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Roadwork begins on Big Buddha hill

Work starts after accident leaves six dead, 14 injured

By Atchaa Khamlo

WORKMEN on Wednesday began recalibrating the notorious 'death bend' on Big Buddha hill, three days after one of the island's most lethal road accidents claimed the lives of five people, including two Burmese sisters: Cheet, age 13, and Nanja, just four years old.

Fourteen people were injured in the accident, seven severely.

Eyewitnesses recounted to the *Gazette* the head-on smash, between a pickup carrying about 20 Burmese and a Siam Safari bus carrying tourists up the hill.

Australian tourist Alessia Nuccitelli, 19, told the *Gazette* that morning that she saw the pickup speeding downhill toward the safari bus.

The two vehicles collided, launching the Burmese out of the back of the pickup.

No tourists travelling on the bus were seriously injured, but the impact left the Burmese scattered



Brake failure and overloading were identified as the causes of the accident, which killed two Burmese sisters. Photo: Christian Mouchet

among the debris on the road. a little baby," said Miss Nuccitelli. The Australian tourist said the pickup was carrying far too many people.

"It was horrible. I saw at least three people dead. One was just... The driver was drunk..."

People here could smell alcohol on his breath," she added.

The Burmese workers, from the Thanason project at Baan Borrae in Wichit, were returning from paying respects to the giant Buddha image, which was built by Burmese laborers, when the accident happened.

In addition to Cheet and Nanja, a report by the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation office in Phuket (DDPM-Phuket) named the other deceased as the driver, 41-year-old Thongdaeng Piwjun, and three other Burmese passengers: Mr Bee, 25; Mrs Nor, 25; Miss Yen, 25.

The report identified brake failure and overloading as the causes of the crash, which occurred about 11am.

A truck carrying felled rubber trees ran off the road on the same bend the next day.

The driver of that truck reportedly escaped with only light injuries.



A medic attends to a man who fell off his bike drunk, but alive.

Seven dead on Phuket roads over Songkran

THE accident on Big Buddha hill brought Phuket's road toll during the "Seven Days Of Danger" road-safety campaign to seven dead and 52 seriously injured.

Last year, two people died over the same period.

However, the 43 accidents reported this year marked a 28.3% fall year-on-year and the number of people requiring hospital treatment from road accidents was down by 18.6%.

Police inspected 60,000 cars at checkpoints, with 4,207 people charged or fined.

The most common infraction was unlicensed driving, with 2,597 failing to produce a license.

Forty-five people were arrested for drunk driving.

The most dangerous day was April 13, when Songkran water play was at its height. There were 11 accidents reported on the day but, remarkably, no deaths.

Photo: Sumpawat Wannasangkam

Task force targets taxi, tuk-tuk blockades

By Atchaa Khamlo

A TASK force of top provincial officials expects a long-term solution to local taxi drivers repeatedly blockading the Phuket Deep Sea Port to be in place by mid-May.

A meeting headed by Phuket Vice Governor Weerawat Janpen on Wednesday marked the first gathering of representatives from 17 government agencies and private sector groups which are to establish a formal committee to deal with tuk-tuk and taxi issues that are harming Phuket's reputation among tourists.

Thai Hotels Association special adviser

Methee Tanmanatragul told the meeting at Provincial Hall that two transport-related issues were tarnishing the island's tourism industry: the blockading of the Deep Sea Port by Ao Makhom taxi drivers and the physical assault of tourists.

"From now on there can be no more blockades at the Deep Sea Port. Right now the reputation of Phuket is absolutely ruined, as we can see from various websites," Mr Methee said.

Phuket Tourist Association Vice President Bhuritt Maswongsa said, "At the beginning of March, 120 people from tour agencies held a meeting at the Grand Centara

[hotel] in Karon. A representative from Travel Spirit, one of the five biggest Australian tour companies, was hit on the head by a taxi driver at the hotel entrance. He [the driver] did not know the man's company brings about 450,000 tourists to Phuket each year."

News of the assault has been sent to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, and Phuket Governor Tri Augkaradacha has expressed concern about it, he said.

Mr Bhuritt said an internet search of "Phuket" and "taxi" leads to at least 40 websites with negative remarks about Phuket.

Continued on page 2



NO MORE BLOCKADES: Methee Tanmanatragul.

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This Week

Jet-ski payout vs payback



Sole insurer considers pulling the plug on jet-ski policies. **Pages 4-5**

Tech



Woody tells why you can't find your 3G spot on Phuket. **Page 14**

Health



All the reasons why you should lighten up your workload. **Page 16**

Scuba Scuba doo



Pierre-Yves Cousteau in Phuket to highlight conservation. **Page 26**

Property



Istana Phuket takes on the world in international awards. **Page 29**

Sport



FC Phuket takes Chiang Mai to the mountain and back with 4-0 drubbing. **Page 45**

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Warehouse gutted in Phuket Town blaze

By Yodsak Jarana

A WAREHOUSE blaze took firefighters over 30 minutes to extinguish early on April 11.

Phuket City Police at 2:30am received a report of a fire a few doors down from the Lotus Express shop on Wirat Hongyok Road.

By the time Phuket City and Wichit Municipality firefighters arrived, there was little they could do to save the warehouse, which had been filled with stored documents and other flammable materials.

Thanathip Kienphomart, owner of the Srisorndaeng Restaurant, said staff closed the restaurant at 2am and were preparing to leave for home when they noticed smoke coming from the warehouse, located behind the restaurant.

The restaurateur rents the land from event-organizing firm BIC Phuket, owner of the warehouse.

Restaurant staff tried to put out the blaze with fire extinguishers and managed to pull some computer equipment from the structure before it was engulfed by flames.



Workers sift through the remains of the warehouse. Photo: Yodsak Jarana

Phuket City Police duty officer Ekkasit Pinkaew suspected an electrical short started the fire.

That would need to be confirmed by officers from the Forensics Police office in Phuket Town, he said.

Tanet Kianpoteeramatr of BIC Phuket told the *Gazette*, "I still don't know where the fire started because I was not there at that time. Police are still investigating the cause," he said.

"The items in the storage build-

ing were all used materials. It is where we kept documents and other items related to events that have already taken place.

"The building was insured. The insurance company representative came to photograph the damage," he said.

Mr Tanet said he could not estimate the financial cost of the damage.

Additional reporting by Janpen Upatising

Hanged man believed 'suicide': Police

FAMILY are accepting as suicide the death of a man found hanged in a dense patch of jungle off Soi Nakok in Chalong on April 15.

Duty officer Chianchai Duangsuwan of Chalong Police arrived at the scene at 10:30am to find the body of 47-year-old Samer Wongmuang hanging from a tree.

Tied around his neck was his *pah kao mah*, the traditional Thai waistcloth worn by men.

Near the body police found a blue carry bag and a small plastic bag containing clothes, a salary slip, a packet of Mama instant noodles, canned fish and some mechanic's tools.

Police say their questioning of those who knew Mr Samer did not reveal any known disputes or conflicts with people, and there were no bruises on his body or indications of fighting at the scene.

One of the dead man's fellow workers said he spoke to Mr Samer two days earlier as he walked into the same patch of



Phuket Ruamjai Kupai Foundation rescue workers recover the body from the patch of jungle. Photo: Yodsak Jarana

jungle, Lt Chianchai said.

Mr Samer said he was going to drink alcohol in the undergrowth because it was cool there.

The workmate said this was not unusual as Mr Samer often went into the area to relax on his days off, as it was near where he worked.

The workmate added that Mr Samer recently slept at his work-

place instead of returning home each night.

Other fellow workers of Mr Samer concurred that he had personal issues that could not be resolved, said Lt Chianchai.

They all believed he wanted to end his life, the policeman said, adding that Mr Samer's family members agree that suicide was likely.

- Yodsak Jarana

Govt tackles taxi blockades

From page 1

"Right now tour groups from Scandinavia have already stopped coming to Phuket, opting instead for Khao Lak in Phang Nga," Mr Methee said.

The situation has deteriorated to the point where Phuket faces losing tourists to rival destinations such as Malaysia and Singapore, he added.

In the short term, local taxis will be given access to 50 per cent of tourists disembarking at the Deep Sea Port, as agreed to in an emergency meeting following the blockade of luxury cruise liner *Silver Spirit* earlier this month.

To establish a long-term solution a committee will be set up to consider all the issues involved. Possible solutions might include requiring all black plate taxis to legally register and to set up a management system like the one at Phuket Airport.

Mr Methee said the long-term management plan would take a few months to develop.

"But at least it's a start," he said. V/Gov Weerawat asked police to monitor taxi drivers in Karon.

The problem of taxi drivers harming tourists occurs much more frequently in Karon than in Patong or Phuket City, he said.

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Soldier faces court martial over pub shooting

THE Thai soldier who opened fire in a Phuket pub early on April 14, killing one person and injuring four others, has been handed over to Military Police to face a court martial in Narathiwat.

The news was confirmed by Deputy Commissioner of Region 8 Police Pisan Chuldilok, who arrived in Phuket to personally oversee the handling of the case.

"We will continue our investigation into this as a murder case, but we will look into his claims of acting in self-defense," Maj Gen Pisan said.

Sgt Wisut Duongkaew, 27, will be charged with possession of his Army-issue gun when not on active duty, he added.

Sgt Wisut is stationed at the 1st Infantry Battalion Camp in Joh-Irong District, in his home province of Narathiwat.

Joh-Irong is renowned as one of the hot spots in Thailand's troubled Deep South.

Officers explained to the *Gazette* that the shooting at the Return Pub, across the road from Cherng Talay Witthayakom School, ended an argument between Sgt Wisut and the five people shot.

One of the men with the group of five apparently "accidentally" bumped into the table where Sgt Wisut was sitting with five female friends, all friends of his girlfriend.

The man allegedly slammed his hand down on the table before apologizing and

stumbling back to his own table to rejoin his friends.

As the staff were collecting the bills to close the bar, a war of words broke out between Sgt Wisut and the four men, police said.

One of the men allegedly walked over and smashed a bottle over Sgt Wisut's head, before his three male friends joined the attack, police quoted Sgt Wisut as saying.

That's when Sgt Wisut pulled out his gun and opened fire, police said.

Suthin Suekpamkij was shot in the head and Weeradet Sanohkham, 27, from Surat Thani, was shot several times, one of his wounds in the chest.

Kusoldharm Foundation rescue workers rushed all five wounded, including one woman – Sumaporn Tontarn, 25 – to Thalang Hospital.

Mr Suthin and Mr Weeradet were later transferred to Vachira Phuket Hospital in Phuket Town, where Mr Weeradet died.

The two other men, Songwut Decharat, 38, and Aran Jantawong, 24, suffered minor injuries.

Officers at the scene reported that Sgt Wisut did not try to escape.

Instead, he waited for officers to arrive at the pub so he could surrender, police said.

– **Wichai Witthaya and Atchaa Khamlo**

Phuket raises B12.6mn for Japan, South

THE Phuket provincial fund-raising effort for victims of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami and the flooding in the South totaled nearly 13 million baht.

The handover, held at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on April 10, was chaired jointly by Phuket Governor Tri Augkaradacha and Anchalee Vanich Thepabutr, Secretary-General to Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

Representing Japan at the gathering was Japanese Embassy minister Takashi Okada.

At 10pm, all present moved to the nearby Queen Sirikit Park to open a concert entitled "Spirits of Phuket to Japan and the South", which was broadcast nationwide on state-run Channel 11.

Yuki Masahiko of Japanese rock band Lucifer performed as special guest, along with Thai performers including Blackhead, Jetsetter, B Peerapat, and others.

After the concert, Gov Tri handed over a total of 5.5mn baht in funding to Minister Okada.

Gov Tri also presented a cheque to MP Tossaporn Thepabutr in the amount of 6.1mn baht.

The funds will be distributed to victims of floods and landslides in other provinces throughout southern Thailand.

The remainder, one million baht, was used to pay expenses incurred in organizing and staging the fund-raising drive.

