested a number of Hmong ethnic in the camp, as recently demanded by Lao officials.

“We will never return to face punishment in Laos. I will fight until the end of my life to resist the repatriation,” he said.

Thailand and Laos agreed in 2006 to repatriate all Lao refugees to Laos.

Last month, Lao Deputy Chief-of-Staff Brigadier General Buaxieng Champapanh visited the Hmong in the camp to try and convince them to join the repatriation.

Lee Sue said Thailand should be grateful to the Hmong refugees, who helped to fight against Communist threats more than three decades ago. He urged the National Human Rights Commission to investigate the military’s conduct, which has been forcing the Hmong to return to Laos against their will.

Sexual satisfaction low: survey

Just 30% of men and 16% of women in Thailand are ‘completely’ or ‘very’ satisfied with their sex lives, according to Pfizer (Thailand) Ltd’s latest Asia-Pacific Sexual Health and Overall Wellness survey.

Among the findings, the survey revealed that nearly half of men and women in the region reported erection hardness of less than Grade 4 in the ‘erection hardness score’ that rates erection hardness on a scale of 1 to 4, with ‘4’ being the desired optimum for satisfaction of both partners.

The survey was conducted with 3,957 sexually active men and women in 13 countries (2,016 men and 1,941 women) aged between 25 and 74 years who had indulged in sexual intercourse in the past 12 months.

Greater satisfaction with sex is strongly associated with greater satisfaction with life overall, according to the survey by Pfizer, producer of the erectile dysfunction drug Viagra.

Gangster posed as THAI monk for a decade

The Department of Special Investigation (DSI) has cracked a ring that allegedly sold Thai ID cards to nearly 300 illegal Burmese and Lao migrants at a cost of 100,000 baht each. DSI deputy director-general Suchat Wong-ananchai said the gang used reliable-looking figures to testify that the illegal aliens were born in Thailand to a Thai mother so that they could get the ID cards.

Three ring members have already been picked up. Pornsri Sornpaeng and Duangjai Lehkon were arrested in Nakhon Phanom for acting as agents looking for illegal aliens who would agree to pay a big sum in exchange for a national ID card. Weera “Toon” Pakdee, a Burmese, was nabbed in Phang Nga. Suchat said Weera sneaked into Thailand about a decade ago and spent most of his time here as a monk.

“After staying at many temples, he headed down South. And after spending five years at Yan Yao Temple in Phang Nga, he was appointed an acting abbot,” Mr Suchat said.

During his monkhood, he was known as Phra Azee Uttara. He had to leave the temple and become a layman on January 19 following a temple funds mismanagement scandal, he added. Mr Weera was suspected of embezzling donations intended for tsunami victims to pay for his Thai ID card. Many other illegal aliens have done just like Weera, according to the DSI.

They first enter the country as monks and after spending many years at a temple, they find a way to buy a national ID card and live a normal life. Such conduct hurts both national security and Buddhism, he said. The DSI was going after two more suspects, for acting as agents looking for illegal aliens who would agree to pay a big sum in exchange for a national ID card.

Giving an interview to reporters at Government House, PM Abhisit said THAI wants a financial rescue from the government, but the finance minister wants THAI to come up with a restructuring plan first.

“Talks on the restructuring have been going on for sometime and details should be released next week, the prime minister said.

Stories Sourced from The Nation, Daily Xpress and Kom Chad Luek newspapers.
ATM fraud nets three million baht

CHUMPHON: Residents of Lang Suan District have lost a total of more than three million baht after using an ATM opposite Uaychai Market, the biggest wholesale fruit market in the South.

At 1pm on March 7, five people came to Lang Suan Police Station to report that money had disappeared from their bank accounts. All five had withdrawn money from the Bangkok Bank ATM opposite the market.

Police went to look at the ATM and were met by another group of people who claimed to have lost money.

After filing a report with the police, the group, led by Ahamo Molso, 37, Phonsak Suwanakot, 38, and Prannee Kongcha, 53, all durian exporters, went to the Bangkok Bank branch at Tesco Lotus, the only branch in the district open on weekends.

While they were discussing the problem with branch manager Sunida Sangket, more people claiming to have lost money came to join the group, taking the total number to 20.

Miss Sunida checked the details of the claimants bank accounts and found that large transfers had been made from their accounts.

The incident was reported to Chumphon Provincial Governor Karan Soophakitwilekarn, who ordered the ATM in question to be suspended. He instructed the Mass Communications Organization of Thailand’s radio station in Lang Suan to run a bulletin warning anyone who may have used the ATM to check their bank accounts.

Police said that the ATM is an old model and that it is possible that criminals could have fitted a device to skim data from the cards of people withdrawing money from the machine. They are likely to have chosen that particular ATM as many market traders have large amounts of money moving in and out of their bank accounts.

It is not yet clear what compensation will be offered to those who have lost money.

Student confesses to role in gold shop heist

SONGKHLA: Police have arrested a 21-year-old student for his involvement in an armed robbery on a gold shop in Haad Yai.

Chaiyuth “Palm” Chonpakdee, 21, was arrested in a rented room in the Din Daeng area of Bangkok on March 7. Mr Chaiyuth is the son of a Haad Yai businessman and studies at a well-known university in the capital city.

The arrest was in connection with the robbery of Sap Phaisan gold shop in Haad Yai on February 28, in which a man armed with a 9mm pistol made off with 74 baht-weight of gold jewellery worth more than 10 million baht.

The shop is owned by a relative of Commissioner of the Bangkok Metropolitan Police Wiraphong Chupricha.

Police said that Chaiyuth confessed to acting as a lookout and getaway driver for the heist. Songkhla and the Metropolitan police forces are still hunting for the suspected gunman, Wachara Chonpakdee, 21, a relative of Chaiyuth.

Police said that Chaiyuth confessed that he and Mr Wachara robbed the gold shop as they needed money to pay off Wachara’s football gambling debts. Chaiyuth said they had originally planned to murder the football bookie to clear the debt, but then changed their mind and decided to rob the gold shop instead.

Chaiyuth said that Wachara had taken all of the gold and had already sold most of it on the Bangkok black market.

Chaiyuth has been charged with conspiracy to commit an armed robbery and firearms offences.

Two muslims killed in Yala shootings

YALA: An Islamic teacher was shot dead early on the morning of March 9 while riding his motorcycle home, police said.

Abdullahi Saleh, 35, a teacher at the Ban Padu Mosque’s Islamic school in tambon Lidlor at the Ban Padu Mosque’s Islamic school in tambon Lidlor in Phaisan sub-district, was shot and killed at 1.10 am on a road in Batu Puth village.

His friend, Usaman Yango, 29, was severely injured.

Police revealed that the two were returning home at the time of the attack.

The attack followed the shooting of another Muslim man on the afternoon of March 6. Maduning Saha, 52, the owner of a teashop in Ngoh Gapo village in tambon Bannang Sata in Bannang Sata District, was shot and killed in front of his shop at 4.30 pm.

Police said two men arrived on a motorcycle and opened fire at Maduning before fleeing the scene.

Second wealthy woman killed in Chumphon

CHUMPHON: A wealthy 68-year-old woman was murdered in her home in Sawee District on March 7. This was the second such case in little over a week, though police believe both killings to be family disputes and not related.

The body of Nuchan Panyarak was found covered with a sheet in her house in tambon Tha Hin. She had been beaten with a blunt object and strangled. Her killer made off with a one-baht-weight gold necklace she was wearing, but left other valuables in the house untouched.

Mrs Nuchan lived in the large house with her youngest son Wacharin Panyarak, 34. She was one of the wealthiest women in the province, but had already divided most of her fortune among her children.

A witness told police that before Mrs Nuchan’s body was found, they had seen Phaithun Irthnchan, 30, a very close friend of Wacharin, dash off with the house looking flowered. Mrs Nuchan had previously argued with Mr Phaithun as she believed he was after her son’s money.

Police are now searching for Mr Phaithun.

The killing followed the murder of Lamiat Yalansajja, 80, another wealthy pensioner, whose body was found dumped in a bag on February 27.

Police have questioned Mrs Laminin’s son-in-law, Shinhun Khundeua, 45, after finding tape and plastic cord of the kind used to bind and gag the victim in his house. Police also found blood stains on the back of his pick up truck. Mr Somchai denied any involvement in the killing.

Deputy Commander of Chumphon Provincial Police Narin Bussawit said that a witness had reported seeing Mrs Laminin walk to Mr Somchai’s house on the day of her disappearance.

Col Narin added that he has ordered officers to watch Mr Somchai’s actions carefully and arrest him if it looks like he is preparing to flee the area.

Student confesses to role in gold shop heist
Irish pub gutted by fire aims for St Patrick’s Day return

In a recent column, I documented the large fire at the local Ao Nang gas station, which totally destroyed the facility. Unfortunately, fire struck Krabi again last month. This time a popular pub – the Irish Rover – was severely damaged by a fire started by an electrical ornament that was left on after the watering hole closed. Kevin Reynolds, the proprietor, is a well-known and well-liked expat businessman here in Ao Nang, who opened one of the first dive shops some 15 years ago. His family hails from County Longford in the Republic of Ireland, and six years ago he opened the Irish Rover pub, along with the Ao Nang Inn apartments above. The pub is the only authentic Irish pub in the area, boasting a complete restaurant and Irish band playing live music.

The Inn was full at the time of the blaze, but thankfully all the occupants escaped unharmed. The first floor was heavily damaged and the infrastructure gutted. Kevin said that only the efficient work of the local fire department kept the blaze from spreading to the adjacent buildings.

When he arrived on the scene at 4 am, there were already four fire trucks and rescue vehicles hard at work battling the inferno. The devastating blow suffered by Kevin and Dutch, his wife, to their business comes on the back of a poor tourist season. His family was forced to close their apartment kept the blaze from spreading to the adjacent building.

Guesthouses in the 500-700 baht per night range are fully booked, while the hotels charging over 3,000 baht are struggling with low occupancy rates and are forced to offer big discounting. The four- and five-star properties, such as the Sherton and Sofitel, are reported to be especially hard hit. Two-star properties like the Best Western chain have initiated campaigns to woo customers who normally stay at three- or four-star properties by offering free internet and other services.

My resort on Ao Nang Beach has historically had a ratio of 85% pre-paid customers to 15% walk-ins or local bookings. This year, the ratio is reversed, with almost all the business coming from the lower budget walk-in customers demanding up to a 50% discount off the normal price. An interesting side story of the downturn is the reluctance of the Tourist Authority of Thailand to release the December arrivals statistics. Who would want to make figures that show a decline in excess of 50% available to the public?

As I have lived in Thailand for 15 years now and only return to my native USA during the summer months, I hadn’t experienced cold weather or seen snow in many years. Worse off, I had no cold weather clothes, and had to resort to borrowing them (from my Thai partner, of all people) to make the trip. The episode reminded me of that old saying, “You have been in Thailand too long when…”

…You have to borrow cold weather clothes to visit your native country.

…You can’t wear your old dress shoes as your feet have flattened out from wearing sandals for years.

…Your toilet paper roll is on the table, not in your bathroom.

…You eat your meals with your fingers.

…If you bother to set the table, there is only a fork and spoon.

…Grilled crickets don’t re- pulse you anymore.

…You haven’t been to a girlie bar in years.

…You take four showers a day.

…While driving, you over-take another car in a no passing zone on a blind corner flashing your headlights.

…You enter an intersection in your car and turn on the emergency blinkers to signal you are going straight.

…You pop your zits using your motorbike mirror.

…You marry your Mia Noy’s younger sister.

Pub owner Kevin Reynolds has a full contingent of workers laboring around the clock to be ready to open by St. Patrick’s Day, on March 17.

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Kevin’s efforts to re-establish his popular hangout by heading to the Irish Rover and having a few pints. Sounds like as good an excuse as any to have a beer! This high season has been stumbling along with mid-budget travelers dominating the scene.