Patong to stage random emergency-response drills

By Atchaa Khamlo

PATONG Hospital will soon start co-ordinating random drills so that emergency response personnel from a variety of different agencies will be better prepared to deal with accidents.

The announcement follows a review of the handling of the tour bus crash on Patong Hill last month in which one man died and many others were injured.

The review was conducted on March 11 at a meeting of the main agencies involved in providing emergency aid, including Kathu Police, Kusoldharm Foundation, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation divisions at Patong Municipality and Phuket City Municipality, as well as Bangkok Hospital Phuket and Vachira Phuket, Thalang and Patong Hospitals.

Leading the meeting was Dr Wiwat Seetamanotch, Deputy Director of the Phuket Provincial Health Office.

Dr Wiwat Seetamanotch was instrumental in co-ordinating the full-scale tsunami evacuation drill in December, which required co-ordination of no less than six different organizations.

Identifying crowd control as one of the biggest problems at the bus accident scene last month, he called on local police to be first



Better co-ordination among emergency-response agencies was identified as a top priority, starting with those at work in Patong. Photo: Atchaa Khamlo

on hand to help keep onlookers clear so emergency crews can quickly attend to accident victims.

"The situation [in Patong] was different from the bus accident in Malaysia on December 20 last year, where only officials involved in rescuing people could access the accident site," Dr Wiwat said.

"Their officers restricted access to the accident scene, which made co-ordinating the emergency response crews flow very well. It was orderly and well-managed.

"The big difference between the bus crash in Malaysia and the accident in Patong was that in Patong only about five percent of the people at the scene were emergency crews actually responding to the accident," Dr Wiwat said.

Patong Hospital Director Dr Phumin Silapunt agreed.

"The important thing is crowd control. When accidents happen, people like to come and see what is happening," he said.

Dr Phumin confirmed that ran-

dom drills will be conducted to improve co-ordination among emergency-response crews.

"It will be different from the past, when they [emergency crews] were instructed beforehand about what type of emergency they would be dealing with and specifically what to do to best handle the situation," he explained.

"Each team is trained by their own organization, but when a real situation occurs they need to work together with members of many different organizations," he said.

"There should be just one commander to co-ordinate everything. The commander should be the head of the local authority, such as the president of the local OrBorTor [subdistrict administration organization], the mayor or district chief," he said.

"If such a person is not able to perform this duty, then it should be someone that person has assigned, someone in a high position of authority," he added.

Dr Phumin confirmed that all relevant organizations will be involved in the random rescue drills.

"But we're not sure when we will start conducting them," he said.

Although the drills will at first be in Patong only, they are likely to be extended to other areas in Phuket in the future, he added.



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Tourist pays B180,000 for repairs to jet-ski

By Atchaa Khamlo

BRITISH tourist Nicola Ross Morton in Phuket to celebrate Songkran on April 13 agreed to pay 180,000 baht for damages to a jet-ski he rented out in Patong.

The settlement came after negotiations with police and the jet-ski owner, and discovering that the controversial jet-ski insurance scheme doesn't cover all repair costs if a jet-ski is badly damaged.

Mr Morton was among three tourists who rented jet-skis from 54-year-old Sucha Petnuan-ong, said Patong Police information officer Somsak Nguanson.

The three paid 1,000 baht each for 30-minute rides, he said.

Mr Morton's jet-ski first collided with another jet-ski, ridden by 31-year-old American Christine Marie Gordon, before crashing into rocks off the coast of Kamala, he said.

Ms Gordon's jet-ski was lightly damaged, but the entire front of Mr Morton's jet-ski was torn apart



The damaged jet-ski after the accident in Kamala.

by the impact and its engine was almost completely dislodged.

Mr Morton suffered a broken leg in the crash, according to a British woman who was riding with him at the time.

Patong Police described his injuries as "minor", however.

Ms Gordon went to Patong Police Station the following day

to negotiate a settlement for both parties, who assumed the cost of repairs would be covered by the insurance agreement they signed upon renting out the jet-skis.

Patong Police called in a mechanic, who estimated the total cost of repairs for both jet-skis at 320,000 baht – far more than the maximum 50,000 baht in damage coverage specified in the insurance agreement.

"I made a deal for the tourists by negotiating with the jet-ski owner that Mr Morton would pay 180,000 baht. They seemed happy with that," officer Somsak said.

Ms Gordon had to pay an extra 7,000 baht: 3,000 baht for each of the two days the jet-ski would be out of service plus a 1,000 baht deductible charge on the damages.

Jet-ski owner Sucha Petnuan-ong, 54, said repairing the machine would cost almost as much as buying a new one.

"I will be at an absolute loss as a new jet-ski chassis alone is about 270,000 baht," he said.

Insurance

By Pimwara Choksakulpan

NOW in its second year, the insurance scheme set up for the Phuket jet-ski rental industry is in danger of collapse, the head of the Phuket Provincial Insurance Office has admitted.

The scheme, the first of its kind in the world, was launched amid great fanfare in late 2009.

The launch followed many complaints by tourists about systematic extortion by jet-ski operators who made them pay excessive "damage fees" and threatened them if they fail to comply.

So widespread was the scam that news of it took on international dimensions, with the Australian government leading the way in calling for action.

Video footage of jet-ski operator Winai "JJ" Naiman allegedly threatening British servicemen with an air gun were broadcast in the television series "Big Trouble in Tourist Thailand" that aired in the UK in September 2009.

All the resulting negative publicity led to the creation of what was initially described as a "mandatory" insurance for all 219 registered jet-skis in Phuket.

The first set of 185 insurance policies were effective from November 17, 2009 to November 14, 2010, during which time the "loss ratio" to insurance provider Ayudhya Insurance PCL climbed to just over 80% due to the high number of claims paid out.

"Loss ratio" is defined as the ratio of total losses paid out in claims, plus adjustment expenses, all divided by the total earned premiums.

This means Ayudhya Insurance paid out 80 baht in claims for every 100 baht in premium payments

it collected in the first year. This is considered very poor performance, as loss ratios for combined property and casualty insurance packages typically range from 40% to 60%.

Despite the poor performance, Ayudhya Insurance continued to offer the insurance for a second year, beginning on November 17, 2010. But despite the high number of claims paid out in the first year, the number of operators opting to pay the second-year premiums dropped significantly.

Ayudhya Insurance adjuster Jakkarin Noonrod told the *Gazette* that as of March 22 only 162 jet-skis were still covered. Even worse for the company, the loss ratio stood at 23.6% by that date, indicating it is on track to grow to near 80% again by the end of the year.

Given the drop-off, the *Gazette* asked B h u r i p a t Therakulpisut, chief of the Marine Transport Region 5 Office in Phuket Town, if a paid-up jet-ski insurance policy was

actually a required document for operators applying to renew their annual jet-ski registrations.

"It is a required document. Now they cannot renew their registrations at offices in other provinces as they did before because Marine Department Director-General Thawanrat Ornsira already sent a letter to every branch office instructing them not to renew registration for jet-skis registered in Phuket.

"This forces them to take out an insurance policy if they want to provide a legal service, but this is not mandated by law. We simply ask for their co-operation in improving our image as a tourist destination.

"And we have limited the num-



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payouts about to run dry



The high number of payouts is forcing insurance companies to consider no longer offering policies for jet-skis.

Claim	Maximum payment
1. Damage repair cost to jet-ski	50,000 baht for whole year policy
2. Aggrieved party	
- death, disability, loss of limb	50,000 baht / a person / a time
- treatment cost	20,000 baht / a person / a time
- damage to aggrieved property	25,000 baht / a time
	* total payment maximum at 200,000 baht for whole year policy
3. Rider and passenger	50,000 / a person / a time
- death, disability, loss of limb	20,000 / a person / a time
- medical treatment cost	* total payment maximum at 200,000 baht for whole year policy

Note: Annual premiums depend on the number of boats insured and other factors, but typically range from 8,000 baht to 10,000 baht.

ber of jet-skis in Phuket at 219, with no new registrations," he said.

With only 162 of 219 jet-skis carrying the insurance in the second year, there could be as many as 57 eligible boats operating with neither insurance nor up-to-date registrations.

Mr Jakkarin said most of those

operating without insurance were in the Bang Tao Beach area.

One such operator told the *Gazette* on the condition of anonymity that lack of enforcement in the area gave illegal jet-skis there an unfair competitive advantage, which was why he chose not to renew his jet-ski registrations in the second year.

The man, who operates four jet-skis, said, "Illegal jet-skis [with no insurance or registration] remained in service. Why should I pay more with no additional income? If I want to take out a second policy, I have to pay 6,000 baht more than the first policy due to my claims history.

"By the way, there is no government officer in charge coming to check whether jet-skis in the area have legal papers," he said.

"If government officers want to set things right, they should turn this measure into an actual law or regulation, or whatever to force jet-ski operators in every province to be insured. Here it seems they only paid interest in the scheme at the outset," he said.

Suwimon Sae-lim, director of the Phuket Provincial Insurance Office, said the lower number of operators taking out policies in the second year, coupled with the high loss-ratio, makes her fear this could be the last year Ayudhya Insurance will offer the policies.

"This jet-ski policy was the first of its kind in the world, but it is still just voluntarily, not required by law.

"Ayudhya Insurance was the only company interested in offering this insurance because they wanted to improve Phuket's image. But last year the loss ratio reached 80%, which means they had to pay out 80% of income on damage claims.

"The remaining 20% isn't all income for the company, but needs to be used to pay the costs of the adjusters in processing the claims.

"If the loss ratio remains very high, the company might be forced to discontinue it next year. I can say there is a definite risk of that happening," she said.

Ms Suwimon asked the *Gazette* to tell readers to rent out only jet-skis bearing the second-year sticker (inset, on opposite page) to show they still carry the insurance.

This is important not only to keep the scheme going, but also

to protect people from scams or in the event they do have an accident while aboard a jet-ski, she said.

The insurance not only pays out for damages to jet-skis, but also covers medical treatment to injured riders and passengers, as well as to aggrieved third parties. (see table).

"For example, last year two Chinese [honeymooners] died in a crash and insurance company paid out two 50,000-baht claims to their relatives.

"I would like tourists to ride only jet-skis with insurance policies. This is for their own benefit. So please look for the new insurance sticker to make sure the jet-ski is covered by a policy."

"I would like every sector and agency to pay more attention to this. Hotels and tour companies should tell their customers. Jet-ski operators should be more co-operative and authorized government officers should follow up the result.

"If this measure is successful, Pattaya may follow us," she said.

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Brit arrested in Patong coke bust

By Atchaa Khamlo

POLICE arrested 43-year-old Briton Paul Hanna for possession of cocaine at his home on Nanai Road in Patong on April 11.

He was arrested at 4:45am with 33 packages of cocaine weighing 0.9 grams each.

The arrest followed a police complaint by a Thai woman claiming to be Mr Hanna's wife.

She told Patong Police he had beaten her and was in possession of "lots of drugs".

When officers arrived at the home it took them some time to wake the suspect because he was quite drunk, Patong Police Inspector Akanit Danpitaksat told the *Gazette*.

A urine test for drug use proved positive, he said.

Mr Hanna had been under investigation since January, he added.

The cocaine was found in a black garbage bag in a bedroom cabinet, said Lt Col Akanit.

Mr Hanna told Patong Police Superintendent Arayapan Pukbuakao that he was living with his wife and son.



Col Arayapan Pukbuakao (left) confronts Paul Hanna with the evidence.

He sourced the drugs from Thai men on Soi Sansabai for 2,500 baht per bag and resold them at 3,000 baht each, he said.

He was unable to provide the names of the Thai men he bought the drugs from.

Mr Hanna, who operates a bar on Soi Bangla, said he was just supplying friends and did not sell to customers at the bar.

He had been living in Patong for

about eight months, he said.

A former partner in the bar who returned home four or five months ago introduced him to the trade, he claimed.

Mr Hanna now faces charges of possession of a category 1 drug with intent to sell.