Kevin Reynolds, the proprietor, is a well-known and well-liked expat businessman here in Ao Nang, which totally destroyed the facility. Fortunately, fire struck Krabi again last month. This time a popular pub – the Irish Rover – was severely damaged by a fire started by an electrical ornament that was left on after the watering hole closed. Kevin Reynolds, the proprietor, is a well-known and well-liked expat businessman here in Ao Nang, who opened one of the first dive shops some 15 years ago. His family hails from County Longford in the Republic of Ireland, and six years ago he opened the Irish Rover pub, along with the Ao Nang Inn apartments above. The pub is the only authentic Irish pub in the area, boasting a complete restaurant and Irish band playing live music.

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When he arrived on the scene at 4 am, there were already four fire trucks and rescue vehicles hard at work battling the inferno. The devastating blow suffered by Kevin and Dutch, his wife, to their business comes on the back of a poor tourist season. But despite the setback, Kevin is determined to rebuild and reopen as soon as possible.

He has a full contingent of workers laboring around the clock to be ready to open by St. Patrick’s Day, on March 17. While Kevin admits that this schedule is quite ambitious and that not all the facilities will be fully functional by that date, as long as the beer taps are open, his business will be too.

So let’s all help support Kevin’s efforts to re-establish his popular hangout by heading to the Irish Rover and having a few pints. Sounds like as good an excuse as any to have a beer! This high season has been stumbling along with mid-budget travelers dominating the scene.

Guesthouses in the 500-700 baht per night range are fully booked, while the hotels charging over 3,000 baht are struggling with low occupancy rates and are forced to offer big discounting. The four- and five-star properties, such as the Sherton and Sofitel, are reported to be especially hard hit. Two-star properties like the Best Western chain have initiated campaigns to woo customers who normally stay at three- or four-star properties by offering free internet and other services.

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Acquiring a taste for excellence

On the menu

Daniel Ogunshakin

Acqua

Located in Kalim Bay, a mere stone’s throw from Patong, Acqua – the new high-end restaurant opened by Italian chef Alessandro Frau – boasts a view that few restaurants on Phuket can rival. Looking out across the bay, Acqua’s carefully chosen position affords stunning views at sunset, as the dying sun dips beneath the shimmering horizon, where the sky meets the turquoise Andaman Sea; the perfect spot for an early evening cocktail or a sumptuous meal.

Having previously attended the hugely successful opening night, and therefore having already sampled Alessandro’s take on fine dining, the prospect of returning so soon and reviewing the restaurant was enough to set my taste buds tingling.

Appraising the venue at night, the outside is tastefully lit, offering an intimate, al fresco dining experience cooled by a gentle sea breeze. Stepping inside, the effect is mirrored, this time in air conditioned comfort.

The entire restaurant has been furnished with chic simplicity in mind, although no stone has been left unturned when it comes to the little details that matter. The yin and yang décor of black and white offset each other perfectly, creating a stylish appearance suitable for a date, anniversary or group celebration, all of which was taken into consideration during the planning stages.

“After nine years of working in the restaurant industry, Acqua is how I believe a restaurant should be,” chef Alex said.

“The design is very detailed, not only the interior design, but in the table- and kitchenware. The idea was to create a clean, fresh, young and elegant atmosphere for people who enjoy their food,” he added.

After finally sitting down and taking a moment to peruse the menu, I was faced with a dilemma – what on earth was I going to have? The carefully crafted Carta del giorno was crammed with mouthwatering delights tempting us, nay, begging us to sample them, all made from the finest imported ingredients.

Freshly made soups, tuna, foie gras and artichokes to name but a few starters, perhaps followed by home-made pasta and ravioli, risotto, belly pork, lobster or cod among other dishes – it was hard to pick just one starter and one main. After several minutes spent deliberating and salivating, we selected the aged Parma ham and the Jamon Patanegra, baby buffalo mozzarella and giant marinated olives, and the Acqua signature Italian cold cut selection with ricotta cheese and marinated olives as appetizers, accompanied by a crisp Chilean Sauvignon Blanc (Sol de Chile “De Aguirre” 2007) – white wine with red meat, philistines I know – chosen from a cellar containing 120 wines from around the world. For main, roasted lamb rack with pecorino cheese crust, roasted potatoes and braised shallots in lamb sauce. The delicious roasted lamb rack with pecorino cheese crust, roasted potatoes and braised shallots in lamb sauce. The wonderfully presented oyster tower.

The delicious roasted lamb rack with pecorino cheese crust, roasted potatoes and braised shallots in lamb sauce. The wonderfully presented oyster tower.

The battle between the aged Parma ham and the Jamon Patanegra was declared an equally delightful draw, while the selection of Italian cold cuts provided stiff competition to both, the flavors wonderfully enhanced by the Sauvignon Blanc. Once the plates were cleared, all thoughts turned to the main event. Choosing a smooth Chianti (DOC-GI Doc “Ruffino” 2006 Toscana, Italy) to complement our dishes, the wine and the fantastic flavors produced a delectable cocktail of delight. Both the lamb and the beef were tender and cooked to perfection, offering pleasure with every bite; tempting you to savor every mouthful but forcing you to finish at the same time.

After finishing our main course, the attentive staff did just enough arm-twisting to tempt us to dessert, and we plumped for the Illy coffee-flavored tiramisu, warm chocolate cake milk ice cream served with vanilla sauce and milk ice cream.

The tiramisu was delicious, with just the right amount of coffee, while the chocolate cake, as its description might suggest, was an orgasm for the taste buds. Rich, warm and gooey and mingled with the vanilla sauce and milk ice cream it brought us to the peak of gastronomic ecstasy.

Forgoing a choice of three brands of coffee, we sat back to reflect on a fabulous meal. The food was superb and the service was sharp and attentive, making sure our every need was met.

As one would expect from a high-end restaurant that imports 85% of its produce, the cost of dining at Acqua is firmly entrenched in the upper echelons of the market. However, given the location, the design, the quality of service and superlative food, the end justifies the means as it were. Bellissima! Grazie.
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Lead Agent
HR

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Hin Lek Fai

Hin Lek Fai’s last visit to the Phuket Brewery was for the mega venue’s grand opening back in November 2008. The performance was such a hit that the Brewery invited the group back for more.

Hard rock shook Phuket recently when Thai heavy metal outfit Hin Lek Fai (Stone Metal Fire) played a two-hour set at the Phuket Brewery. Since forming back in 1993, Hin Lek Fai has undergone two name changes – the band has recently renamed itself “Sun” – and seen various members of the line-up come and go, although vocalist Pathompong ‘Pong’ Sombatipun and lead guitarist Chakarin ‘Pop’ Duangmaneerat-tanachai have remained ever-present over the years, appearing on each of the band’s five albums.

In its latest incarnation, Sun has moved away from its original heavy metal roots, incorporating elements of jazz, pop and rock into its repertoire. The group’s plans to hold an orchestral concert had to be postponed recently, having been advised to first complete their album, the self-titled Sun. The band were also forced into its repertoire. The group’s new album, consisting mostly of rock, is due out in the middle of this year, almost three years after their last offering, an acoustic collection.

“We’re not sure if we will release an album in the future featuring an acoustic collection,” said Pong. “Actually I prefer to keep moving forward, writing and performing new songs, but we are thinking about maybe including one or two of the old songs as bonus tracks on the new album,” he added.

The band’s new album, consisting mostly of rock, is due out in the middle of this year, almost three years after their last offering, an acoustic collection. “The Gazette asked the veteran rockers about the raft of younger bands who have taken to playing their music. “We are always delighted to hear other bands playing our songs, especially the well-known numbers such as Longkol (Be Tricked), Palangrak (Love Power), Ngay Gernpai (Too Easy) and so on,” said Pong. “Normally after making an album, we have a big concert. So, when our new album comes out around the middle of this year, we are thinking about following it up with a large gig as usual,” he added. Their last visit to the Phuket Brewery was for the mega venue’s grand opening back in November 2008. The people enjoyed their performance so much that the Brewery invited them back for more.

Despite the obvious allure and razzmatazz of the big concerts, the pair nevertheless confess to a fondness for playing smaller, more intimate gigs, like pubs, as these are what enable the band to really connect and get close to their audience. After so many years in the business, the band’s familiarity with the material and their ‘feel’ for a crowd have enabled Hin Lek Fai to know instinctively which song to play at any given time during a show.

Following the success of their last two visits to Phuket, Pong and Pop say that they would love to return to the island, especially to the Phuket Brewery, because of its exceptionally good sound quality.

They would be happy, they declare, to share the stage with any band, although their preference would be with one of their all-time favorites, Aerosmith.

Growing up, the pair spent most of their time listening to foreign artists.

It is not surprising that they should list as their favorites such greats as Ozzy Osbourne, Michael Schenker & Aaron Mindel. Among the Thai musicians that they most admire, Laem Mottaya was the first that came to mind. On the subject of the future of heavy metal, Pop comments, “In Thailand, heavy metal will never die out, even though some people say that this kind of music is unfashionable these days, especially compared with indie or ska music.

“Ten years ago, people were describing Hin Lek Fai as indie. I know a lot of people who are currently playing heavy metal music that will still be popular 10 years from now,” he observed. Whenever Sun returns to Phuket they’re certain to be a hit.

-Atchaa Khamlo

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EXPAT GALLERY

David Shrubsole

David Shrubsole might best be called Phuket’s impresario of culture. He is definitely the most dynamic local producer of events such as the recent Fringe Festival at The Playhouse, Patong Beach.

“We need to offer the international visitors a variety of entertainment to keep Phuket appealing. When we expect a downturn in visitor arrivals, it means we have to be more creative and inventive about attracting the world to our island,” he says.

David has spent most of his life producing entertainment events, both in Thailand and in his native Australia. He was born in South Australia and was an indifferent student, he says, until he saw a television program featuring celebrity hair stylist Peter Coker. When the 16-year-old David heard that Coker was offering a three-year apprenticeship, he competed with over a hundred applicants and was chosen for the coveted position.

“Being a hairdresser is the most privileged of careers. It provides the perfect opportunity to listen to people and learn from what I call ‘The Bible of Life’.”

He worked with Peter Coker for sixteen years and bought the business when he was just 32. During that time he became adept at working with wigs and make-up for the Adelaide Theatre Trust which produced the local Fringe Festival and theatrical and operatic productions. On television, he gave advice on the latest hair and beauty treatments on ‘Adelaide Today’, and was a popular Master of Ceremonies for big fashion events.

But a holiday in Bangkok in 1996 changed his life as he was strongly attracted to the city’s energy after nearly half a life in sleepy South Australia.

He met Yupin McCloud who operated the Best Salon at the prestigious Oriental Hotel and she offered him a two-year contract. It was an offer he did not want to refuse. He immediately began working with the hair and make-up of the city’s international high society ladies, and even styled such celebrities as Margaret Thatcher and Elizabeth Taylor.

After another position as Spa Manager at the Westin Ban yan Tree Hotel on Sathorn, David’s reputation as a stylist spread. He was offered the opportunity to work as Creative Director of the Icon Boutique Hotels, first in Pattaya and then in Phuket. He designed his own line of male underwear, and produced fashion events and entertainment at Bangkok’s Icon Club on trendy Soi 4.

David was then asked to open a show theater on Phuket. He designed a 75 seat cocktail space with a full professional stage that has presented the highlights of the world’s best musical theater since 2002. After some impressive renovations, The Playhouse now offers two 45-minute shows nightly, featuring a song and dance review with a resident cast of professional dancers. It’s a show one would expect in Las Vegas but certainly not in Phuket.

He is already planning the 2009 Fringe Festival by developing relationships with both Phuket’s and the region’s arts communities. He plans for this year’s Fringe to present the best performances in Asia by working with people who are passionate about their craft.

David is also the Group Creative Director of Manathai Hotels and Resorts, which has properties in Chiang Mai and Phuket. He has designed and styled all parts of the properties at both locations. These resorts now reflect his attention to detail in providing an authentic Thai environment for his guests.

“I think of what I’ve done as an apprenticeship for what is up ahead. I want to take each life experience as a move in a new direction. I am not afraid to move forward. I think the best will be up ahead.”

— Bruce Stanley
CAPTAIN ON DECKS: Seduction Discotheque in Patong was treated to a special appearance recently of the legendary Louie Vega – one of the originators of House music – who spun for an intimate crowd of 300, taking them on a non-stop 4-hour dance journey.