His wife would raise money for his legal fees and find a lawyer to fight his case, he told Col Arayaphan.

Phuket tourist plays 'To Catch a Thief'

GERMAN tourist Damian Skrzypietz didn't start Songkran on April 13 dousing fellow revelers in water fights.

He started his Thai New Year chasing a burglar who had just robbed his rented house in Cherng Talay, tearing down the street after him barefoot and dressed only in his boxer shorts.

"I was sleeping in the bedroom when my girlfriend woke me at about at 5:30am saying someone was inside the house," he told the *Gazette*.

"I went out of the bedroom to check and found the front door open and the outside light on.

"My girlfriend spotted a man outside. When I looked at him, he looked back at me and then he started running. I ran after him a long way down the soi.

"He threw my black bag at me, but I kept chasing him.

"He then ran into the bushes along the side of the road, but I caught him and dragged him back to my house and told my friend to call the police.

"Before the police arrived, he kept wai'ing us and saying sorry, but I told him not to apologize to us," said Mr Skrzypietz.

Police arrived and found the thief, named as Khuanchai Ganpai,



Damian Skrzypietz rests his feet at after catching the thief himself.

28, in possession of about 35 euros and 2,960 baht in cash, two mobile phones, a lighter, a small flashlight and a set of house keys.

Sen Sgt Maj Suvarin Maudmuang of Cherng Talay Police told the *Gazette* that Mr Khuanchai had been arrested previously on drug charges and only recently released from serving one year in jail for attempted rape.

Mr Khuanchai, who lives with his family at Surin Beach, apparently confessed to police that he had committed many break-ins in Kamala and Cherng Talay.

Navy sailors lend Krabi a hand

OFFICERS from the Royal Thai Navy Third Area Command in Phuket distributed relief packages to flood and landslide victims in Krabi from April 12 to 17.

Group Captain Parinyatham Pulpitaktham, head of the Disaster Mitigation Center's civilian affairs and public relations department, led the effort to badly hit

locales. Areas that received assistance included Nong Talay, Tab Prik, Klongya, Klonghin, Ao Luek and Plaipaya.

The servicemen also installed toilet facilities for homeless victims taking refuge at a temporary shelter set up near Chong Mai Reservoir in Klonghin subdistrict, Ao Luek.

Suthep vows to target tourist cheats

Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban, who is also responsible for national security, has vowed to save foreign tourists from being cheated during their visits to the country, including, specifically, Phuket.

Deputy PM Suthep said after attending meetings with the Tour-

ist Fraud Prevention Committee that the problem needs to be eliminated.

There are many forms of cheating, starting with Thais cheating foreign tourists, foreign tourists teaming up to cheat other foreigners, and Thais and foreigners working together to cheat foreign tourists, he said.

From the year 2007 to 2010, around 6,000 Thais were arrested for cheating tourists, and 517 foreign gangs were arrested, Deputy PM Suthep added.

Meanwhile, Mr Suthep said that the recent mob of taxi drivers in Phuket province, who blockaded the Phuket Deep Sea Port to prevent tourists from using pre-booked tour company vans, was done to express their dissat-

isfaction over "unfair tour agencies". The taxi and tuk-tuk drivers claimed the tour agencies tend to provide large buses for tourists, leaving taxi drivers with no passengers.

Mr Suthep has also set up four subcommittees to work on eliminating fraud.

He has assigned the Tourism and Sports Permanent Secretary Sombat Kuruphan the responsibility of preventing tourist fraud in Bangkok and at Suvarnabhumi Airport.

At the same time, Interior Permanent Secretary Deputy Pranai Suwannarat will be in charge of towns frequented by tourists, such as Phuket, Pattaya, and Chaing Mai.

- Thai Asean News Network

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Chavalit resigns Pheu Thai chair

THE chairman of the opposition Pheu Thai Party, Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, has resigned just weeks before Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has proposed to dissolve parliament to pave the way for national elections.

Gen Chavalit, a former Thai prime minister himself, did not give a reason for his resignation as both chairman and member of the party.

It has been speculated that his exit stemmed from his opposition to the party's close association with the red-shirt movement.

TNN Cable TV, which broke the story, quoted a source as saying that Gen Chavalit resigned out of his uneasiness that red-shirt leaders mentioned the Royal Family during their recent rallies.

On Wednesday, red-shirt leader



Kokaew Pikulthong rebuked the claims, saying the general had stepped down because he was disappointed that the party would not endorse him as the prime ministerial candidate.

"The real reason Chavalit is departing the party is because Thaksin [Shinawatra] has made it clear he will endorse an individual close to him and this is a case of a heartbroken old man," he said in an interview posted on Matichon online.

Earlier this month, Army Chief

Gen Prayuth Chan-ocha lodged *lese majeste* complaints against three red-shirt leaders over remarks they made during a rally in Bangkok on April 10.

One of the three, Pheu Thai MP Jatuporn Prompan, said he would lodge a counter-complaint against Gen Prayuth for libel and *lese majeste*, denying he had insulted the monarchy.

The Department of Special Investigation has since served summonses on 18 red-shirt leaders to face *lese majeste* and sedition charges in connection with the April 10 rally speeches.

DSI director general Tharit Pengdit said the 18 suspects would face indictments based on Articles 112 and 116 of the Criminal Code.

— *Phuket Gazette*



Speculation is rife over precisely why Gen Chavalit resigned as chairman of the Opposition party Pheu Thai. Photo: The Nation



The Ministry of Culture webpage celebrating Songkran was later removed.

Topless teenage dancers provoke Songkran outrage

THREE teenage girls dancing topless during Songkran celebrations in Bangkok have provoked moral outrage in Thailand.

The incident last Friday night on Silom Road reportedly began when one Thai teenager began dancing on top of a truck in front of cheering crowds.

To the loud approval of the audience, she gradually stripped off her clothes until she was dancing wearing only her underpants. Two more teenage girls soon joined her.

Video clips of the girls were uploaded to YouTube, they received tens of thousands of hits before

being removed from the website.

Two of the three women were on Monday presented at a police conference to apologize for their "reckless and obscene" action. The women were charged with exposing themselves in public and obscene behavior, punishable by a 500-baht fine.

The move sparked a backlash, including claims the authorities were hypocritical in condemning the girls.

On commentator pointed out the Ministry of Culture website featured an image of three topless fairylike women on its homepage. The image was later changed.



A screen grab of the video as shown on Channel 3.

Any problems?
Call Mr. No Problem
08-7471-4751

Brit trainee teacher dies in holiday waterfall plunge

A BRITISH woman training to teach English in Thailand was killed on April 15 when she slipped on submerged rocks and was swept off a 300-foot waterfall.

Sarah Crutchley, 30, was wading through shallows at Ton Nga Chang falls in Songkhla when she lost her footing and was swept towards the drop.

She managed to grab a rock for a few seconds before she was swept over the cliff by a torrent of water.

Mrs Crutchley, originally from Bournemouth in the UK, was studying TEFL at a school in Haad Yai. She was on a day trip to the beauty spot with four British friends from her course.

Chris Penny, 21, witnessed her death. "Sarah was

just swept off her feet by the water. She grabbed hold of a large rock and hung on for about two or three seconds," he told Britain's *Daily Mail*.

"I tried to get to her but I also slid and fell and grabbed on to another rock. She was about one or two feet from the edge but didn't say a word.

"I cried out for help and then the current of water was just too strong for her and she lost her grip.

"She slid about 10 meters down the rocks and then fell over the edge. It must have been about a 100-meter drop.

"It was just horrible to watch. I think she was knocked out cold during the first fall and she wouldn't have known anything about it. She didn't stand a chance."

— *Phuket Gazette / Agencies*



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Is Songkran really worth the trouble?

I have lived, barely and with little sleep, through six of these “festivals” and now stock up on provisions as one might do preceding chaos.

I do not leave my residence or spend any money and as far as I can see – through binoculars, mind you – most of the water-throwing drunkards, foreigners and Thais alike, don’t do much spending either.

How can they while standing in the streets?

How can you go to a cinema, a nice restaurant or a shopping mall while soaking wet? Sit in a puddle? That is if you are fortunate enough to not have been killed or injured in the scores of vehicle accidents brought about by this “New Year 2”, a tradition that does not even slightly resemble its origin.

Many residents stay indoors, some go to lesser-affected Thai communities and some actually leave the country or schedule holiday trips to an earlier or later date.

Some wise merchants close up shop as profits soon disappear as “cleanup/repair” costs increase.

My ExPats club cancelled its mid-Songkran meeting and I have been told that Cambodia several years back cancelled its version of this debacle due to traffic fatalities.

Thai officials boast, today that is, only about 300 were killed and 10,000 injured. Tell that to a bereaved parent/survivor.

Custom and tradition are, indeed, to be honored, but who does this distorted version benefit?

*Don Aleman
Phuket*

Greed, thuggery threats to tourism

Phuket Gazette

ISSUES affecting tourist safety and welfare in Phuket and other popular destinations in Thailand have rightly dominated the news pages in this issue of the Phuket Gazette.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of tourism to the Thai economy. The Tourism Authority of Thailand recently announced that it plans for a record number of tourists, over 17 million, to visit the Kingdom in 2011. In recent years, about a third of these have included Phuket in their travel plans.

The TAT estimated that Phuket generated 800 million baht in tourism industry revenue over the Songkran holidays alone.

Former Phuket Governor Pongpayome Vasaputi once famously compared the tourism industry to glass, saying it could easily shatter. Yet the Phuket tourism industry continued to grow even after the 2004 tsunami disaster, and despite political turmoil, last year saw a record number of tourist arrivals to Phuket: more than seven million.

But Phuket now faces a serious threat as one fiasco after another stains its international reputation. First are the illegal blockades of the Phuket Deep Sea Port by a collection of self-entitled taxi drivers at Ao Makham who demand – and are thus given – access to passengers disembarking there.

The fact that the majority are unregistered “black plate” taxis seemed to make little difference to the negotiations. Once again, mob rule trumped the rule of law in this land of protestocracy.

The losers, as usual, are tourists and those who

cater to them in honest, hospitable fashion – something sadly lacking in much of the transport sector.

Another very serious issue is physical assault, including allegations of rape, of tourists by tuk-tuk drivers in Karon. These drivers seem to share a similar mindset to their counterparts in Panwa and have developed a reputation for thuggery that has exceeded even that of their counterparts in Patong.

When tourists are not being beaten or extorted on fares by the transport syndicates, they are taken advantage of in other ways. Many tourist attractions on the island, most notably jewelry shops, pay drivers handsome commissions on sales of low-quality, shamelessly overpriced adornments.

Then there are the infamous jet-ski scams. The laudable effort to introduce “mandatory” insurance to prevent unscrupulous jet-ski operators from demanding extortionate damage claims is now also at serious risk due to lack of compliance and insufficient enforcement [see pages 4-5].

The Gazette fully supports Suwimon Sae-lim, director of the Phuket Provincial Insurance Office, in urging all tourists to use only registered jet-skis, otherwise the plan will fail and the situation will simply revert to the pathetic status quo of the past that has done so much damage to the island’s reputation.

Fuming over airport smoking room

Not long ago, the smoking room at Phuket International Airport departure lounge was large with a few electrical fans to blow off the smoke.

Recently, it became half the

size and is now without even a single ventilation fan.

If revenue from leasing areas at the front of the airport is so important, then charge a nominal fee for smokers to use the back portion and provide proper facilities, such as ventilation fans, instead of a storage place with few used round tables

stacked in a corner making it smaller.

Wouldn’t providing a simple nice smoking area at an international airport cost nothing compared to the airport taxes paid by air travelers?

Just a thought,

*Phuket my future home
By email*

Tourist choice goes out the window

Re: Gazette, Holidays hijacked by tuk-tuks, April 9

Getting tourists to choose using tuk-tuks is not as easy as it sounds. Most tourists do not like tuk-tuks as they are considered not safe. If you asked tourists whether they preferred a city sightseeing tour by non-air-conditioned tuk-tuk or a comfortable air-conditioned van, what do you think their answer would be?