JOB’S WORTH: Thai reggae legend Job 2 Do performed in front of a packed crowd at the Reggae Full Beach Party at the Ska Bar in Kata on February 27. Almost 1,000 people crammed into the corner of Kata Beach to see the Thai superstar strut his stuff on-stage.

LET THE MUSIC PLAY: Siam Music Yamaha celebrated the grand opening of a new music school branch in Phuket City on February 15. Phuket Governor Dr Preecha Ruangjan joined other dignitaries for the celebration and ribbon cutting ceremony. The Otwatt band from Muang Phuket Municipal school joined popular Thai pianist and singer Saksit “Tor” Vechsupaporn to perform a mini-concert.

GOING DUTCH: The K1 classes from Kajonkiet Kuksa School performed songs and dances for the children of the Holland House Children’s Home and Orphanage on February 11. The aim of the event was to give students the chance to spread some happiness and fun with less fortunate children and to teach them about being good, sharing and showing kindness to others.

LOVE PHUKET LOVE OUR PLANET: The Love Phuket Love Our Planet campaign, organized by Central Festival, was launched on February 13. The campaign has been introduced to help preserve mangrove areas, the Klong Pi national forest, and other precious eco-systems. Pictured (from left) are: Mr Yotin Tamajamrat, Director of Corporate Communications; Miss Kronkanork Junprasadtorn, Operations General Manager; Mr Songphol Pongrapeeporn, Marketing General Manager; Mr Panut Pukpo, General Manager of Central Festival Phuket; and Ms Nittaya Yangyuen, Managing Director of Niya Media Co Ltd and DJ on FM 108 Mazz Radio.

SILK ANNIVERSARY: Silk Air celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Phuket Merlin Hotel on February 27. The party was attended by some 120 guests from various travel agencies, airport authorities and operating departments, interliners and the members of the media. Pictured are (from left): Squadron Leader Wicha Nernlop, General Manager of Phuket International Airport; Mr Tan Han Soo, Manager of Silk Air Thailand; Mrs Jongrak Tandaves, Station Head of Malaysia Airlines and Mr Sutthisak Pungtanawatthanakun, Manager of Phuket Dragonair.
Important
News

HALF THE GALLERY
HALF THE PRICE

At the end of March we are closing half of our twin shop gallery due to the expiration of the rental contract in Phuket City. The result is a lack of showroom space and for that reason we are selling our masterpieces of art at just 50% of the price.

Hurry to buy wonderful antiques, paintings and other art works at “once in a lifetime” prices: Picasso, Dali, Warhol, Wang Guang Yi and many other Asian artists.

Hurry to our Phuket City Gallery for first choice!
Campaign ends April 30

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Moon Salutation

As the moon, emitting no light of its own, reflects the light of the sun, the practice of the Moon Salutation reflects that of the Sun Salutation. The sequence of asanas is the same as the Sun Salutation, except that ardha chandrasana (Crescent Moon pose) is performed after ashtanga afsahalana-sana (Equestrian pose). This posture develops balance and concentration, adding another dimension to the practice.

Whereas the 12 positions of the Sun Salutation relate to the 12 zodiac or solar phases of the year, the 14 positions of the Moon Salutation relate to the 14 lunar phases. In the lunar calendar, the 14 days before the full moon are known as sukla paksha, the bright fortnight, and the 14 days after the full moon are known as krishna paksha, the dark fortnight. The name of each day introduces each asana and is used as a basis for learning the days of the lunar cycle. The lunar energy flows within Ida nadi, and has cool, relaxing and creative qualities. Ida is the negative, introverted, feminine or mental force which is responsible for consciousness.

It is advisable to learn the Moon Salutation before attempting the Sun Salutation as the postures are the same for both, except for one extra pose. In the Moon Salutation the added pose is inserted in the sequence at positions five and 12. The Moon Salutation is best practiced late evening or at night – especially when the moon is visible – or at dawn during a full moon. When practiced at night, ensure the stomach is empty. Duration: For physical benefits practice three to 12 rounds quickly, and for spiritual benefits, slowly practice three to seven rounds.

Contraindications: People with back conditions should consult a medical expert before commencing this practice. Although some back conditions may be alleviated by this practice, problems such as a slipped disc and sciatica will be better managed through an alternative asana program. Completely avoid this practice if suffering from a hernia or intestinal tuberculosis.

Benefits: The movements in this series widen and loosen all of the spaces around the pelvis, hips, knees and ankles, allowing the life force to enter into them, healing, stretching, strengthening and relaxing. A healing energy is felt from the blood circulating throughout the body. The possibility of eventually sitting in the Lotus position can be realized. The solar plexus and sexual organs get an inner massage. The blood is cleansed of toxins and enriched with oxygen. The solar plexus and sexual organs get an inner massage. The body and mind are relaxed. Not a drop of energy is wasted. Just the opposite in fact; there is a feeling of strength that fills the entire body. Before beginning the Moon Salutation, a few moments should be allowed to prepare the body and mind. Stand upright with the feet together and eyes closed. Slowly bend the elbows together, the eyes closed and arms by your sides. The weight of the body should be evenly distributed throughout the body. The possibility of eventually sitting in the Lotus position can be realized. The body and mind are relaxed. Not a drop of energy is wasted. Just the opposite in fact; there is a feeling of strength that fills the entire body. Before beginning the Moon Salutation, a few moments should be allowed to prepare the body and mind. Stand upright with the feet together, the eyes closed and arms by your sides. The weight of the body should be evenly distributed on both the feet. Try to observe any spontaneous movement of the body as it relaxes. Gradually become more aware of the natural flow of breathing with each inhalation and exhalation. Then include awareness of the movements in the body with the rhythm of breathing. Retain this awareness for a few moments. Slowly become aware of the whole body in the standing position.

Position 1: Pranamasana (Prayer Pose) Stand upright with your feet together and eyes closed. Slowly bend the elbows together, the eyes closed and arms by your sides. The weight of the body should be evenly distributed on both the feet. Try to observe any spontaneous movement of the body as it relaxes. Gradually become more aware of the natural flow of breathing with each inhalation and exhalation. Then include awareness of the movements in the body with the rhythm of breathing. Retain this awareness for a few moments. Slowly become aware of the whole body in the standing position.

Position 2: Hastha Uthanasana (Raised Arm Pose) While inhaling, raise and stretch both arms above the head with arms separated, shoulder width apart. Bend the head, arms and trunk backward. Benefits: Tones the spinal nerves, opens the lungs and removes excess weight.

Position 3: Padha hastasana (Hand to Foot Pose) While exhaling, bend forward until the fingers or the palms of the hand touch the floor on either side of the feet, keeping your legs straight or bent at the knees. Touch your knees with the forehead without any strain to your back and neck. Do not be alarmed; it’s very common to feel the deep stretch at the back of your legs (Stretching hamstring muscles). Benefits: Improves digestion and helps to remove constipation.
Position 4: Ashwa Sanchalan-asana (Equestrian Pose)
Inhaling, stretch the right leg back as far as possible, keeping the foot flat and toes pointed. At the same time, bend the left knee, keeping the left foot on the floor in the same position, with the arms straight. In the final position, the weight of the body should be supported with both hands, the left foot, right knee and right foot. The head should be tilted backward, the back arched and the inner gaze directed upward. **Benefits:** Improves the function of abdominal organs by massaging them, and strengthens the leg muscles.

Position 5: Ardha Chandrasana (Crescent Moon Pose)
Maintaining your balance while inhaling, raise and stretch both arms over the head, keeping the palms together. Arch the back and look up, raising the chin as high as possible. There should be a gentle curve from the tips of the fingers to the tips of the toes, resembling a crescent moon. Hold the pose for a short time. Lower the hands to the floor on either side of the right leg, while exhaling as in position four. **Benefits:** This practice develops a sense of balance and gives the front of the body a good stretch.

Position 6: Plank Pose
While exhaling, move the right leg back to meet the left and align the whole body like a plank of wood. Keep the heels vertical to the floor, contract the muscles of thigh and pull up the knee cap, wrist resting under the shoulder. **Benefits:** Strengthens the shoulders and the muscles of the arms.

Position 7: Balasana (Child Pose)
Drop both knees on the floor, keeping the feet flat with toes pointed. While exhaling move the body back, rest the buttocks on the heels. Do not re-place your hands in order to move your body back. **Benefits:** Stretches the shoulders and back muscles.

Position 8: Ashtanga Namskara (Salute with Eight Parts or Points) Keeping the trunk parallel to the floor, activatedly exhale and lower the chest between your palms on the floor. In the final position, the knees, chest and chin should touch the floor simultaneously. The buttocks, hips and abdomen should be raised. **Benefits:** Strengthens the legs and arm muscles, develops the chest.

Position 9: Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward Facing Dog) With a deep inhalation, lift the chest, abdomen and thighs up, stretch the arms completely and push the head and trunk as far back as possible, with or without resting the knees on the floor. The spine, thighs and calves should be fully stretched, and the buttocks contracted tightly. **Benefits:** Rejuvenates the spine, helps in removing lumbar and sciatica, and improves the elasticity of lungs.

Position 10: Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog) Exhale completely, lift the hips very high and press the heels on the floor. Keep the knees high as possible. There should be a gentle curve from the tips of the fingers to the tips of the toes, resembling a crescent moon. Hold the pose for a short time. Lower the hands to the floor on either side of the left leg, while exhaling as in position 7. **Benefits:** This practice develops a sense of balance and gives the front of the body a good stretch.

Position 11: Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose) This is the same as position four. Inhaling, bend the right leg and bring the right foot forward between the hands. Simultaneously, lower the left knee so that it touches the floor and push the pelvis forward. Tilt the head backward, arch the back and gaze at the point where the eyebrows meet.

Position 12: Ardha Chandrasana (Crescent Moon Pose) This stage is a repetition of position two. Inhaling, raise the torso and stretching the arms above the head. Keep the arms separated, shoulder width apart, bend the head, arm and trunk backward.

Position 13: Padahastasana (Hand to Foot Pose) This position is the same as position three. Exhale and bring the left foot forward next to the right foot. With legs straight or slightly bent at the knees, bring the forehead close to the knees, without straining.

Position 14: Hastha Uthanasana (Raised Arm Pose) This is the final position and is the same as position one. Exhale and lower the hands; bring the palms together in front of the chest.

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LIFESTYLE

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CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT
FOR PHUKET SUNSHINE VILLAGE
3rd and 4th April 2009
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March 13-14. Alcenta’s Sec- ond Annual Pampered Turtle Lovers Dinner

Come and help us help the turtles! Alcenta’s second annual Pampered Turtle Lovers Fund Raising Dinner has been moved to March 14-20. Proceeds will be used to fund coastal marine research on the declining marine turtle population in the Andaman Sea. We are hoping to raise 500,000 baht this year. Tickets for the dinner are priced at 5,000 baht per person. Special room rates will be offered to guests attending the dinner, starting at 5,000 baht per room, per night with breakfast at the Ocean View Loft. From 6pm until 11:30 pm at Alcenta Resort & Spa, Phuket – Phang Nga. For further information contact Ms Been Prasad. T: 076-580333. E: helptherturtles@a- leenta.com. W: www.alcenta.com.

March 14. Annual Mulligan Reunion Golf, Blue Canyon

The Annual Mulligan reunion golf competition is open to all, up to a maximum of 72 players. The competition will take place over 18 holes using the ‘Stableford’ scoring system on the Lakes Course. Prizes and buffet dinner awaited at the Poolside Restaurant at 6:30 pm. From 10 am to noon, at Sandwich Shoppe Laguna. For further information contact Woody Leonhard. T: 089-1960940. E: woody@KunPhwoody.com. W: www.KunPhwoody.com.

March 15. Cape Sienna SUNDAY BRUNCH with a twist!

Cape Sienna reinvents the traditional brunch! A Sunday brunch with a twist, hosted in the Plum Fine Dining restaurant starting on March 15. 1,199 baht nett per person or 1,499 baht nett per person with a half bottle of wine. Don’t miss it. A unique experience! On Wednesday, we fire up the grill! A sumptuous BBQ awaits you at the Poolside Restaurant. 999 baht nett per person or 1,299 baht nett with a half bottle of wine. From 12 pm until 4 pm at Cape Sienna Hotel & Villas, Kamala. For further information contact Jorge De la Torre Koch T: 076-337300. E: food@capesien- na.com. W: www.capesienn-a.com.

Mar 16. An Evening of Extraordinary Wines

From 7pm to 10pm at La Trattoria restaurant at the Dusit Thani, enjoy a Wine Dinner with Kai Schubert from Schubert Wines of New Zealand and Chef Felix from La Trattoria restaurant. THB 1,800+++ per person. For more information contact Ms Natsaran Jitpakdee. T: 076-362999. E: dl@th.dus-i.com

March 21. Wine & Dine with the “Superstars of Germany” SALA Phuket, in collaboration with Central Wine Cellars, is pleased to present an evening with the “Superstars of Germany”. 2007 Rieslings from Max Ferdy, Richter Estate, Gunderloch and Balthasar Ress will be served with a delectable selection of Chef Jan’s favorite German fare. The SALA poolside provides the perfect backdrop for a relaxed evening of culinary delights. Prices from 8,500 baht++ including free-flow wine and the German-inspired banquet. Stay the night at SALA and enjoy special rates from 8,500 baht++ including an evening with the “Superstars of Germany” and breakfast for two. From 7 pm until 11:30 pm at SALA Phuket Resort and Spa. For further information contact T: 076-338888. E: info@sala-phuket.com. W: www.salaphuket.com.

March 22. FREE Computer Clinic - Chalong


March 27. Soi Dog Salsa

“Salsa” private beach party begins at 6 pm and finishes at 11 pm at The Chedi, Surin Beach, Phuket. Dress to impress in party/salsa attire. Tickets are 2,500 baht each and include a fantastic buffet dinner, plus free-flow margaritas, beer, wine and soft drinks. Music will be provided by Wave Entertainment Phuket, with the Sayonara Bella band and DJme. Salsa dancers will be on hand to entertain and Gary Holden will perform Master of Ceremony duty for the event. To help raise more funds at the event, there will be a silent auction and raffle with some great prizes up for grabs. See you there. For further information contact Cristy: T: 085-4734636. E: cristy@soidog-foundation.org. W: www.soidog-foundation.org.

March 29. FREE Mac and PC Clinic – Laguna


April 2-5. Phuket Oilfield Classic Golf Tournament 2009

A golfing event for oil and gas executives and supporting companies – held for the first time in Phuket – to raise funds for Phuket Sunshine Village. Play takes place from 9 am to 2 pm at Club Andaman Beach Resort. For further information contact Mark Cameron. T: 081-7882843. E: mark@phuketoilfieldclassic.c- om. W: www.phuketoilfieldclassi-c.com.

April 6. Chakri Memorial Day

Chakri Day commemorates the origins of the Chakri dynasty, founded by Rama I, who estab- lished Bangkok as the nation’s capital. HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the ninth monarch of the Chakri dynasty.

April 13-15. Songkran Festival

Songkran (Thai New Year) is also known as the Water Festi- val. Held during the driest months in Thailand, Songkran is cel- ebrated by Thais throughout the country by pouring traditionally only a little – but these days a lot – of water on other people to wish them good luck for the New Year.

May 1. National Labor Day

Public holiday for all commercial workers, but government offices will remain open.

May 5. Coronation Day

Coronation Day commemorates the ascension to the throne of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej on May 5, 1950.

May 8. Visaka Bucha Day

Visaka Bucha Day is observed on the day of the full moon dur- ing the 6th lunar month, which usually falls in either May or early June. It is a day to commemo- rate three important incidents: the birth, the enlightenment and the passing away of the Buddha. Miraculously, these events fell in the same month and on the same date in the Buddhist era.
Mr Alexander Mack has been appointed the new Director of Food and Beverage at Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket. Alexander began his career at the Sheraton Frankfurt and progressed through a number of five-star hotel chains to the position of executive chef, working for, among other international names, the Amari Group, Thailand, Raffles-Swissotel Group, China and the Marriott Chain in Moscow, Russia. Before joining the Dusit Thani, he held the position of Executive Chef at Amari Coral Beach Resort, Phuket.

Mr Brian Summers has assumed the position of Project Director for Destination Paradise Holiday Club after relocating from Cyprus to Phuket. Brian comes to Phuket with 11 years of experience. There has been an increase in the Holiday Club industry, having worked in Australia, Singapore, Bali, Hong Kong, Greece and Cyprus. Brian spent time in the Western Australian Police Force, where he received the highest bravery award in Australia, the Star of Courage award. He has also been awarded the Royal Humane Society Bronze Medal.

Mr Robert Bergwerff has been appointed the Director of Operations at West Sands Phuket. Robert has held several prominent positions in executive and operations management at many four and five-star properties over the last 15 years, including The Hilton Hotel Antwerp and The Hilton Hotel Antwerp Airport. He also worked for eight years with the Accor Hotel Group in the Netherlands and Thailand before joining West Sands Phuket. Robert held the position of Executive Assistant Manager at Novotel Phuket Resort.

Russia: Putin puts its faith in gold

T he global financial crisis is now impacting on the economies of many Eastern European countries, several of which have already applied for assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This, in turn, has an effect on the economies of Western Europe, namely its banks, that lent heavily to Eastern Europe.

Hungary is a prime example where bank lending was not just reserved for the corporate sector. Many private individuals borrowed money for home mortgages from branches of Western banks operating in Hungary.

In terms of interest rates for borrowers, it was much cheaper to fund their home purchases using foreign currencies rather than Hungary’s domestic currency, the forint. Swiss francs became the currency of choice, with euro loans also popular.

However, in the past six months, the forint has fallen over 20% against the euro and Swiss franc and this means that all mortgages and repayments have increased by over 20% for Hungarians, along with house prices falling.

Hungary’s Government has approached the European Union for a financial bailout — covering itself and other Eastern European countries — to the tune of more than US$230 billion. This application has been rejected.

The crisis is also being felt in Russia, where the economy has slowed dramatically and substantial falls have been suffered on its stock exchange (around 70%) and on its currency. Apparently, the number of billionaires in Russia has fallen by 50% in the past year. President Putin has dropped in popularity, mainly Western European, that Russian companies have a strong macro-economic background.

This is important because many Russian companies have been funded by Western Europe and a substantial number of these credit lines are due to be repaid this year.

In the current environment this will undoubtedly be of concern to the lenders, in addition to other worries. The problems in Eastern Europe and Russia are just more signs of this global economic tsunami; unfortunately this disaster is lingering and analysts are predicting that one of its next victims is the US commercial real estate, namely office buildings and shops.

This, it is feared, will really impact on the US and its own economy, at all ages when they visit the mall.

Despite all the doom and gloom, there are some indications that a recovery is starting in China, but more on that next week.

Alan Greenspan has recently stated that the Obama administration’s bailout is going to be too small to succeed. Greenspan went on to say that this is the most serious crisis to hit America since the 1930s, and overall he was gloomy about the future, despite not ruling out a recovery.

Business television channel CNBC produced an excellent program entitled House of Cards which they showed on President’s day, February 16, repeating it again on several occasions due to high demand. For anyone who feels they do not understand the current problems, this documentary, with interviews of various players and schematic presentations of how things worked, provides an excellent insight. What was of particular concern was Alan Greenspan’s reaction to CNBC interviewer, David Faber. He was asked if he had been aware of the mortgage crisis that was developing in America during his tenure as Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, America’s central bank.

Greenspan stated that a staff member of the “FED” had drawn his attention to the matter and the scale of the developing problem. Greenspan’s attitude was that he brought it to the attention of Congress, the politicians would not have acted on the problem as they would not have wanted to stop the housing boom.

It would have seemed logical for Greenspan to have at least tried. History may well take a harsher view of Greenspan’s lack of action.

More and more analysts are referring to a third forthcoming economic bailout package as well as TARP4. These, as we know, have not yet been announced, but many believe it is only a matter of time and money.

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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ON THE MOVE

Money Talks

By Richard Watson

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TAKE A BREAK

Sudoku

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

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.

The BIG Crossword

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Across
1. Advancement
9. Unobtainable
15. Continually
16. Disconcerted
17. Revving engine's roar
19. Thrashing tool
21. Gateaux
22. Sand particle
23. Painter, Leonardo...
24. Actress,... Garbo
25. Indian class system
27. Early harp
29. Arduous hike
31. Large spoon
33. Matter of concern
35. Come up
38. Lodge firmly
40. Challenge
41. Hymn,... With Me
42. Hang loosely
43. Acted wordlessly
44. Exclusive English college
46. Reveal secret
48. Cavalry weapon
51. Clumps
53. Lettuce meal
55. Rupture
56. Modernise (software)
58. Most submissive
61. Grovel
63. Smash into
65. Infantile
69. Respiratory disorder
71. Prickly
72. Wine-serving jugs
74. Enemy

Down
1. Stern-looking (2-5)
2. Secretes
3. Mountain range tops
4. Fiji's capital
5. Perverse fate
6. Pseudonym,... plume (3,2)
7. Silver tray
8. Handsome youth
9. Unhealthy
10. Maxim
11. Wheel shaft
12. Site
13. Sweltered
14. From Asia
15. Perversion
16. Pours forth
17. Pointlessly
18. Tells off (7,4)
19. Stern-looking (2-5)
20. Aggravated
21. Decorative curtain cord
22. Moral
23. Curtail
24. Grovel
25. Jackdaw
26. Decorative curtain cord
27. Harvests
28. Frisks
29. Adroitly
30. Smear
31. Cloth flaps
32. Hereditary
33. Alter (text)
34. Hymn,... With Me
35. Ancient Greek writer
36. Hereditary
37. Alter (text)
38. Haemorrhaged
39. Haemorrhaged
40. Hymn,... With Me
41. Hymn,... With Me
42. Hang loosely
43. Acted wordlessly
44. Exclusive English college
45. Verbal exams
46. Reveal secret
47. Actors,... Lancaster
48. Call star,... Beckinsale
49. Smear
50. Cloth flaps
51. Clumps
52. Cloth flaps
53. Lettuce meal
55. Rupture
56. Modernise (software)
58. Most submissive
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63. Smash into
65. Infantile
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Solution on next page
Quick Crossword

Across
1. Pursue
3. LP
7. Cork
9. Homicide
10. Magistrate
12. Japanese city
16. Advertisement
17. Blode
18. Comedian...Hill
19. Jeans

Down
1. What is the collective noun for a group of people walking behind a coffin?
2. How did Vincent van Gogh commit suicide?
3. Which wood is used for the black keys on a piano?
4. Which Nazi leader flew to Britain to parley with Churchill?
5. Which US President abolished slavery?
6. Who was the star of Easy Street?


Get your brain in gear with the MONSTER QUIZ

1. What is the collective noun for a group of people walking behind a coffin?
2. How did Vincent van Gogh commit suicide?
3. Which wood is used for the black keys on a piano?
4. Which Nazi leader flew to Britain to parley with Churchill?
5. Which US President abolished slavery?
6. Who was the star of Easy Street?
7. What is the name given to the seat on the back of an elephant?
8. Which country governs Easter Island?
9. What sort of animal is Rikki-Tikki Tavi?
10. Who wrote the Invisible Man?
11. Who was the first European to sail to India?
12. In which country did the Anzio landing take place in WWII?
13. What is the capital of Trinidad & Tobago?
14. Who starred in Seven & Johnny Suede?
15. In which US state is Fort Knox?
16. Who is the only athlete to have set 6 world records in a single day?
17. Who is James Bond’s CIA partner?
18. Whose children are Moon Unit & Dweezil?
19. What number is lucky in Thailand?
20. What is the full name of the Wimbledon championship?

Puzzle Solutions

Phraya builds fortified residence following bloody riots in Phuket

-looking back

The previous ‘Looking Back’ article discussed how Phuket Town was first founded as a small settlement in the south of Phuket Island, with the belief that tin ores in the locality could be better mined and traded.