*Seatbelt fan
Kata*

Stuck in first gear

Re: Gazette online. Phuket officials tackle taxi, tuk-tuk blockades, April 20

I can’t understand why the government officials aren’t the ones making the rules that the taxis must follow. Why is it the taxi drivers (anyone who owns a car) that decide where they operate and how?

The system at Phuket Airport is not a very good one to follow. They should be doing the same as the Bangkok Airports and have the taxis line-up for passengers instead of taking all the parking near the terminals.

*Tim
Gazette forum*

Tourists in their sights

My customers have never had any problems in Patong, but a few times a month in Karon drivers have threatened my customers with a gun, which I suspect was a BB gun, but anyway... I stopped complaining to police a long time ago...

*Jimbo
Gazette forum*

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Issues & Answers...

Where are the road signs for Baan Pa Khlok School?

On the road between Pa Khlok and Baan Ruang there is no school sign or crosswalk markings for children or adults. People just drive through there at 80-plus kmh. They never slow down by the school and it’s mostly tour vans that speed through there.

If speed bumps are placed in rural areas, why not on a main road near a school?

*Tom Notaro
Pa Khok*

Aroon Saneeh, Director of the Phuket Provincial Highways Office, replies:

To have signs posted in your area we need you to fill out an official request form at the Phuket Provincial Highways Office.

In a case like this, usually the school, community leaders or local authority file the request. Once we receive the request, we will

Send us your queries and we'll ask the right people to respond to them.

Submit your issue at

www.PhuketGazette.net/IssuesAnswers

send officers to survey the area to determine whether any signs are necessary.

The next step is assigning priority to installing the signs, if indeed they are needed.

For example, in giving priority between marking traffic lines on roads and fixing potholes, we give priority to fixing potholes as they may cause accidents.

We have to do this as we have a limited budget.

Anyway, the sad truth is that traffic signs do little to save lives. What we need are more safety conscious pedestrians and motorists who respect the traffic safety laws.

Blinded by glare

Can you suggest a company to put tinted solar film on my bedroom windows?

*Tinted rooms
Kathu*

Kanidta Kaenkaeo at Man Auto Sound Phuket, replies:

We install tint films on windows in cars and houses. Prices vary according to the type, brand and of course area covered. Call us at 076-236613 or 076-236264.

Nittaya Boonrod of Muangthong Auto Sound replies:

We install tint films for cars, buildings and houses. Our office is located north of Super Cheap on Thepkasattri Road. Call Ben at 089-8730464 or 076-238426.

Sumipuk Poode at Jaroenchai Film Car Accessories replies:

Our office is near Phuket Rajabhat University. Call me at 080-9402757 from 8am to 6pm to make an appointment and I’ll bring a catalog to your home.

Overfishing helping lionfish to coral buffet

FIRST PERSON

MUCH has changed in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi over the past 30 years, with tourism evolving from handfuls of backpackers sleeping in shanty bungalows in the 1970s to today's mass tourism with luxurious hotels and resorts of up to hundreds of rooms to cater all tourists from all over the world.

Feeding fresh seafood to these millions of tourists and local fishermen looking to feed their families have led to intensive fishing all along the Andaman coast.

Many local fishing boats were destroyed by the 2004 tsunami and many European countries helped rebuild the fleet and the fishing industry.

The result was the fleet ended up better equipped and more efficient than before. They can now fish deeper waters further out to sea, putting far too much pressure on local fish stocks.

Now that large schools of fish are quickly disappearing, many fishing boats are more frequently coming inside marine national parks to poach at night and during the monsoon period when parks are closed to the public.

Many fishing boats use large fish traps inside the parks, often placing 10 to 20 traps side by side to simulate large reefs.

This intensive fishing around coral reefs has led to overfishing of certain species, including grouper and sharks, which are natural



Guy Lidureau, 58, is Managing Director of Seafarer Divers in Chalong and a dive training Course Director for TDA Diving Association (Thailand). A dive tour-operator and dive boat operator for 32 years with over 10,000 dives in Thailand, Mr Lidureau here talks about the problems caused by overfishing and lionfish overpopulation on the coral reefs in Andaman Sea.



NATURAL PREDATOR: The Lionfish.
Photo: Sebastian Wallroth

predators of lionfish. Without the "normal" number of grouper and sharks around to keep the number of lionfish in check, the lionfish are now out-eating the number of juvenile coral reef fish.

Their aggressive behavior and population explosion at some reefs give lionfish the potential to become the most disastrous marine invasion in Thailand. By drastically reducing the number of coral reef fish, they leave behind a devastated ecosystem.

Protected by venomous spines,

lionfish are voracious and effective predators. They herd and corner their prey using their pectoral fins, then quickly strike and swallow their prey whole.

It was not unusual to observe a lionfish consuming prey up to two-thirds its own length. Experiments have shown that lionfish significantly reduce the net population of coral reef fishes by an estimated 80%.

In studies on controlled plots, scientists at Oregon State University determined that lionfish reduced juvenile fish populations by 79% in only five weeks. One large lionfish was observed consuming 20 small fish in just 30 minutes.

Efforts to reduce densities of lionfish at key locations may help to reduce their ecological impact. Recovering and maintaining healthy populations of potential native predators of lionfish, such as large grouper and sharks, may also help reduce the deleterious effects of these voracious invasive predators.

Steps must be taken to protect grouper, sharks and other lionfish predators from overfishing.



We need to curb, not curtail, enthusiasm during Songkran. Photo: The Nation

Losing Songkran

Island View

By Damian Evans

*Do you have an opinion to voice?
Email Editor@PhuketGazette.net*

THE entertainment and activities put on by government agencies over Songkran was excellent.

The festivities on the Sarasin Bridge was a brilliant idea. It was first rate and with an unshakeable underlying theme of togetherness epitomized by using the bridge itself as the venue.

Meanwhile in Old Phuket Town, the "Icy Road" event at Queen Sirikit Park seemed to be much enjoyed by all who attended.

It seemed this year that Patong was the only place to miss out on any staged fun – but they did have Bike Week just before the water started flying.

But my worry is all these "venue-specific" festivities.

At the Icy Road event, the park was a designated safe haven from water play. Any people breaking the watershed were quickly remonstrated by "water wardens".

This was great for parents with babies or infants, as they could sit on the sidelines and watch the water fights.

But there was also a specified "water fight zone", which without any signs stipulating that water play must be contained therein,

certainly sent the message that was what authorities encouraged.

Many people bemoan overzealous water play during Songkran, and many are right – if the problem is revellers being "overzealous" – anything short of that is fair game.

Constraining water play to specific areas is a no-go. The last thing I ever want to hear someone ask is, "Where's Songkran this year?" And the answer being, "Over there..."

Songkran is a time, not a place.

I understand those who prefer to avoid the water play, but to criticize it is to criticize the country they have sought to live in.

Water play at Songkran has been zealous fun for Thais long before anyone under the age of 60 would have chosen to come to Thailand.

They should be old enough to know that by now.

...asking the questions that affect you...

Can I get insurance for sidecars?

Ten years ago, the *Gazette* posted an Issue & Answer asking "Are sidecars legal?"

The answer then from Somjit Boonchaoy at the Phuket Provincial Transportation Office was, "Yes, it is. There is no Thai law that allows a motorcycle with a sidecar to be legally registered. This means they cannot be legitimately insured. Therefore, all motorcycles with sidecars are illegal. Motorcycles are the only two-wheel vehicles that may be legally registered and be legitimately insured."

Now Tiger motorcycles have introduced a retro-style motorbike with sidecar. Tiger is a Thai company. These new motorbikes with sidecars are made and sold in Thailand.

Has the law changed? If so, are motorbikes with sidecars now legal on Thai roads?

Karsten bo Andersen
Kathu



Sidecars can be insured if the modifications pass safety standards.

Titima Yukuntorn, chief of the Vehicle Registration Unit at the Phuket Provincial Transport Office, replies:

The Department of Land Transport will not register motorbikes fitted with sidecars or any attachments if the sidecar and/or attachments are not made by the

original manufacturer or do not pass Department of Land Transport safety standards.

We do not allow the registration of *rot salaeng* (motorcycles with privately-made sidecar trays commonly used for transporting goods or people) because they are not safe for the driver or passengers.

However, if the sidecar conforms to our safety standards – and passes an inspection by our engineers – then we will allow it to be registered.

Sirima Koonkit, Insurance officer at the Viriyah Insurance Phuket office, replies:

We used to offer insurance for motorbikes, but we stopped offering policies for any motorcycles last year.

We now refer customers seeking insurance for motorbikes to the Road Accident Victims Protection Co Ltd Phuket office located at Phun Pol Night Plaza in Phuket Town.

Pakpon Thongbaipetch, Insurance officer at the Road Accident Victims Protection Co Ltd Phuket office, replies:

Our company was set up by the government to ensure that all vehicle owners have some form of insurance.

[The company is better known by foreigners as the "government insurance office" using the letters

"RVP" to identify itself – Ed.]

When we insure a motorcycle with a sidecar, we simply insure it as a motorcycle.

As such, motorcycle insurance premiums are calculated according to engine size: Class A) 1cc-70cc, premium is 161 baht per year; Class B) 71cc-125cc, premium is 323 baht per year; Class C) 126cc-150cc, premium is 430 baht per year; and Class D) greater than 151cc, premium is 645 baht per year.

However, before we can insure any motorcycles with sidecars, the applicant must have a certificate from the Land Transport Department verifying the vehicle passes all required vehicle-safety standards.

This usually requires an inspection by engineers at the local Land Transport Department office.

For more information, call us at 076-246483/4 from Monday to Friday between 8:30am and 5:30pm. Our office located at Phun Pol Night plaza or visit our website rvp.co.th (Thai language only).

Phuket to click with software alliance

SOFTWARE Park Thailand has initiated a collaborative project to bring local software parks throughout the country together as the Thailand Software Park Alliance, in an effort to strengthen the software industry.

The alliance aims to facilitate the flow of software-development resources and work among software parks located both in Bangkok and in regional areas.

It will also encourage a flow of software development and jobs to the Asia-Pacific region through Software Park Thailand's regional network, the Asia Oceania Software Park Alliance.

Software Park Thailand's director Thanachart Numnonda said the objective was to pool local resources and build up the core competency of local software development to serve both local and regional demands.

The concept of the collaboration is focused on four main pillars:

virtual office via technology, technology transfer, business matching and co-branding activities.

In part, the alliance will follow Software Park Thailand's mission, which includes facility management services (office rental, training-and meeting-room rental and park clustering); technology-enabling services (providing technology platforms, collaborating with stakeholders to provide the latest technology to alliance members); IT advisory (improving the standard of local software companies to international level); technology transfer (promoting the transfer of relevant technologies for the software industry on both professional and management levels); and software-business enabling (business matching, promoting the use of IT to all sectors, collaboration within the industry and creating an environment conducive to software business).

cive to software business).

The local software parks to be included in the alliance are E-Saan Software Park, Korat Software Park (Thailand), Chiang Mai Technology and Outsourcing Centre and Software Park Phuket.

Thailand's software market is expected to grow by 16.3 per cent this year to reach a value of about 84.23 billion baht.

Within the overall software market, embedded software and mobile applications are expected to see high growth this year, of 96.1 per cent and 54.8 per cent respectively. However, enterprise software will remain the largest contributor, representing 63.5 per cent of the software market.

It is also expected that total spending on software-as-a-service in Thailand this year will be around 2.56 billion baht, representing growth of 22.9 per cent.

— *The Nation*



INNOVATIVE: Software Park Phuket opened in 2009.

Gov urges control over hillside construction

GOVERNOR Tri Aukaradecha voiced concerns over construction projects that have been planned on hill slopes on Phuket.

During a meeting with the Phuket Housing Committee on April 8, Governor Tri said that recently there have been many cases of disasters causing substantial property damage and loss of life. He mentioned the recent floods and severe landslides in the south of Thailand, as well as earthquakes that have recently occurred in New Zealand, Burma and Japan.