A few years after its founding, one of the first mayors of Phuket Town, the legendary Phra-Phuket Thut, managed to transform the small mining community into a bustling and lively town, prospering from local and regional trade, within a remarkably short span of time.

Towards the beginning of King Rama V’s reign, the town was elevated to become the administrative center of the island, supplanting Thalang Town to the north. Due to Phra-Phuket Thut’s good governance and sound administration policies, he gained royal favor and was officially promoted to the rank of ‘Phraya’ by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V).

Hence, from 1862 onwards, Phra-Phuket Thut became known by his royally bestowed title, Phraya Wichit-Songkram. On the same occasion, the Phraya’s eldest son, Lamduan, was also given the new title of ‘Phraya’ and made the mayor of Phuket Town, replacing his father.

When Phraya Wichit-Songkram administered the town, Phuket’s mining industry was thriving and generated much revenue for the state. The required revenue demands.

Unfortunately Phraya Lamduan did not prove his father’s equal when it came to overseeing administration and trade. Unluckily at one point during his governance, the price of tin on the world market fell sharply. This led to massive influx of Chinese ‘coo-

The angry Chinese ‘coolies’ unleashed their fury throughout the streets of Phuket Town. They looted and killed Siamese locals, burned shops and targeted government buildings in particular.

Following the incident, Phraya Wichit-Songkram moved his residence to Ban-Tha-Rua, just outside Phuket Town. Following the angry riots, threats of similar violence in the future seemed more real than ever. The governor had to move his residence out of town where it would be safer for him and his family. Incidentally, Ban-Tha-Rua was also where the famous English Captain, Francis Light built his home during the late 18th Century, when he lived and traded in Phuket.

Phraya Wichit-Songkram’s first house in the heart of Phuket Town has long perished over time. His residence at Ban-Tha-

Incidentally, Ban-Tha-Rua was also where the famous English Captain, Francis Light built his home during the late 18th Century, when he lived and traded in Phuket.

Within the walled compound stood a large complex of several buildings, that included an assembly hall, a theater, a pool and several wooden houses. Although the governor’s fortified residence has been neglected for many years, many of its structures, which over the years have been gradually buried under the soil and vegetation, are now being slowly exca-

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

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One step forward, two steps back?

To its credit, the current government has gone to great lengths to revive the ailing tourism industry in the aftermath of the Bangkok airport closures at the start of the current high season. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) continues to pump money into its international advertising campaigns under its Amazing Thailand theme, following up with a series of ‘roadshows’ and ‘mega-familiarization tours’.

The government has also taken measures to lure back more passengers by waiving application fees for tourist visas, decreasing landing fees at international airports and waiving parking fees for scheduled flights staying less than 24 hours — up from just three hours previously. Fortunately, the tourism outlook does seem to be gradually improving despite the global economic gloom. Leading low-cost carrier Thai AirAsia, which recently reported load factors on flights to Phuket up over the same period last year, says it would like to establish Phuket International Airport as a second aviation hub for Thailand.

Sadly, such positive developments could be offset by a series of alarming events which, taken collectively, can only serve to undermine tourist perceptions about the safety of traveling to Phuket. While reports of the island having the highest incidence of violent crime, dengue fever and HIV/AIDS in the South are no doubt skewed by poor statistical analysis, chilling incidents such as the recent murders of two foreign businessmen and a spate of fires along the Patong beach road are not as easy to discount. [See news pages].

In addition to the tragic loss of life with the recent sinking of a Dive Asia vessel, tourists running the word “Phuket” through the beach road are not as easy to discount. [See news pages].

Effectiveness in combating drug abuse; are completely incompatible with innocent tourists to face temporary incarceration or even miss return flights to Phuket up over the same period last year, says it would like to establish Phuket International Airport as a second aviation hub for Thailand.

In association with The Nation Multimedia Group PCL

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A-ok from the USA

From February 18 until 21, 2009, the United States Navy (USN) ship, USS BOXER (LHD 4) conducted a port visit to Phuket Province for some rest and relaxation following a long voyage from San Diego, California, USA. During the visit, over three thousand sailors and marines had the opportunity to enjoy everything that this magnificent island has to offer.

At the conclusion of the holiday, there was an overwhelming consensus amongst the troops that the visit was a success and that everyone had enjoyed a wonderful time. This was just one of numerous port visits conducted by USN ships over many years of friendship between Thailand and the United States.

Prior to and during the stop-over, there were many people who worked to make this visit possible and ultimately successful. I would like to give my sincere thanks to Governor Preecha, his staff and the members of Phuket provincial and city government offices for their leadership and advice.

I would like to thank the management and employees of Glenn Defense Marine Asia for their dedication to service.

I would like to show my sincere appreciation to the leaders and officers of the Royal Thai Police Region 8, the Immigration Volunteers and the Phuket Tourist Police Volunteers for working such long hours to ensure the safety of our personnel.

To the management and staff of the Patong Resort Hotel, thanks for your never-ending support.

Finally, I would like to thank the business owners, hotels, restaurant and bars; bus-, taxi- and tuk-tuk-drivers, and all the good citizens of Phuket for the warm welcome they demonstrated. Everyone made a long and lasting impression on our personnel.

So thank you Phuket for your warm and sustained hospitality and friendship.

Very Respectfully,
Douglas H. Robinson
Chief of Naval Security
Force Protection Detachment (FPD)
United States Embassy, Bangkok

Stop the shops

As a resident of Bang Tao, I usually enjoy taking a leisurely drive along the beach road by Best Western towards Ching Talay. In the past six months there have been no less than 10 new shops open along what used to be a beautiful green and open-spaced area. You guessed it, tallow users – optician, tailor, optician, it’s like two shops and a line of mirrors.

Of course there are now so many that shop staff have taken to the streets to nab any innocent looking passers by, harassing them to buy their wares. Coupled with the new hotel that has been built in this area, which resulted in so many construction trucks and workers rushing to get it open on time, the road now resembles the surface of the moon!

When will developers wise up that we need to protect the beauty of Phuket and stop senselessly creating more buildings?

M. Walker
Bang Tao

Road sense

It never ceases to amaze me how many people I see riding motorbikes without wearing a helmet or, worse, using their mobile phones.

The roads in Phuket are dangerous enough already and many people lose their lives each year. The last thing we need is people acting so recklessly and inconsiderately.

As far as helmets are concerned, I feel the problem lies with people believing that it’s ‘uncool’ to be seen sporting a helmet. Wearing a helmet isn’t ‘uncool’, having your brains scattered across a busy road is ‘uncool’.

What’s more, I often see people placing their helmet on their heads when traveling through areas where police patrol – without bothering to fasten them – and then removing them as soon as they are clear – incredible.

As far as mobile phones are concerned, this simply begs for belief.

How can you control a vehicle when on the phone? I thought I had seen everything, then just the other day I saw a young man traveling at a reasonable speed, seemingly sending an SMS – what on earth were you thinking? Oh that’s right, he wasn’t.

I hope that the police crackdown on these reckless riders and hit them with massive fines that will deter them from repeating these mindless acts of stupidity. Ultimately, this will save their lives and more importantly, the lives of others.

Richard Joyce
Kathu

Letters conveying views and suggestions are published here. Those seeking comment from government officials and/or business owners are published in Issues & Answers at www.phuketgazette.net.
Phuket is holding up well at the moment but its difficult to predict how the economy will fare in the longer term. However, the picture will be a lot clearer after the Songkran holiday (Thai New Year) in April.

This month and next month, Phuket is hosting several important events, including the Thephkasattri memorial festival, the Thailand Open golf tournament and the ASEAN conference, all of which help bring visitors and revenue into the province.

Once these events have finished, we’ll have to take another look at visitor numbers to see how the figures compare with those of the same period in previous years.

China represents a promising source for Phuket’s tourism industry. A new twice-weekly charter flight from Shanghai to Phuket began recently. Each flight brings in around 300 tourists. This has opened the door to a new niche in the tourism market, and I believe more similar charter flights will follow soon.

This foothold in the Chinese tourist market is a result of marketing efforts by the TAT and I believe more similar efforts will be better distributed between the cities.

Land prices will continue to rise, which will in turn make the cost of any future project much more expensive than it is now.

WATER
Ensuring that there is enough water for the current demand throughout the year has been a top priority. A committee was set up a while ago to look into the issue of water supply and it’s working to bring down from Bangkok. There is still no fixed date for the island’s own reservoir but a company has been sourced to organize the move and handle logistics. The office is expected to be in service, as planned, within two months.

UNDERGROUND CABLES
Having recently put electricity cables underground along the beach road in Karon, there are plans to do the same in other areas, but it is a very expensive undertaking, so we are taking our time.

I hope that one day all of Phuket’s electricity cables will be underground, but that time is still quite some way off. Plans inevitably involve numerous parties – none of which are directly in charge of such projects – making progress slower than it would be if being carried out by a private company led by a CEO.

MARINE CONSERVATION
Steps have been taken to preserve fish stocks and other marine fauna around Phuket by introducing fishing regulations, such as designating boundaries for fishing areas while prohibiting fishing in other areas and requiring that the fishing equipment used is of a certain standard and design.

Net fishing and trawling is strictly prohibited over known fish breeding and nursery grounds or where there is coral that needs to be preserved. Those who ignore the regulations can be punished by having their boat impounded and their fishing license deducted for a certain period.

Net fishing and trawling is strictly prohibited over known fish breeding and nursery grounds or where there is coral that needs to be preserved. Those who ignore the regulations can be punished by having their boat impounded and their fishing license deducted for a certain period.

Safi

Road safety and the high number of vehicles on Phuket’s roads remains a major cause for concern. Already, there are as many motor-cycles registered in Phuket as there are people registered as living here (1,000,000) – the actual number is around 200,000 four-wheeled vehicles registered in the province. Many of the cars on Phuket’s roads are from other provinces, so they are not registered here. That’s also true of much of Phuket’s human population, with a large number of people living here for just a few months at a time such as, so the actual number of vehicles and people in Phuket is much higher than any statistics will tell us.

One significant danger is the ease with which youngsters can get on a motorcycle and ride it on the roads without any previous driving instruction.

To learn a new skill, one would usually learn the theory and then put what has been learned into practice, but that doesn’t happen here. People are driving about without regard for the rules.

I’ve experienced myself when stopping at junctions as the lights turn red, with the driver behind expecting me to race through the changing lights and becoming angry and（...）
Historian kicks out the jams

By James Eckardt

I n 1940, Mortimer Adler, editor of the Great Books series, wrote an instructional tome called How to Read a Book. Compliments are not hard to find, but they’re not always given, and are often not given for the right reasons. In any case, books are not made to please the reader. There are many books written by many authors who have been confused as to which way to turn. An auspicious astral atmosphere helps you to make the right decisions during the second half of March, particularly regarding property and career matters. Those with a birthday to celebrate this week can expect the year ahead to bring more job satisfaction. Your lucky number is two this weekend.

ARIENS (March 21-April 20): Many Arians who would like to find a better situation to make their act will not move quickly. A hot tip regarding your search for a new home should be pursued sooner rather than later. Those who are content with their current living situation could discover that their energy benefits from some redecorating. Incorporate the colors mandarin orange and jungle green to encourage better balance in your life.

TAURUS (April 21-May 20): Taureans whose hearts aren’t in a particular relationship will finally find the right way to back out gracefully. This will leave the coast clear for other developments in your love life and the stars suggest that Sagittarians would like to get to know you better. Money matters are well-starred until the end of March, with a surprise windfall forecast this week. Wear a piece of rose quartz to encourage inner peace.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Those Geminis who haven’t been fully this week. Forgotten appointments are highlighted for those born November 22. Important decisions are highlighted for those born November 19. The heat builds up in Gemini this week. The number four is lucky on Monday.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Business is forecast to be less stressful during the second half of March, but Aquarius’ attitude next weekend could cause a slight stormy atmosphere. Your ability to maintain a cool composure ensures that progress is still made. Where romance is concerned, a new relationship is suddenly more serious when family becomes involved. If you’re not ready to take this step, careful conversation is necessary. The number five is lucky this weekend.