The governor urged the committee to be more cautious when approving projects that have been planned on hillsides, especially projects that require extensive deforestation. Governor Tri urged the committee to be more careful when issuing building permits for such sites.

"With severe weather becoming more common, landslides can become a major problem causing severe public damage. The

Ministry of Interior is also concerned with this problem", Gov Tri said at the meeting.

During the meeting two new housing projects were announced to the committee. One of them was The Heritage project located in Kathu. The Heritage, still in its early stages of construction, will consist of 58 land plots spread across 23 acres of land. Sitharom Properties will also be starting a new project soon.

In January 2011, six housing projects were approved by the Phuket Provincial Land Office.

Geological experts have questioned whether Phuket buildings are ready to withstand strong earthquakes, a phenomenon that is happening more frequently in the region.

Amnat Tantitamsopon, a prominent Phuket geologist and a member of the Phuket Environmental Impact Assessment

Committee, notes that Phuket lies in an earthquake risk zone. Private constructors should keep that in mind when planning and constructing buildings.

"Buildings that stand 12 meters or higher should be engineered to cope with earthquakes that are stronger than a magnitude 6. Unfortunately there are very few specialists here in Phuket who can advise constructors about building earthquake resistant structures," Mr Amnat said.

"High rise buildings here are often not 'geologically engineered'. Geological engineering means doing a carefully study of the underlying geological formations to determine the required stability. This often requires advanced scientific techniques like remote sensing. A lot of the buildings here do not go through such a study before construction starts because constructors lack the resources and know-

how", Mr Amnat explained.

"To make buildings earthquake resistant, foundation pillars have to be longer and dig deeper into bedrock. Such procedures ensure more safety against natural disasters, but they also increase the overall construction costs," Mr Amnat said.

"Fortunately many private businesses and constructors agree with us and they are willing to change their plans to make buildings safer. But the main problem is the lack of know-how and experts who can advise constructors about building for earthquake resistance," he added.

Current Thai law, effective since 2007, requires buildings that are more than 23 meters in height to have earthquake-resistant design. However the law only applies to five provinces in Central Thailand.

— *Anand Singh*

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Businesses all in for organic meet

By Pimwara Choksakulpan

TWO hundred Phuket business operators attended the "Organic: Alternative Life" seminar organized by the Ministry of Commerce from April 20 to 21.

Held at the Royal Phuket City Hotel, the seminar was chaired by the Deputy Permanent Secretary for Commerce, Pimpapan Chansilpa.

The purpose of the seminar was to promote organic food and related products and hopefully introduce a domestic, then world-wide campaign, she said.

The seminar also offered hotel, restaurant, spa and souvenir industry representatives the opportunity to discuss organic-related products for their businesses.

She also added that Phuket is a famous tourism destination and with a great number of tourists visiting Phuket, the Ministry aims

'Since 2007 the Ministry of Commerce has supported organic agriculture and there are organic culture networks in some 40 provinces.'

– Deputy Permanent Secretary for Commerce, Pimpapan Chansilpa

to establish the island as an organic products hub in the southern region to promote the products among Thais and foreigners in southern Thailand.

The Ministry also intends to connect organic businesses with tourism by supporting initiatives such as an organic farm for tourism, organic hotels, organic restaurants, organic spas and organic souvenir shops.

Since 2007 the Ministry of

Commerce has supported organic agriculture. There are organic culture networks in some 40 provinces, she said.

Organic herbs and vegetables are grown in the north of Thailand. In the northeast region organic rice is farmed while in central and eastern regions organic fruit is the main produce. The southern region is famous for organic business products relating to hotels, spas and restaurants.

"Phuket is especially renowned for its spa industry among tourists. There are many organic products for use in spas. Many hotels now have good environmental management and plant homegrown vegetables. I suggest these hotels ask for organic guarantee certificates from target countries such as those in Europe and Japan to confirm use of organic products," she added.



PUSHING THE ORGANIC MESSAGE: Deputy Permanent Secretary for Commerce, Pimpapan Chansilpa.

Holiday Inn to open new Phuket resort

HOLIDAY Inn will have a second property in Phuket when the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket Mai Khao Beach opens this September.

According to Anutin Kraitong, Director of Sales and Marketing for Holiday Inn Resort Phuket, the hotel is set to have its grand opening on September 9.

The four-star property, comprising 245 rooms on a 22-rai plot, will face Mai Khao Beach on Phuket's northwest coastline.

"Although this is the second hotel in Phuket under the Holiday Inn Resort brand, our hotel on Mai Khao Beach will cater to a different market than our resort in Patong.

The Holiday Inn Maikhao is quite exclusive and located far away from the busy town center, which makes it appealing for some client groups," Mr Anutin explained.

"Having a second property in

Phuket allows us to cater to a different group of clients who are loyal to the Holiday Inn brand, but would like to enjoy a quiet, natural and truly relaxing beach holiday," he added.

The owners of Holiday Inn Resort Mai Khao also operate the Narai Hotel in Bangkok and have chosen Intercontinental Hotel Group as the management company. The Intercontinental group also owns the Crown Plaza and Inter-Continental brands.

"Currently most of the hotels on Mai Khao Beach, including the Anantara, Renaissance and the JW Marriot, are

luxurious hotels under the five-star category. It therefore raises the question as to why our company would choose to build a four-star hotel in an area mostly dominated by ultra-luxury hotels," Mr Anutin said.

"We think that there are many clients who want to holiday outside busy centers like Patong. With the Holiday Inn Resort Maikhao, we are building a product that is no less exclusive and luxurious, but with a price gap that makes it more affordable compared to the other hotels in the vicinity. We aim to provide guests with more options

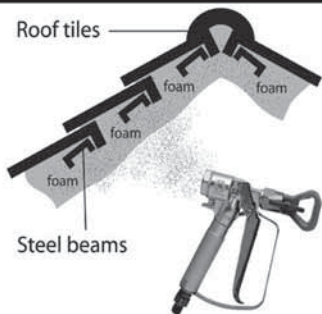
under an international and well-recognized brand name like the Holiday Inn," Mr Anutin explained.

The newly-built hotel comprises eight separate buildings, each three or four storeys high. The Holiday Inn Mai Khao offers a wide range of facilities, including a fitness center, restaurants, cafe and an outdoor infinity pool situated on the beachfront.

In the coming high season the resort expects to welcome guests from Western Europe, Russia, as well as regional tourists from China and Korea.

– Anand Singh

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How assets lose the golden touch

IN THE previous Retirement Years column on April 9, I explained the basics of how many investors misunderstand how they can lose money by investing in asset classes when the individual assets that make up the entire class all seem safe from nearly any risk at all.

One example is gold. Right now gold is on a path to the moon. Gold funds are making a killing for their investors.

This may go on for years more. The marketing of gold as a safe haven is helping to cause capital inflows, but at some point all of the capital that is going to flow into gold will have already arrived.

Gold will not stop being a safe haven at present, but capital will start to flow in the opposite direction at some point.

What will happen then is that there will no longer be loads of buyers hanging around to snap up the investment in gold being sold by those looking to get their money back, for whatever reasons they may be.

Gold is a shiny rock that people flock to when they think the world seems to be falling apart, but there will always come a time in the future when people are again confident the world isn't on the brink of collapse and that buying gold is no longer deemed critical for safeguarding their money.

Thus, when the big money – the pension funds and institutions that control capital in amounts large enough to move big markets

Retirement Years

By David Mayes

– starts to sell off to meet obligations, the lack of buyers will cause prices to drop.

It is important to note here that the actual reasons for capital flows really don't matter: If capital flows out of an asset class, prices will drop.

What happens next in the cycle is that the price drops themselves become a self-fulfilling prophecy because they cause people to lose faith in the future of the asset class.

Stock market crashes occur frequently enough for people who are risk averse to stay away, but a boom-bust cycle in gold is not nearly as common.

Capital flows out in greater volume and at a faster pace, and any fund that has used leverage (borrowed money to get a better return during the good times) will be forced to liquidate first.

Some funds will go bankrupt, others will simply close their doors

and return their investors' funds with however much of a loss they incurred.

To be clear, I am not predicting gold funds are going to go bankrupt in the next year. In fact, my personal belief is that there is a good chance gold prices will shoot up to levels I can't even dream of before the

The more concentrated in one asset class, or especially in a single geographic area, the more likely capital outflows are to cause losses not in line with the risk level typically associated with the underlying assets.



Gold is one commodity people invest in to safeguard their money, but it can lose its luster. Photo: Mykl Roventine

above scenario plays out.

This may happen a lot sooner than some people think, though, this is no problem if you have some sort of a "stop loss" or "trailing stop" to allow you to get out before the panic.

Unfortunately, many people will not have educated themselves enough to understand this, and will believe that gold is "safe" and will end up wondering, "How could this have happened?"

Real estate and money markets are two very relatively safe asset classes where investors in funds have been burned by failing to understand how capital outflows on a massive level can affect the fund they were invested in.

Gold is likely to be another asset class to burn people in large numbers at some point in the future.

Gold is an exchange-traded commodity, and such commodities' prices are subject to the

pressures of supply and demand, behind which are the decisions of human beings whose emotions swing back and forth on a pendulum from extreme greed to extreme fear, causing booms and busts.

An easy way to avoid problems is to think about what would happen to a fund if suddenly everybody lined up to get their money at once. This is how even banks can get into trouble, because they can't just call in all of their loan portfolio on a day's notice.

Some funds are less susceptible to liquidity issues than others. If a fund manager is trading across many markets (currencies, commodities, stock markets) and not dealing in a significant amount of the overall volume in any of them, then he can get out of his entire portfolio very quickly, without being forced to liquidate at fire-sale prices.

The more concentrated in one

asset class, or especially in a single geographic area, the more likely capital outflows are to cause losses not in line with the risk level typically associated with the underlying assets.

The real reason any market moves up or down is the collective action of all the market participants. The reasons for their actions do not need to be grounded in any logic, and human's natural herd instinct often causes markets to do things that seem to completely defy logic.

Understanding this is the starting point to understanding how markets really work and protecting oneself from the consequences of this herd mentality.

David Mayes MBA lives in Phuket and provides wealth management services to expatriates throughout South East Asia, specializing in UK pension transfers. He can be reached at david.m@faramond.com

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What's all this 3G mumbo jumbo?

I DO NOT like – and try very hard not to use – the term “3G”. The scientific-sounding “3G” rates as a marketer’s dream come true. It reeks of sizzle and bling.

And, the way it’s being tossed about, it means absolutely nothing.

You would presume that 3G is better than 2G and not as good as 4G, yes? It ain’t so. It’s not true in Thailand, and it’s not true in the rest of the world, either.

The photo in Live Wire last week showed a CAT CDMA dongle – a USB “modem” that you plug into a computer that lets you connect to CAT’s CDMA/EV-DO signals.

The dongle is emblazoned “3G”.



Live Wire

By Woody Leonhard

Only one teensy-tiny problem. CDMA isn’t 3G. At least, not according to the definition that’s widely accepted in the fragmented and inscrutable communications industry.

Look at the graph on this page, and you’ll get an idea of the speeds you should expect from a 3G connection.

Some people say there’s no 3G in Thailand. That isn’t true. There are two stable, reasonably fast

HSPA networks in Bangkok; one is owned and operated by TOT, the other is owned by CAT but operated by True and DTAC and a handful of smaller companies including iFox.

“But, but, but...” I can hear you say, “the Thai government has been trying to auction off 3G service, and there are lawsuits and competing governmental agencies that have blocked the auction.

“Thailand’s the laughing stock of the international communications industry – the only country with no 3G. Right?”

Well, no. That’s wrong. To understand why, follow along with the rest of the story online, at W: PhuketGazette.net/LiveWire.

The Thai government owns TOT and CAT, both of which derive a very large part of their income from mobile phone concessions. When you pay your mobile phone bill to AIS, DTAC or True, a very large percentage of what you pay goes to either TOT or CAT.