LEO (July 23-August 22): Single Leos will be pleased at attention received from a compatible water sign this weekend. A Capricorn friend wants to share some good news with you, but you soon realize that there’s a price to pay. Where work is concerned, Wednesday is the most auspicious day to renegotiate a contract or sign a new one. Money matters are influenced by a benevolent astral atmosphere during the second half of March.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22): Where work is concerned, many Virgols will be caught between a rock and a hard place this week. Your reluctance to accept a particular job could prove to be a barrier in the future and it may be best to simply get on with it. The stars suggest that money will flow towards you more than in the other direction for the remainder of March. The number three is lucky this weekend.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22): Travel and work are a well-starred combination during the second half of March. Many Librarians will have no problems finding the right balance between taking care of business and finding enjoyment in new places. Those who are not going away will discover fresh fun close to home. If you’re baggy with sobering truth. In between is the quicksilver Now, in a baggy with sobering truth. In between is the quicksilver Now, heads of glittering elation that slip beneath the high-sailing dirigible

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21): In spite of your suspicion that you are heading up the creek with no paddle, there are signs that a negative work situation is about to improve. However, this is not an auspicious time to take unnecessary risks. Money matters are subject to unsettled astral conditions for the remainder of this month. Romance with an earth sign is promising but separation is forecast to put a strain on the relationship.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19): An offer to try something different in the area of work may be a high moment for disillusioned Capricorns. However, this will probably involve more commitment than you are prepared to give. Monday is the best day for compromise related discussions. A romantic date this weekend helps you to see that you have more in common than you imagined. The number nine can bring some good fortune on Sunday.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 19): The heat builds up in your personal life and Aquarians will need to plan their days carefully this week. Forgotten appointments are highlighted to cause disruption midweek and a fire sign colleague could use your inefficiency to their advantage. Aquanísts are keen to make investments attractive until the end of this month – on Wednesday you hear of a particularly lucrative opportunity. Wearing the color silver can help to sharpen your wit.
An unexpected lesson

When I came to Thailand nearly two years ago, I was of the conviction that Italy is the best place to study — very hard, of course, but both the scholastic system and the teaching methods are excellent. I am understandably proud when I listen to many people overseas, who consider Italian education to be first rate, referring to the many great scientists, inventors, painters and philosophers that Italy has produced throughout history. Who indeed could deny the enormous impact that such great minds as Da Vinci, Marconi, Maiorana, Raffaello and Dante Alighieri, among others, have had on the course of humanity.

What a surprise then, to discover that Thailand’s schools should be able to offer me some important lessons to my Italian brothers and sisters. As incredible as this state of affairs may seem, it is nevertheless something to which I personally bore witness, when I recently returned to Italy by the invitation of some colleges and public institutions to promote Thailand in my capacity as Miss Teen Phuket and as a student representative of one of the oldest schools in Phuket, Sattree.

I had hitherto been unaware of the recent upheavals in Italian schools, with the new government changing so many things in the education system, such as forcing the teachers to get in tune with the new generation and the removal of many ineffective and surplus teachers.

Other draconian measures included slashing costs on various activities and introducing tough new disciplinary measures, including the introduction of school uniforms and the clamping down on the laisser faire approach that had led to increases in drug use and prostitution amongst the student population. My father informed me that this ‘new’ system was not really new at all, but just a return to the standards of the past and insisted that the importance of respect for rules on hair style and especially the uniforms, the value the uniforms, the surplus teachers.

The same thing happened, but unequivocally discredited part of their reasons for fighting, and the students, although somewhat perplexed, nevertheless enthusiastically embraced the understanding that maybe their protests were misplaced. Unbelievable.

I finally realized that Thailand, with its strong and sometimes conflicted role in the world, could have the chance to offer a solution to the older and well established schools in old prestigious Italy.

Returning to Thailand, just a few days ago, I witnessed an Italian debate on the same argument, with many eminent educators, movie stars and scientists, complaining about the strikes by the students, and many professors finally conceding that the new law was not, in fact, so bad. I felt proud of my little contribution, and was happy to return to my school, accepting the roles of Thai discipline with a great deal more tolerance.

Many of the students and teachers thanked Maria for showing them another way of schooling, long forgotten.
Randhawa cruises to victory in Thailand Open

The 40th running of the Thailand Open came to a conclusion on Sunday March 8 as European and Asian Tour star Jyoti Randhawa completed a fine week’s work with a bogey-free five-under-par round of 65.

An aggregate score of 17-under-par secured the Indian a comfortable two-stroke victory over Welshman Rhys Davies and saw him pick up his eighth Asian Tour trophy, and a winners cheque for US$79,250.

After receiving the trophy, Randhawa said, “It’s great to come and win in Thailand. It’s a great country, with great professional golfers.”

“It was a good field this week, so to play the way I did over the last two rounds gave me great satisfaction” he added.

Under the constant threat of rain, the staff at the Laguna Phuket Golf Club worked around the clock to ensure the tournament ran smoothly.

Randhawa, Davies and Shivshankar Chowrasia began the final round of the televised event day tied for the lead on 12-under-par.

Of the threesome, Chowrasia made the strongest start, registering an eagle at the first, but then faltering, dropping shots at the second, the sixth and eighth holes.

With seven tournament victories under his belt, it was Randhawa who gradually emerged as the likely winner. Three birdies on the front nine left him two shots clear of Davies at the turn.

Elsewhere on the course, luck seemed to desert world No.71 Thongchai Jaidee in his quest for a first Thailand Open. Thongchai ended the tournament shooting a 67 to finish 10-under-par and the joint highest Thai finisher, level with Chapchai Nirat.

Prom Meesawat also suffered from the weight of expectation in his attempt to emulate his father’s famous win in 1991. Prom began the day nine-under-par, just three shots off the lead, but was unable to recapture the form that took him into contention after the first three days, finishing the tournament at seven-under-par.

The 2009 Singha Thailand Open proceeded without a hitch, with many of the players complimenting the ground staff, especially on the consistent trueness of the greens.

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Earlier, USPGA star Daniel Chopra had chosen the final day to remind everyone why he is so highly rated and why he was invited to compete at the Singha Thailand Open. After a disappointing three days, Chopra found himself seven shots off the lead at five-under.

Throwing caution to the wind, the Swede registered two eagles in a brilliant 63 that pushed him to 12-under-par and suddenly with an outside chance of forcing a playoff. But it proved to be a case of too little too late. Randhawa, proving unflappable—something he attributed to going scuba diving earlier in the week—was chasing his maiden victory on the Asian Tour.

Randhawa proved unflappable—something he attributed to going scuba diving earlier in the week—making another two birdies as his competitors fell by the wayside.

Approaching the last, to the generous applause of the gathered spectators, Randhawa made a straightforward par to secure a well-deserved victory and become the first Indian to lift the King’s Trophy.

The 2009 Singha Thailand Open was the first international golf event for Laguna Golf Club and was deemed a great success. All the staff, caddies and volunteers performed tirelessly and proved a credit to the golf club as well as a wonderful advertisement for golf in Phuket.

Speaking after the event, Tim Haddon, Director of Laguna Phuket Golf Club, said, “The organization has been fantastic from beginning to end.”

His sentiment was echoed by Chris Jordan, Senior Vice-President of World Sport Group—the tournament’s promoter—who said, “The course was fantastic and did not yield to the pros. It defended itself well.”

The event’s premier sponsors were Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau and PTT Public Company Ltd. The Phuket Gazette Newspaper and PG TV provided coverage as media partners.
Stars win league title with last kick of season

By James Goyder

The Phuket Fair Play League came to a dramatic conclusion on March 9 at the British International School (BIS).

The league comprises six teams of children aged between 11 and 12, drawn from the Youth Football Home (YFH) orphanage and BIS.

After 40 weeks of keenly contested matches, the Stars and the Diamonds were tied at the top on 19 points, with just one round of matches remaining. As fate would have it, the fixture list saw the two sides lining up against each other in the final clash.

The Diamonds went into the match boasting a superior goal difference, knowing that a draw would be enough to see them crowned champions.

Mindful of the importance of keeping a clean sheet, the Diamonds played Nonthawit Onting – one of the outstanding football talents in Thailand – in defence. This negative tactic looked to have paid off, as, with seconds to go, the game remained scoreless.

With time running out, the Stars looked destined for disappointment but launched one final desperate attack.

Following some good work down the left, the ball fell to Patrick Larsen and the Norwegian kept a cool head, rifling a shot into the roof of the net to secure his side the title with the very last kick of the match.

Last gasp match winner Patrick said, “I had a really good chance to score earlier in the match that I missed. I thought we had lost our chance to win, so I was really pleased when I scored.”

There is a dearth of organized sport for youngsters in Phuket and so the aim of the Phuket Fair Play League was to give children from both establishments the opportunity to play competitive football and to meet new friends.

According to organizer Hannu Tuukkanen of the Youth Football Home, “It’s been a fantastic success and we have had really positive feedback from all involved. It’s been a great opportunity for the boys from YFH to make some friends at BIS and I think both groups will really benefit from this experience. “I think everyone involved would like the league to keep on going, but most of the YFH boys go home for a few weeks at Songkran. Maybe after that we will be able to start up a league again,” he added.

World Cup winning footballer Uwe Bein, who was part of the victorious West German squad in 1990, was on hand to present trophies to the winners. Nonthawit Onting was the competition’s top scorer, with 15 goals, while Chaicothe Panasampon received the Most Valuable Player award.

The 11 most outstanding players have also been selected to represent the league in a tournament at the BIS later this month.
Fractional ownership: what needs to be considered?

By Michael Greth

In these days of global economical woes, an investment concept such as fractional ownership might benefit from buyers becoming better appraised of the actual costs and potential risks of their investment.

Whenever a buyer is considering investing in a fractional ownership structure, an understanding of the basic legal principles of the specific structure is highly recommended prior to the signing of any legal document.

Basically, fractional ownership is described as a method of co-owning a single or several assets by more than one individual or entity – a group of investors. Usually, a single legal entity owns the asset – a residential holiday home, a leisure yacht or a private jet, for example – and this legal entity is controlled by a number of investors who become shareholders and therefore indirectly owners of the asset.

The costs and use of the asset is divided among the shareholders in relation to their percentage shareholding.

Typically, the company grants its shareholders certain time periods to utilize the asset by means of a shareholders’ agreement.

Widely misunderstood is the difference between fractional ownership and time share.

Generally speaking, the major difference between the two is that buyers of time share purchase time in an asset, whereas fractional owners actually own a part of the property through their stake in the asset-owning company. A fractional owner may sell or bequeath its interest and can even benefit from the appreciation of the asset’s value.

Time share, on the other hand, does not typically offer these advantages, due to legal or market reasons. Buyers of time share receive only a time-limited right to use a specific property, which extinguishes after a certain period, unless the buyer decides to purchase additional time.

Naturally, these important differences will be reflected in higher pricing for fractional ownership ventures compared with time share.

In terms of the legal documentation that is required when buying a fractional ownership interest, a buyer is typically required to sign a share sale and purchase agreement, as well as a shareholders’ agreement, under which important points – including terms of payment for the shares in the asset-owning company – will be outlined.

The shareholders’ agreement will also stipulate the conditions under which each shareholder shall be entitled to use the asset, what proportion of the management and maintenance fees need to be paid, as well as details regarding the processing of a resale of an individual share interest by single shareholders.

The agreements should also be carefully examined vis-à-vis the consequences that may occur in the event that single shareholders default on their payment obligations regarding management and maintenance of the company’s asset.

In summary, fractional ownership may gain in popularity as an economical and feasible way to realize and live out your personal dreams in these times of worldwide economic recession.

Photo: Mia Gillow.

Fractional ownership may gain in popularity as an economical way to live out your personal dreams in these times of worldwide economic recession. This article was written by Michael Greth, Consultant of the Phuket based law firm International Law Office Patong Beach Co., Ltd. He can be contacted by email (michael@ilo-phuket.com) or phone (076-222191-5).
Construction update

Located on Phuket’s west coast in the resort of Karon, construction of Sunset Plaza began in April 2008 and is scheduled to be completed by the middle of this month.