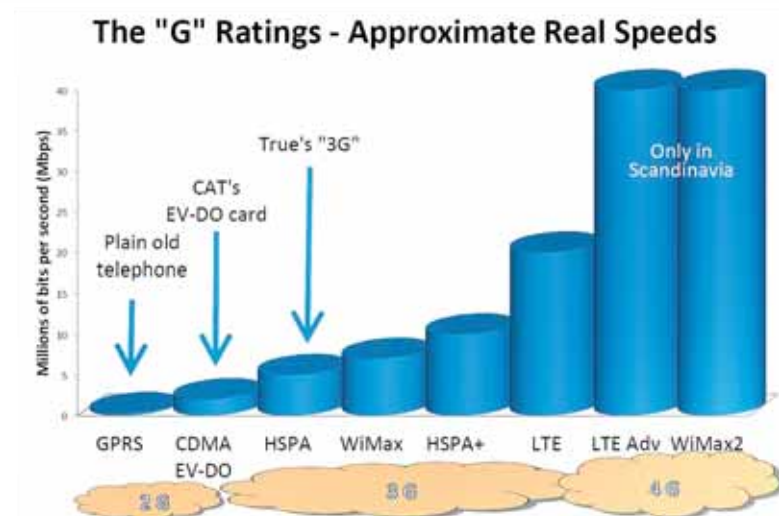
The very high concession rates were established many years ago, when governments could demand a whole lot of money for using the mobile airwaves.

CAT and TOT don’t want to lose their highly lucrative mobile phone concession. That’s likely to happen if HSPA takes hold. But that’s only a small part of the problem.

To read in depth the ins and outs of why 3G in Thailand is being held to ransom, stay tuned for Live Wire next week.

Facebook 101 Seminar

Able Wanamakok’s second



FYI: 3G internet connections are quite fast, and do exist in Thailand.

Facebook 101 seminar is fully booked. Facebook 101 takes attendees through the basics, from setting up a business (or organization or charity) page, designing it, drawing attention to it, and then using the page to reach out to Facebook users.

Johan Lofgren helps with the more technical parts. No experience with Facebook needed to attend the free seminars.

The next set of three seminars run May 7, 14 and 21. To attend, sign up by going to W:facebook.com/SandwichShoppes and on the left click the link marked Facebook Seminar.

The seminars are sponsored by Khun Woody’s Sandwich Shoppes, AW PR and Marketing and onsite.in.th. Able is planning a series of seminars in Thai, starting May 28. Email able@awpr-phuket.com for details.

FREE Computer Clinics

The next Computer Clinic will be on April 24, from 10am to midday at Sandwich Shoppe Chalong, one kilometer north of Chalong Circle on Chao Fah East, in the Fisherman’s Way Business Center.

As always, the clinic is free and open to anyone interested in (or bothered by) computers in Phuket. There’s a lengthy question and answer period, and lots of help from kindred souls. If you have a question about computers in Phuket – or PCs in general – drop by and we’ll get you some world-class answers. The clinics are sponsored

by the *Phuket Gazette* and Khun Woody’s Sandwich Shoppes.

Apple/Mac/iPad/iPhone Clinic

I’m actively looking for someone to start an Apple Clinic. In a typical month, dozens of people approach me with questions about their Macs, iPads and iPhones. The best solution would be to find an Apple fanatic – or an Apple dealer – who’s willing to give up a couple of hours a week to help other Apple users.

So far, I’ve heard of several Apple user groups that started in the past decade, but all of them folded for lack of interest. That’s amazing to me, because there are so many Mac (not to mention iPad and iPhone) users on the island.

My guess is that 90 per cent of them don’t understand why “3G” on their iPhone or iPad runs so slow – and why it’s ridiculous to pay more for “3G” for use anywhere but the extreme west coast of the island.

If you want to help, email me: Woody at KhunWoody.com.

Live Wire is IT guru and *Phuket Gazette* columnist Woody Leonhard’s weekly snapshot of all things internet in Phuket. Woody’s written more than 40 computer books including *Windows 7 All-In-One For Dummies*. Follow Woody on Twitter: @PhuketPC, or to see what Woody’s up to in the international press and to keep on top of the latest patches and problems with Windows and Office, drop by AskWoody.com.

Wireless internet access in Phuket right now:

GPRS/EDGE. The old wireless Internet access you can get on almost any phone, from any wireless phone carrier. About 0.2 Mbps international download, at least in Phuket.

CDMA EV-DO. Available for years, only from Hutch in the 21 provinces near Bangkok, and only from CAT in the other provinces, including Phuket. Considerably faster than GPRS/EDGE, 1 to 1.5 Mbps. There’s good coverage all over the country, but EV-DO cards from CAT will not work on the Hutch network, and Hutch cards will not work in the rest of the country.

HSPA. Available in Thailand for a year or so. Service is always called “pilot”, “experimental” or something similar. Good speed: clocked at 2 Mbps to 5 Mbps international download, here in Phuket. Both TOT and CAT have towers. True and DTAC run their iPhone service off of the CAT towers. Apparently there are many towers in Bangkok proper, with good reception over much of the city. Only eight towers in Phuket; all belong to CAT. True HSPA only available on the extreme west coast of Phuket, from just south of Nai Harn to just north of the airport.

LTE. Not yet available in Thailand. Runs considerably faster, say 20 Mbps, although speeds vary considerably in the US and Europe.

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Stuff soap and save your skin

By Stephen Fein

JOHNSON and Johnson might not want to hear this, but I am now two months into a personal hygiene experiment that has led me to one simple conclusion: soap and shampoo are generally bad for the skin.

Each one of us is the end product of millions of years of evolution. Throughout that entire evolutionary process how did our ancestors keep themselves clean? They just used plain old water, the universal solvent.

Your skin, which makes up virtually all of the human interface with the environment, protects itself with natural oils that are perfectly designed to keep your skin soft and supple. They will do a great job of this, provided you don't continually strip them away with the harsh offerings of the multi-trillion dollar "beautycare" industry.

The skin is its own little biosystem, one largely designed to take care of itself. If you accidentally cut yourself, the blood soon

coagulates and you scab up. Provided you don't pick the scab, minor skin wounds will generally disappear with almost no scarring. Your are, to a certain degree, born with some Terminator-like qualities.

But soaps, shampoos and all this other nonsense that is endlessly touted in TV commercials are really just the agents of a relentless, low-level assault on a natural and highly complex cooling and excretion system that is designed by nature to interact only with clean water.

Even here in the tropics, all you need to do to keep your skin clean and healthy is to avoid too much exposure to the sun, maintain a healthy diet and wash yourself thoroughly several times a day with clean water. A shower will do, but if you have access to a pool (non-chlorinated water is best) or bathtub, total immersion is better. Why is it that only the Japanese people seem to understand that?

All you need to keep any funk from setting in under your arms

is a potassium alum-based deodorant applied once a day after your morning bath or shower. These all-natural products are made in Thailand, cost about 30 baht a stick, and last about a year. You can buy them at Supercheap and some pharmacies, but the other major retailers don't stock them – probably because they want you to buy more-expensive deodorants laced with noxious chemicals.

What's best is they are true deodorants. Odorless themselves, they stop bacteria that cause body odor in their tracks without imparting that sickeningly sweet chemical smell that seems to be constantly around us in products ranging from air freshener sprays to WD-40.

Soap and shampoo are like napalm-light for your skin. Most of us know this deep down. We are all quick to accept that we need to buy special "mild" soap formulas for our newborns, ones that are effectively half-strength, but cost twice as much.

I suffered from dandruff for decades – until I stopped using



SOAPY BUBBLES: Is soap, 'handmade' or otherwise, really needed? Not in our writer's eyes. Photo: Malene Thysen

shampoo. I suffered from dry patches on my skin for years, but they are now almost completely gone after just a few months without soap.

What I am writing here will sound like blasphemy to some, especially the female readers who have been so thoroughly brainwashed by TV advertising. Yet I invite one and all to give it a try for yourself – what have you got to lose? Certainly not money: you

will save lots of it. And you will find all the time wasted sourcing and applying this stuff can be for more productively used elsewhere. Another advantage is that the amount of household waste you produce will be significantly reduced.

Best of all, your skin will improve, natural balance will be restored and you will smell as nature intended – not like a car air freshener.

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Studies show that people who work overtime are prone to heart attacks, so it's best we all head to the beach folks. Doctors orders.



GET OUT OF HERE: It's official. All work and no play make us all very dull – and unhealthy – people. So go on, get out of the office and stop working so much overtime. Photo: Jim Welch

By Woody Leohnard

THE IT industry abounds with Type A prototypes: ambitious, impatient, hostile, hard-driving professional workaholics. Raise your hand if that describes someone you know.

The 1960s-vintage Type A/Type B paradigm has all sorts of holes in it, not least of which is its ability to predict heart attacks.

For example, a University of Michigan study shows that, statistically, Type A people don't have more heart disease than Type B, never mind the problems associated with characterizing an individual as one of the binary types. Detailed and knowledgeable reviews of studies prove inconclusive.

Some research theorizes that the hostility component of classic Type A behavior raises the chances of heart disease, but proof lies mired in a thick web of definitions and fuzzy observations. One person's angry, hostile techy is another's quirky knight in white armor, eh?

Now comes a study you can hang your hat on. Or at least your neck.

The American College of Physicians' prestigious Annals of Internal Medicine just published a report (PDF; US\$15) called *Using Additional Information on Working Hours to Predict Coronary Heart Disease: A Cohort Study* that includes several disturbing results. An earlier version of the article, covering much of the same

ground and from most of the same authors, was published last year in the European Heart Journal (PDF; free).

You have to understand the context of the study to see exactly what's been discovered.

Back in 1948, researchers started watching 5,200 men and women in Framingham, Massachusetts, using both medical exams and lifestyle interviews, correlating observations over many decades with outcomes – originally, heart attack and strokes.

Boston University and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute have continued the study over the years, adding many more participants and other outcomes.

If you want to see how you stack up against the averages, the

Framingham Heart Study site includes numerous interactive calculators and downloadable Excel spreadsheets that you can use to predict your chances of coming down with various forms of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and much more.

Those calculators and spreadsheets are all based on statistics derived from the Framingham study, which you can see in great detail on the site.

The Framingham Heart Study measures many things, including physical activity, but it doesn't take into account the number of hours a person works. That's where these reports shed a lot of light.

The study follows more than 7,000 Brit-

ish civil servants, aged 39 to 62, starting in 1991. Like the Framingham study, it involves detailed medical exams and questionnaires, and long-term outcomes.

Unlike the Framingham study, the questionnaire asks participants (among many other things) how many hours they work, on average, per day. Respondents can tick "No overtime hours (7-8 working hours/day)", one hour overtime, two hours overtime, or three-four hours of overtime per day.

After 10 years, the researchers found that people who reported they were working three to four hours of overtime per day were 56 per cent (in the European Heart Journal) to 67 per cent (in the AIM) more likely to have Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) events – primarily heart attacks or strokes.

Those who reported two hours of overtime, on average, came up with a 45 per cent higher chance of CHD "after accounting for the effects of demographic factors and several known risk factors for CHD. Similar association was found with an outcome comprising only coronary death and non-fatal [MI 9 heart attack]. No significant association was found between overtime work and all-cause mortality."

If you've been concerned about your glycerides and sugars, diet and exercise and stress, now you have one more thing to worry about.

Fifty years after it first hit the talk show circuit, Type A comes back into play. If you factor out Type A behavior,

say the authors, overtime hours aren't as significant: "adjustment for type A behavior pattern attenuated the hazard ratios by 11-12 per cent, suggesting that part of the association may be explained by such behaviors. Type A behavior pattern...can be a risk factor for CHD."

It's important to understand what the study doesn't say. In spite of what you may have read in the popular press, it doesn't say that working more hours will give you a heart attack or stroke. There's no cause-and-effect. There may well be other factors at play.