The development, comprising 50 standard luxury units and six deluxe penthouse suites, is being built on 2,800 square meters in close proximity to the Big Buddha and overlooking the entire Karon Beach area. Ninety percent of the units have already been sold, but the remaining five properties are still available for purchase as foreign freeholds.

The project was designed by Architecthu, which is also overseeing the development and construction of Sunset Plaza. With over 14 years of experience in the property development industry, Architecthu pledges high-quality construction – using first-rate materials – on the outer shell and interior walls, as well as the electricity and water systems, balcony railing and safety glass. Prices of the units range from 4.9 million baht for a standard luxury unit up to 30 million baht for a penthouse suite.

The Sunset Plaza Condominium, including units and facilities, will be managed by the RESAVA Company, which will offer owners the opportunity to take part in a rental program. The Sunset Plaza development will feature two types of unit: luxury one- and two-bedroomed seaview units and deluxe penthouses, including rooftop garden and optional Jacuzzi. The latter boast panoramic views of Karon Bay.

For the one- and two-bedroom units, the total floor space ranges from 116 to 400 square meters, while the penthouse suites start at 253 square meters, up to a maximum of 400. All units will be fully air-conditioned, with quality interior fittings, living area, European kitchen and built-in BBQ grill on the balcony.

Owners of the units have the option of furnishing the properties themselves or can choose from a number of packages, with prices starting at 250,000 baht.

In addition, the Sunset Plaza will boast myriad facilities available to potential clients. Amenities will include a sun deck with sun-beds and palm trees, pool with Jacuzzi area, infinity edge lap pool, kids’ pool, common area toilet and shower facilities. Owners will also be able to enjoy a lush tropical landscaped garden, dining area, snack bar and relaxation area, fitness center with views of the Andaman sea, common area staff service, 24-hour on-site security, lift from underground parking to the fifth floor.

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Birds of a feather

I am enjoying a sun-downer by the swimming pool. Overhead, in the gathering dusk, a flight of 20 or so white birds wing their way eastwards. I would call it a ‘skein’, but that collective noun applies to geese. These birds, though impressive, are different.

In fact, they are Cattle Egrets (bubulcus ibis), long necks extracted into hunched shoulders, legs stiffly astern in the manner of their relative, the heron. I can set my watch by them. It is 6.30. Every day at this time of year, they make their noiseless pass over the garden en route from feeding ground to night-time roost.

We are lucky to have these elegant birds in Phuket. Many of their number, especially the Great Egret, were endangered by nineteenth century ladies’ insatiable desire for hat plumes. Indeed, their name comes from the French aigrette, meaning ‘feather’.

We are doubly lucky to have them when you consider the Thai propensity for putting more loss to explain why the sun skinks over the plot, armed with a long stick like a fishing rod. It had a fine nylon noose at the head-high, secondary growth beyond the plot, armed with a long stick like a fishing rod. It had a fine nylon noose at the head-high, secondary growth beyond the plot, armed with a long stick like a fishing rod.

By Patrick Campbell

Lizard for lunch?

In fact, Phuket’s lizards provide a tasty morsel for some unlikely gourmets. Recently, I was at a loss to explain why the sun skinks (mabuya multifasciata) were putting in fewer and fewer appearances in their favorite flower borders. One day I discovered why. A golden tree snake (chrysopelea ornate, see photo) was wrapped around my papaya tree. The tail of a skink was protruding from its mouth; the rest had already disappeared down a serpentine gullet. This visitor normally moves like quicksilver; now, in his post-prandial state, he had as much get-up-and-go as a Victorian gentleman after a 10-course meal.

Some months earlier, the other lizards in the garden, fencepost agamids, had narrowly avoided a similar fate. They were at risk due to the national habit – often borne of necessity – of supplementing a monotonous rice diet with animal protein.

Long before the garden had taken shape, I was having a well sunk in my newly acquired plot. It was never finished as it happens, since the diggers encountered a stratum of grey granite – it is below the surface in much of Phuket – that defied all attempts to mine it with dynamite. A hazardous business, since the explosives were not only temperamental, but illegal. So before each big bang, the diggers ran into the jungle and hid, only emerging after the explosion had sent a hail of rocky fragments flying in all directions.

Every day, the chief bombardier spent his lunch break catching these absurdly long-tailed fence lizards (calotes versicolor), reptiles so named after their long necks retracted along with a dozen or so unexpected scraps of their natural camouflage when disturbed by making an initial dash and then merging with their natural surroundings in reptilian stillness.

Once the creature had frozen, the hunter then dangled the lasso over its head, carefully lowered it and then quickly pulled it tight in the manner of a rabbit wire. Writhing and struggling like a hooked fish, the victim was unceremoniously dumped in a large plastic bottle.

Once work was over for the day, the lizard was spit-barbecued along with a dozen or so of his unfortunate fellows over an impromptu fire. There was precious little flesh, but the tiny, pathetic cadavers were consumed with relish. Let’s hope that Agamid lizards are not an endangered species.

One possible crumb of comfort for green-minded readers, My Thai partner assures me that Phuket natives do not eat such things, that this is a barbarism indulged by people from Isarn or Myanma or Vietnam, by non-southerners who think nothing of eating disgusting stuff such as fermented fish soup or frogs’ feet. And in truth, our lizard catcher did come from Udon Thani. But I still worry about the lizards...
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Delving deeper into Samui’s luxury market

In my last column I looked at the emerging luxury property segment in Koh Samui. This week, we take a look at on-going demand and issues and forecast the trends of the current market sentiment.

The year started weakly and we can expect lower levels of demand to persist throughout 2009 and possibly into late 2010. Recent political problems have had an impact on the property market but this is seen as a short-term issue. Far more pressing for the Samui market is the difficult sales climate. This is mainly due to a decrease in confidence and liquidity among potential purchasers as a result of tough global financial conditions.

We are seeing moderation rather than heady optimism among buyers. There is a gap between the prices offered by developers and owners and what prospective purchasers are willing to offer. This has led to developers being open to negotiation and to opportunistic buyers who are open to negotiation and to developers offering deals. This has led to a decrease in the number of transactions that are benefiting from short-term opportunistic buyers who are being open to negotiation and to developers offering deals. This has led to a decrease in the number of transactions that are benefiting from short-term opportunistic buyers who are being open to negotiation and to developers offering deals.

However, the Thai government is offering some timely support to the local property market. Opportunities exist for local investors to gain a foothold in Samui’s tourist industry, as they will be offered Thai Board of Investment (BOI) incentives on a automatic basis if they win bids to buy back assets in Thailand from troubled foreign companies affected by the financial crisis. Furthermore, there are signs of recovery by the year end, though as of late, these forecasts are being pushed into next year.

Samui’s tourism market has traditionally been an important source of potential villa purchasers, and as conditions improve, tourism is expected to strengthen. This, combined with the limited current and upcoming supply of prime properties, should provide a solid basis for upward momentum in the Samui property market.

Samui’s real estate market is still in its infancy compared to Phuket’s, but it is rapidly catching up in terms of product variety and robust pricing levels. The Samui Estates villa project (adjacent to the Four Seasons), was the first large-scale project in Samui priced in excess of 100M baht. However, the W Retreat and Conrad-branded luxury villa projects are also testing pricing levels in the market, as is a variety of smaller boutique luxury villa developments. With the newness of many of the high-end developments, it remains to be seen how the market tolerates current asking prices.

However, the existing and impending supply at the top end of the Samui property market is very limited, and it is likely that in the medium term, upper-tier properties will remain a small but exclusive segment of support in the Samui property market.

The bulk of development in Samui has always centered on the northern and eastern coasts, which have become increasingly developed. As such, with a growing array of high-end developments clustering along the southwest region from Taling Ngam to Thong Krut and the last few remaining coastal parcels in the area being bid up, it appears that Samui is creating a new luxury enclave.

Looking ahead at new trends, one is a likely change in demographics. Due to increased accessibility to key regional and international markets, it is likely that Samui will see a change in the make-up of its visitor groups. New direct air routes announced recently will open up access to Samui for high nett worth individuals, particularly from Eastern Europe, Russia and China. With the fairly recent large-scale evaluation of both the pound and the Australian dollar, these markets have seen sharp declines as key sectors.

There is a move to smaller boutique developments. The shortage of developable land (or contiguous land parcels) in prime areas has led to an increase in the number of small-scale high-end developments, with 10 or fewer units. An example of such a development is Naissance Villas. While new areas opening up in the less developed south and west of Samui have afforded investors the opportunity to purchase parcels of land suitable for larger projects, the overall short-age of land on the island will not make this trend sustainable.

Always a key issue is the available infrastructure and whether it can keep pace to support the growth of the tourism market. This includes the new terminal at Samui Airport, which became operational in 2007, more than quadrupling handling capacity to 16,000 passengers. This is complemented by planned additional air routes into Samui, which will provide access for new tourism segments. Other works under-way include the expansion and improvement of essential access roads, including projects to widen key roadways.

Interesting to note is a shift in the political landscape, led by the recent decision to declare Samui a “town” in its own right, as opposed to a sub-district of Surat Thani. This has resulted in some administrative changes that may have positive effects on the island and its future development. These changes will make it possible to deal directly with the central government in Bangkok, rather than petitioning Surat Thani to do so on its behalf, and ought to have a greater say in its financial affairs and infrastructure planning going forward.

Samui already has a critical mass of good-quality marina infrastructure. Samui has very little in place for the boating market, though this may change soon.

A public meeting was held in October 2008 to discuss the possibility of building a small public marina on the island. It appears that the current front runner is the Big Buddha area. In addition, it has been suggested that the upcoming Park Hyatt will have yacht berths on a neighboring island.

Lastly, going green on any island is a charged issue. Samui’s development has been rapid, and the current pace is not sustainable. As such it has been recognized that certain aspects of infrastructure planning have lagged behind tourism growth, causing stress on natural resources and local culture. Currently there is a “green island” project underway. The aim of the project (a collaboration between public and private sector interests as well as tourism), is to protect and restore the local environment and local culture as well as to create a tourism business that is sustainable in the long term.

Samui’s property market remains a developing story, and most insiders’ forecasts for this year see the market remaining challenging going into 2010. How this storyline plays out and whether we see a parallel effect in Phuket remains something to keep our eyes on.
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120sqm, 2 bedrooms, living room, fully furnished marble-fitted kitchen. 4 air conditioners, cable TV and many options. Jacuzzi, 2 pools, landscaped garden. Short or long term rent. 39,500- 49,500 baht per month. Tel: 087-888 4769, 082-166 1690 (Thai).

3 BED POOL VILLA - NEAR BIS
65,000 baht per month long-term. High quality, fully furnished on compound of six. WiFi, cable TV, security, maintenance and gym. Tel: 084-793 9054. Email: oggyyowan@gmail.com

B.L. APARTMENT
2,800 sqm of garden. Part of car park and swimming pool is being renovated. Due to economy, we would like to lease the villa at very low price. But must meet minimum of 5 years of following conditions. The lease excludes maids service, management fees, electric and water bills. The excluded expenses 70,000(BTH) monthly. The lease must be paid annually in advance. First year 8,4m. 2nd year 5.5m 3rd year 11-th year 13m and 5th year 15m. If there is US$10 million. Anyone interested in the above, please contact Khan Penal at 081-353 5912. Or sent email: vanich@phuket.ksc.co.th. We will email you photos and etc.

LUXURY APARTMENT
100sqm, 1 bedroom, 1 living room, kitchen, cable, internet, fully furnished, management fee, electricity, water included. Tel: 089-706 3335.

THAI VILLA AND POOL
600sqm, 4 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms. Safe and quiet location. Jacuzzi, open-plan lounge, diner European kitchen, private garden with parking. Long term: 37,500 baht per month. Tel: 081-270 5126. Email: maydayphuket@gmail.com

SEA VIEW VILLAS
2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, dining room, kitchen, wireless internet, cable TV. Fully furnished or unfurnished. Gym, pool, 24 hour security. Minutes to Nai Ham Beach. Price 20,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-968 9550.

3 BED POOL VILLA - NEAR BIS
65,000 baht per month long-term. High quality, fully furnished on compound of six. WiFi, cable TV, security, maintenance and gym. Tel: 084-793 9054. Email: oggyyowan@gmail.com

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LUXURY APARTMENT
100sqm, 1 bedroom, 1 living room, kitchen, cable, internet, fully furnished, management fee, electricity, water included. Tel: 089-706 3335.
FLAT OR HOUSE from October 8 until March 2009. Could be in Phuket or Krabi, including Koh Lanta. The important things are seaside (or at least sea view) and a swimming pool. Two bedrooms, for a couple. No pets and no smoking. Can be a quiet location. Email: office@neubrasilien.at

HOME FOR 5 MILLION BAHT My wish: a house with pool, maybe unfurnished, half rai, and quiet – all less than 5 million baht. Should be located toward the south end of Phuket island. Own pool with photos. Email: godolix@gmail.com

CONDO CASH Looking for apartment. 1 or 2 beds, sea view Patong-Kata. Payment from offshore account. Please send to email: jeanp2002@yahoo.com

12 MONTH LEASE 6-12 month lease wanted on a secure house with garden and pool in Nai Harn, Rawai, Kata, or Kathu. Must be dog-frendly and have internet connection. Can pay up to 40,000 baht per month. Please send to: robinodonovan@gmail.com

APARTMENT SWAP I am looking to swap rental of my Sydney 2 bedroom apartment for a Patong apartment from December 15 to March 27, 2009 – or part thereof. My apartment has air-con, cable TV, and Internet. Five mins to city and beaches. Tel: +61-2-9904 2073, +61-430-218110. Email: mbohlsen@gmail.com

LAND WANTED I want to buy +/- half a rai. Maybe unfinished, half rai, and located anywhere from the south end of Phuket to Kathu or Nai Harn. Make me a low price offer. Email: godolix@gmail.com

PROPERTY WANTED Looking for land to buy? Chalong area. Can pay maximum 5,000,000 baht per month. ADSL is a must. Please make offer WITH price, good description and grades of Stainless Steel. Email: contact@strangefruit.musi.com

 taxes set out in the management agreement, including housekeeping & maintenance. We are experienced and in the field and are willing to take care of your house for an affordable monthly fee. Price example: For a 3-bed villa with garden and pool, our charge is 5,000 baht per month. Please contact us to discuss our service. The company is Swedish managed. For contact in Swedish or English: 083-394 8337 (Mattias). For contact in Thai, Swedish or English: 081-414-4577 (Vijaya). Email: mattias@phuket-dirtdir.com

VILLA MANAGEMENT BY SELF-EMPLOYED PERSON I have 7 years experience with real estate and property management in Australia. Have worked with hotel management in Phuket resorts for 3 years. I provide high-quality service and villa management at fair prices. Can carry out professional duties set out in the management agreement, including housekeeping & maintenance of property. Can organize flight tickets and activities as well as other requests. Tel: 087-100 6111. Email: luckypan@gmail.com

APARTMENT & ROOM IN PATONG Apartment for long term. 12,000-20,000 baht per month. Rooms from 800-1,500 baht per night. Tel: 067-512151 or 089-290 9567. Or send email to bennymba@hotmail.com. For pics, see our website at: www.bennymba.com

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SURIN / BANG TAO APT Two bedroom apartment at Club Lensuag. Fantastic facilities for short / long term ten. Tel: 076-271670, 087-079 0650. Email: martindanielzlei@yahoo.com

APARTMENT IN PATONG Also available in Benjamia Housing Complex. Tel: 081-344622, 081-719 7092. Email: info@bluewaterphuket.com Website: www.bluewaterphuket.com

STUDIO ROOMS, PATONG Rent daily, monthly. Newly furnished, studio has pool. Good price. Tel: 089-728 4005. Email: tharmad17@yahoo.com

PATONG LUXURY APT Center Patong, 1 and 2 bedrooms. Tel: 076-341827 or for info and photos. Email: suites247@yahoo.com

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APARTMENTS POOL & VIEW 1 or 2 bedroom apartment, sea view penthouse, swimming pool, car park. Quiet and safe. Includes, air-con, cable TV, free WiFi, fully serviced. Best rates. Long- or short-term. Please contact us for details. Tel: 076-296621, 081-691 6147. Fax: 076-344689. Email: info@baansuanvilla.de

KAPA BEACH Southern Fried Rice. “A diamond in the crown of Phuket” (Tripadvisor). 8 beautiful rooms, 3-minute walk to beach. Good long term rates available. Large apartments from Rs 1000. Tel: 085-064 8079. Email: spikes.thailand@hotmail.com

LAKE VIEW APARTMENT Apartment for long term. 12,000-20,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-894 8446. Email: sfrkata@hotmail.com. For further details, please see our website at http://www.southernfriedrice.com

KATA BEACH Rent space. 50,000 baht per month. 24 inch TV, price 2,500 baht. Contact John. Tel: 083-967 2213.

1 WEEK VILLA RENTAL Our family of five will be visiting Mar 21-28 and are looking for a villa with a pool near a beach. Please provide price, photos and references. Tel: +61-80-3315 3921. Email: ksa3ch@ao.com

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HOLIDAY FLAT For rent. 1 studio room fully furnished, fridge, cable TV. 250 baht per day. Please contact for more information. Tel: 083-967 2213.

Curtains / Desk - Good quality curtains, various sizes. Offers. - Desk or lockable drawer, fitting. Drawer as new. 2,500 baht. Tel: 087-922 3242. Email: patongman123@hotmail.com

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Kawasaki JET SKI 750cc, Trailer included. Price: 125,000 ฿. Tel: 081-835 0136, 081-728 8269.

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Shangani is a New Luxury 70ft Catamaran Charter in Phuket. Tel: 076-326026, 081-968-5357. Or Fax: 076-270076. www.tigermarinecharter.com Or sent to our email: webmaster@tigermarinecharter.com

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2 double cabins, 325qm sail area, 9 HP Honda, 490,000 ฿ baht. Contact more details. Tel: 087-461 8098.
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**TEACHERS WANTED IN PHUKET**

Satree Phuket School is seeking full time native English speakers to teach English, arts, health, mathematics, young guide and hoteling to 11-18 year old students. To begin in May. Salary begins at 30,000 baht. 4 weeks paid holiday, government health plan. Minimum requirements: Bachelor’s Degree or above, plus TEFL or CELTA certificate, or equivalent. Be prepared to present all original certificates at interview. Tel: 084-666 3557. Please email CV with covering letter to ep@satreephuket.ac.th or toptip4736@yahoo.com

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**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES**

(American Red Cross)

**Have the following vacancies:**

1. Administration and Operations Coordinator
2. Executive Assistant.

For details please visit www.thalilango.org

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Must have computer, internet, speak English. 30 baht per hour. Tel: 082-803 1442.

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**STAFF NEEDED**

to sell discount Books to tourists around Patong. Work when you want. Average earnings 20,000 baht per month. Tel: 083-392 2032.

**SEENKING FEMALE ASSISTANT**

English a must, able to drive. Duties to include: phone calls, completing errands and local tasks, and other matters as they arise. Salary: 10,000 baht per month. Replies must include photo. Tel: 080-695 6661. Email: contico@telkom.net

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Needed

Must have good English communication skills and a Bachelor’s degree. 3-5 years experience in related field. Tel: 087-716 2700. Or send email: thai rusmedia@gmail.com

RECEPTIONIST

Night time work. Looking for English speaking male. Tel: 087-627 9312.

STAFF RECRUITMENT

Avantika Boutique Hotel, a small boutique beach front luxury hotel with 31 rooms, at the South-end of Patong Beach, is looking for suitable candidates (Thai national only) for the following positions: Reservations - Reception - Housekeeping - Engineers. Please send a recent photo, resume, expected salary to: Human Resource Department. Avantika Boutique Hotel 4/1 Thaveewong Rd, Patong, Kathu, Phuket 83150. Tel: 076-292801-7 ext. 602, 603, Fax: 076-292809. Email: admin@avantika-phuket.com Website: www.avantika-phuket.com

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RJM is a leading M&E Design and Engineering company with offices throughout the region. We are looking an intelligent, dynamic and highly motivated Thai national to join our expanding operations in Phuket.

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Job Description:

• Responsible for managing the day-to-day procurement for our projects.
• Request quotation from suppliers and negotiate for best offer.
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• Compare quotes, prepare bid analysis and proposals for approval
• Issue PO, monitor delivery, check invoice and send to Finance for payment
• Coordinate and resolve with field office on logistics issues.
• Organize the related report such as, PR tracking report, weekly report, finance relating reports, and consolidate field reports.
• Participate in professional training activities as needed and/or requested
• To work with our team to provide detailed pricing of projects.
• Ensure procurements are expedited and completed efficiently to schedules.
• To work closely with clients to build and maintain relationships.

REQUIRED:

• Bachelor’s degree in related field and/or related training course
• Minimum 4 years work experience in procurement and logistics
• Minimum 3 years relevant work experience with NGOs
• Ability of planning, organizing, as well as problem solving
• Able to work under pressure, detail oriented and administration tasks
• Strong computer skills such as MS office
• Good communication in both Thai and English
• Good communication of English written and oral
• Knowledge of import and export in Thailand an advantage
• Self motivated and keen to learn.

Tel: 084-844 1469. Email: thai rusmedia@gmail.com

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ADVERTISING COMPANY

seeking a national female for office assistant position. Requirements: excellent knowledge of spoken & written English, advanced computer skills. Please send your CV. Tel: 084-944 1449. Email: rsmedia@gmail.com

BOAT YARD MANAGER

Yacht Haven Marina is presently planning a new haul out facility with travel lift able to handle 20 to 25 boats. We are looking for a yard manager with the following: marine engineering qualifications/strong technical experience in this field, previous boat yard experience, strong communication skills & good command of written & spoken English. Computer literate, proven managerial skills with ability to create & implement systems and a sound all-round knowledge of boats & the industry. This is a full time position. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-206704. Fax: 076-206706. Email: zara@yachthaven-phuket.com Please visit our website: www.yachthaven-phuket.com

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE EXPERT

18 yrs successful track record in International Trade/Export, Strategic Global Sourcing and Supply Chain Management. MBA from top US Institute. Fluent Chinese and English, conversational Thai. Targeting employment with a strong company in Phuket. U.S. Citizen.

Tel: 087-698-4516 089-813 4456. Email: chilly han@gmail.com

PROGRAMMER LOOKING FOR JOB

Experienced Danish programmer located in Phuket is looking for work on short/long term projects. Keywords: PHP, Zend Framework, Java (+JS/Servlets), MySQL, Java Script, DHTML, AJAX, MVC, Linux server administration and object orientation. Please contact for more information. Tel: 085-073 9984. Email: jan farge@gmail.com

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20 bed hotel, Chanote title. Top location, no key money, 4% ROI, walk to beach. Tel: 086-120 3660. Email: philip.jones@pmctours.com

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Restaurant located 50m from the beach. 35+ seats, 2 years remaining on the contract, with renewable rent at 10,000 baht per month. Price: 495,000 baht. Tel: 086-463 6459. Email: fredrik.pj@gmail.com

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Popular bar/restaurant. 40 covers, owner’s 2-bedroom apartment and 3 en suite bedrooms, 150 sq/m in total, Views over Patong Bay and jungle. Chanote title. 2 bed, 1 bath. No key money. No agents. For more info contact Colin Turpin at: colin.turpin@bintiinternet.com

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For rent in very good location. Entrance Laguna Karon. Tel: 091-091 5919.

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In good location Patong. Fully equipped. 5 year lease, rent paid until Feb 2013. Good price. Tel: 084-842 4850.

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Patong beach. Call for more information. Tel: 089-5683870.

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Bangla Road. 8 rooms, Chanote title. Tel: 076-282232, 080-693 8459. Email: paula@hathai.com

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Visitor accommodation, 2 phase electricity, electric flat, 3 phase electric flat, power 10kw, wholesale, 25% goodwill of donors and volunteer organization into the community in Phuket, Thailand. We rely on the educational scholarships – small and large. Please contact for more information. Tel: 087-095 7597, 089-647 5422. Email: info@phuketwc.com

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