Notably, the study in the two reports didn't take into account diet, activity levels, the kind of work undertaken, or family history of CHD.

What it does say is that if you think you're working a lot of overtime, you're more likely to have a CHD event.

Don't know about you, but I think I'm going to take the rest of the day off.



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THAI to unleash the Tiger



Aviation

By Alastair Carthew

THAI Airways International's announcement of a 15 per cent price reduction on fares to Phuket comes a year after a surprising – and widely condemned – 59 per cent increase in Bangkok-Phuket fares in April last year, highlighting how increased competition is forcing the national carrier to completely rethink its fare strategy.

Leading THAI's revival is hard-driving President Piyasvasti Amranand, who, now approaching 18 months in the job, has shown he intends aggressively to reclaim a significant share of the Bangkok-Phuket route back from low cost carrier (LCC) competition, in particular, Thai AirAsia, the Thailand subsidiary of Malaysian based AirAsia, arguably the world's most successful LCC.

THAI once had a near monopoly 80 per cent share of Thailand's domestic market.

Domestic flights at Phuket International Airport account for 42 per cent of all flights, so the market remains highly important to THAI Airways.

The whopping fare increases last year were, predictably, very unpopular, but THAI held them.

Now it has signaled the gloves are off against Thai AirAsia with the lower fares effective March 15 to September 30.

THAI has also been hit in recent years by increases in direct flights to Phuket, bypassing its ability to pick up passengers for the Bangkok-Phuket flight through its Suvarnabhumi Airport hub.

Currently THAI has 10 daily Bangkok-Phuket and 13 Phuket-Bangkok flights.

AirAsia has eight flights each way. Other, smaller airlines, such as Bangkok Airways and Nok Air (a THAI subsidiary), make up other flights.



THAI will take AirAsia on through a joint venture with low-cost carrier Tiger Airways. Photo: Marijn de Vries Hoogerwerff

In addition to slashing airfares, THAI is attacking AirAsia through a "pincer" movement of creating a joint venture with Singapore-based LCC Tiger Airways.

THAI lost six billion baht in revenue (US\$186mn) in 2010 because of the red-shirt unrest, so it has been forced by such circumstances, as much as anything, to move more quickly to redress an imbalance in its domestic service route network.

THAI Tiger would be the fourth domestic airline serving Phuket.

According to Mr Piyasvasti, the new venture will have "enormous potential" as only six out of 65 million Thais have flown before.

"Low-cost is the fastest-growing market and we want to take part in this market. We have been losing market share to low-cost airlines and we think there is a lot of opportunity for us," he said last August when announcing the joint venture.

THAI is going to need an increase in its domestic flight contributions, which accounted for 12 per cent of its total 200-

billion-baht revenue last year.

For example, 70 per cent of outbound package tours from Japan to Thailand worth 3bn baht

for the April-September season have been cancelled because of the devastating earthquake.

Japan is usually fifth or sixth in

total tourist numbers to Thailand.

One area in particular that will be affected by the earthquake fallout is Phuket's meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) business, which hosts around 40,000 Japanese visitors per year.

The Japanese are also, traditionally, big spenders compared with arrivals from Western countries, spending as much as 70,000 baht per trip.

Still, Phuket – and for that matter THAI – are not holding back in attracting tourists to the island.

At Berlin ITB 2011, in addition to HRH Princess Ubol Ratana Rajakanya gracing the event with her presence, Phuket was represented for the first time by its governor, Tri Augkaradacha.

Also attending was Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (OrBorJor) president Paiboon Upatising. In total, 28 Phuket hotels were represented.

Such high profile presence at the world's largest travel market is to be encouraged.

Airlines cut services and hike surcharges

AIRLINES have announced revised short-term strategies to cope with climbing oil prices. They have opted either to apply fuel surcharges or to simply discontinue some costly routes. The price of jet fuel has increased from US\$114 (3,435 baht) per barrel last year to more than US\$130 (3,917 baht) per barrel at present.

Many airlines, including THAI Airways International, Singapore Airlines and Air New Zealand, have announced increased fuel surcharges to offset higher fuel costs. Thai AirAsia has decided to stop flying its costly route between Bangkok and Taipei.

An aviation industry source said THAI Airways International would increase its fuel surcharges on most international routes starting from Monday. The airline made its last adjustment to fuel surcharges on February 17 this year. THAI will raise fuel surcharges on services from Bangkok to destinations in Europe and Johannesburg from May 2. Charges on domestic routes will remain unchanged.

According to the International Air Transport Association, an average jet-fuel price of US\$123.10 (3,709 baht) per barrel meant airlines faced the need to shoulder jet-fuel bills amounting to US\$53 billion (1,596 bn baht).

– The Nation

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Mar 16 10:00 - 12:00 Phuket International Women's Club AGM and lunch
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Mar 19 20:30 - 10:30 SIX of the Best in Phuket
Mar 20 10:00 - 12:00 Phuket Youth Sailing Squadron Island Regatta
Mar 25 18:30 - 23:30 Bacon and Stone Visual Arts Exhibition
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Mar 26 - 31 11:30 - 23:30
00:00
00:00
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Learning how to think like a dog

FOR LOTS of us, our dogs represent something very special. They are not just pets, but family members – lavished with love and affection, the very best foods and shampoos, and yet for some reason, they repay us with chewing our favorite shoes. We try our best, but just can't figure out why. And let's be honest, for some strange reason, not everyone loves dogs. I don't know how this is possible. Maybe it's because they chase your motorbike, or charge at you when you walk along the beach.

The *Phuket Gazette's* new Dog Whisperer column is for everyone (dog lovers or otherwise) and provides an invaluable insight into what dogs are thinking, and why they act the way they do. Here's some of the things we'll be looking at each issue:

CANINE BEHAVIOR

In the world of a dog, they simply do what is best for themselves at any given moment. Whether that is sleeping, rolling in the grass, or chewing your furniture. No doubt your own dog has given you some grief, whether it's constantly barking, jumping up or something else that annoys you. Such problems are common with dog owners and the good news is that, largely speaking, they can be quite easy to rectify.

TRAINING

Simply put, training your dog is about communicating what is expected from him and is also a great way to build a strong and lasting relationship with your Fido. While most of us seem happy with having our dog sitting nicely whilst we hold the dinner bowl – the real benefit is having a dog that will respond to you in more precarious circumstances, such as on a road with traffic, or on a beach with lots of distractions.



Dog Whisperer

By Russell D Russell

SERVICE DOGS

We often take our dogs for granted – they're always there to greet us at the door, or cheer us up when we're feeling down. But dogs are being trained for more and more complex tasks which can help us in society. Guide dogs for the deaf and blind, assistance



HEY GOOD LOOKING: Russell 'The Dog Whisperer' Russell's German Shepherd, Kay. The two will be tackling dog issues in this newspaper.

dogs for those that are immobile and even service dogs who are trained to detect the onset of "fits" in relation to epilepsy or diabetes, are just a few of the areas in which dogs are playing a vital role in our lives.

We'll also take a look at the developing role of how dogs are helping children to learn through programs such as reading to dogs which has had a massive effect on improving reading skills and confidence in younger children.

Our lives, as much as we may wish otherwise, are never stress free. From running out of coffee in the morning, to having a baby, moving house or changing jobs – there is always something that can affect us at anytime.

We often don't realize the impact this is also having on our dogs.

Russell is a certified canine training specialist T:089-5884050 E:canine.world@me.com W:tk9a.com

Evason to host brunch for Soi Dog Foundation

AS THE old adage goes, charity starts at home, and for Phuket residents there is no better way to show support for the many worthy causes on the island than to attend a glittering social event.

On May 22, the Evason Phuket resort will welcome Soi Dog Foundation (SDF) supporters to indulge in a delicious brunch at their Into the Beach restaurant – and it's all for a good cause.

The Evason management are long-time supporters of this Phuket-based stray animal charity.

"We are delighted to hold another event on behalf of this invaluable local charity. The work that they do not only benefits residents, but is also instrumental to the Phuket tourism industry," General Manager Frank Grassman said.

"By eliminating diseases such as rabies from the island, we are a much more attractive destination for holidaymakers," he added.

The resort, which is part of the Six Senses brand, will be supporting the cost of the event from funds derived from their Social & Environmental Responsibility Fund, which represents 0.5 per cent of the entire hotel revenue.

"We use this fund to support many local, national and international charities and activities. The fund allows 100 per cent of the

ticket price to go directly to SDF," Mr Grassman said.

SDF founder John Dalley reiterates that continuous fundraising and public awareness efforts are vital to the ongoing prosperity of the organization.

"SDF currently runs at a cost of nearly 1 million baht per month (33,000 US\$). Our main outgoings are medical supplies, staffing costs and food. Impressively, volunteers in several countries undertake the administration of the organization," Mr Dalley said.

"This means that the majority of our expenses are part of the process of getting the job done. SDF is totally reliant on donations and receives no government financial support," he added.

The fundraising event will run from noon to 4pm. Tickets, priced at 2,000 baht, include entertainment, free-flow drinks and a delicious brunch. A plethora of fantastic prizes will also be on offer for the charity raffle.

The official sponsors of the event are The Evason Phuket, The *Phuket Gazette* and Shine PR Phuket. Palazzo is also the entertainment sponsor.

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– Natasha Eldred



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Dr Thurman on China and a free Tibet

By Stephen Michael Fein

IN A second installment from American Buddhist scholar Dr Robert Thurman, *Phuket Gazette* News Editor Stephen Fein finds out what the first American ordained into the Tibetan Buddhist order has to say about the Tibetan people's struggle for independence from China. He is one of the world's best-known advocates on the subject. The two met at a Buddhist retreat at the Thanyapura Mind Center in Thalang recently and discussed Tibet's current relationship with China.



DEFIANT: The monks in Tibet, seen here demonstrating back in 2009, have been at the forefront of the region's independence movement. Photo: AFP

Stephen Fein: Now that China is becoming so economically powerful, has that changed the Tibetan people's struggle?

Dr Thurman: Not really. I am not a believer in the economic power of China, personally. I think China is kind of the ultimate bubble of the unsustainability of industrial capitalism. In a way they moved all the polluting industries over there and they destroyed the unions and the middle classes in the developed countries by getting these slaves, basically.

Companies like Walmart and all the computer companies, Foxconn that makes all the Apple computers for example, with millions of employees paid two dollars a day instead of twenty dollars an hour.

That export mercantilism has

built up a lot of cash, but they've wrecked their environment. Then you have the corrupt internal system of the Communist Party, where the banks are owned by The Party, and they led to their party relatives and they waste the money, or steal it and send it to places like Hong Kong or Switzerland.

I think there is going to be a big reckoning with China, frankly. And the people there are tired of it. They want a share, and the party is holding them captive and crushing down any form of self-expression.

I am not a big investor in China. I think it's a big con job, personally. Especially the destruction of the environment there,

which is very serious.

The Yellow River is dry about 300 miles before the Yellow Sea, floods and earthquakes are coming and polluted food and diseases are arising.

I am not at all favorable about them, which is not good. In the Tibetan movement there is not a wish for China to suffer, actually. Because a strong, self-confident

'In the Tibetan movement there is not a wish for China to suffer, actually.'

China that wants to have world-appreciation and good public opinion, they would be the ones to be nice to the Tibetans, instead of being repressive to them.

They would be like Hungary or something; share and become a multi-party system in a nice way and

let the Communists remain somewhat respected.

They don't want them to go in some terrible way, like Ceausescu in Romania who was killed by the people after trying to hold on too long and too hard.

In a fragmented China, the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) would revert to being warlords.

The big PLA generals own all these big businesses that do all of the big businesses in Tibet, that rob the wood in Tibet, do all the mining, sell the bottled water and all this other nonsense.

It ruins the steppe by doing commercial-industrial farming and grazing animals in fixed areas, which therefore pulls up the grass.

They would be harder to dislodge from Tibet than a central, strong Beijing that was being democratic and which decided it was nice to bring in its minorities and have them enjoy being part of China, because they are being nice to them and supporting them.

That's what we want from China. So if China

crushes its own people and gets militaristic with its neighbors and destroys its environment, and destroys the Tibetan environment, and then fragments itself that's the last thing the Tibetans want, actually.

People wrongly think the Tibetans want to see China go down, so they can somehow break free, but it would be harder for them to break free with China all fragmented.

That's what people don't realize.

The Dalai Lama understands this very well. The area he was born in, at the time he was born, was controlled by a warlord. That's a side issue, but it is an important point.

We are pro-China, in other words. We want Tibet to thrive again and see Tibetan culture rise again and see Tibetan Buddhism become well known, all over China. It's very popular in places like Taiwan, where the Chinese are free. We want to see a thriving China that really loves and appreciates Tibet. That would be best for Tibet.

We don't want to destroy China, but they are destroying it [themselves] right now with their bad management.



MAN IN THE KNOW: Dr Thurman wants Tibet to be free.



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Ovadia Shicartzy

OVADIA Shicartzy is the courtly owner of The Family, Phuket's signature Mediterranean restaurant, located next to Tesco Lotus on the road to Rawai. It's an oriental restaurant with a menu that offers not only favorites such as falafel, humus and mousaka, but also such exotic dishes as harime, a fresh fish served with Moroccan sauce.

There's also a full list of Thai food for those who want to mix their meals.

The Family is more than a restaurant. It's also an art gallery, which he calls the Hall of Fame and Shame, and a place to watch classic concert videos. Ovadia's gallery is filled with posters of his favorite musicians, large photos of his early life, and often famous quotes about the meaning of life. There is no other place like it in the world.

"I call my restaurant 'The Family' because we are really one big family which makes it possible. I am happy that I am able to employ so many family members and provide them with housing and an education."

Ovadia came to Phuket in 1999. He planned to work as a tour leader for Israelis who wanted to make dive trips around the island. He became a partner in the dive boat *Colona VI*, which he supervised the construction of in Ranong. At

EXPAT gallery

By Bruce Stanley

the same time, he encouraged his new Thai wife to learn to make a traditional falafel. Under his supervision, she became an expert.

"We opened our first restaurant across from the Chalong police station in 2000. It was a small place but we soon began to attract both residents and tourists so we were able to expand. We stayed there until 2007 when we were forced to move due to redevelopment. We were fortunate to find this new location next to what would become a major shopping center in Rawai."

Ovadia was born in Baghdad as part of the Sephardic Jewish community. In 1951, his family decided to immigrate to the new State of Israel which had been established in 1948.

"We were part of 130,000 Jews who moved to Israel. We lived in a tent community for seven years. Finally the family bought a house near Tel Aviv in 1958."

He remembers the difficulties that immigrant Jews had when settling in their new homeland. Sephardic and their Ashkenazy

Jewish cousins spoke different languages and often competed for the same jobs and education.

Ovadia served in the Israeli army and became an instructor in the use of machine guns. He lost two fingers during a training mishap but learned to shoot heavy artillery using his legs. He then completed a two-year mechanical engineering course.

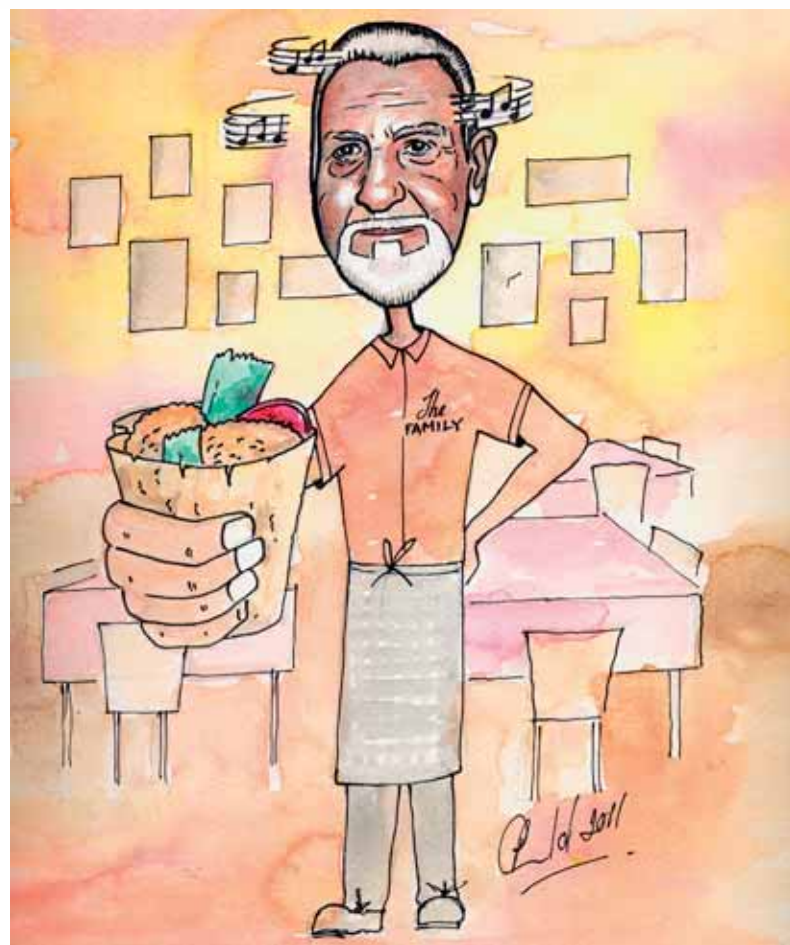
He worked from 1976 to 1999 in the copper cable industry as a maintenance technician in a mine built by the Germans. When it closed in 1999, he began his new life by traveling to Asia, including Phuket.

Ovadia has a very big interest in music.

"My first wife, an American, brought a lot of rock 'n' roll music from the States to Israel, which I found very exciting. Later, another girlfriend introduced me to the Blues. Now, I never miss a concert. I've seen Joe Cocker five times, BB King three times, and just recently went to see Eric Clapton live for the third time in Bangkok."

Ovadia's The Family continues to grow due to his reputation for the authentic taste of his cuisine.

"I import almost all the spices that I use from Israel. It gives my food the right taste. And we make our own products such as pita and sell them around the island."



By PETER CHILD FOR THE PHUKET GAZETTE

About Expat Gallery

The individuals profiled in "Expat Gallery" are chosen on the basis of their contributions to Phuket, and for having made those contributions in successful partnerships with Thais. For many, the contributions have entailed significant investment, often in the mid-80s and 90s when the rules of business were, ahh, not always clear. Some are not in business at all, but all have one thing in common: if there were a *Who's Who in Phuket*, they'd be in it.

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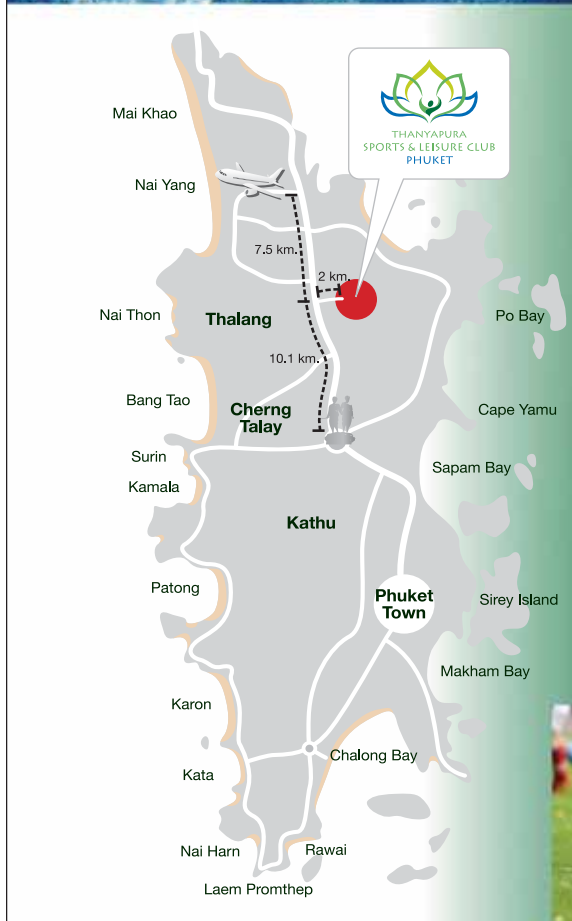


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A comprehensive review of the Phuket Gazette's policy with regard to the use of SPAM as a marketing tool

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Phony classic a roaring bore

THE three classic pillars of Modernist literature are *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust and *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann. Recently I've seen three critical articles taking potshots at *Ulysses* as being clumsy, overblown and humorless.

I would like to take a blunderbuss to the phony masterpiece *The Savage Detectives* (Picador, New York, 2007, 648pp).

Critics routinely call the author Robert Bolaño "a genius". But this sprawling novel about Mexican poets is sloppy, self-indulgent, meandering, turgid and terminally boring.

It starts out okay. The first section "Mexicans Lost in Mexico (1975)" is a 138-page journal kept by a young poet, Juan Garcia Madero in Mexico City. A 17-year-old law student, he is invited to voice the "visceral realists", a group of poets headed by Ulises Lima and Arturo Belano.

Madero promptly quits school, leaves home, shacks up with a waitress and devotes himself to poetry, journal-keeping, cafe-hopping, booze and marijuana. We are also introduced to the other members of the visceral realists, who oppose mainstream poets like Octavio Paz.

Of these, two of the most prominent are sisters Maria and Angelica Font, daughters of Quim Font, an architect who is slowly going insane. Madero stumbles into a ro-

mance with Maria, sharing her bed in a cabin behind the main house: "Then everything turned into a succession of concrete acts and proper nouns and verbs, or pages from an anatomy manual scattered like flower pedals, chaotically linked."

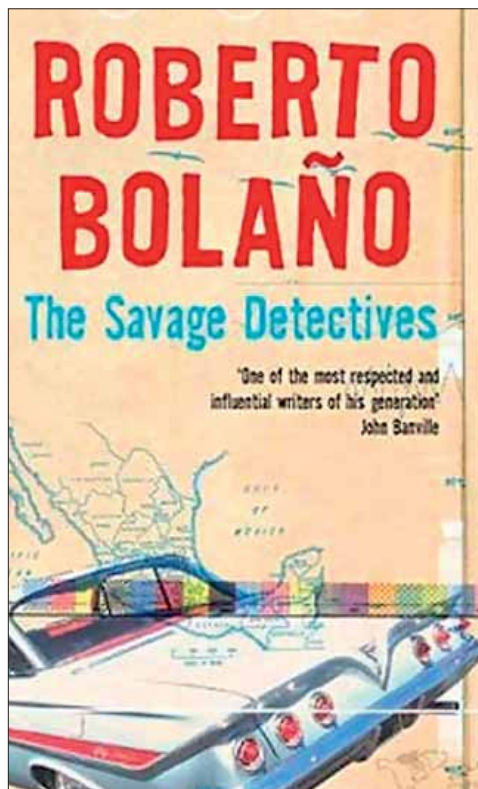
One of the symptoms Quim Font has is an infatuation with a prostitute named Lupe who takes shelter in his home in fear of her knife-wielding pimp

Alberto. On New Year's Eve, Lupe escapes north to Sonora in the family Chrysler, accompanied by Madero, Ulises Lima and Arturo Belano.

The next 540 pages are entitled "The Savage Detectives (1976-1996)". Now the narrative torture begins in earnest. This section is told in a series of interviews with perhaps a hundred characters, each marked with a street address, a city, a country and a date.

After they return to Mexico City, Ulises Lima heads off to Barcelona and Arturo Belano to Paris. The interview motif is a very clumsy one, each character being required to tell his or her lengthy back story before reaching the point when they encounter either Lima or Belano. This outside-looking-in perspective has the added disadvantage of distancing the reader from the two characters who are supposed to be carrying the novel.

The narrative advances through two



STEER CLEAR: This is one to miss.

decades of separate trails to Israel, Vienna, Nicaragua, Los Angeles, Rome, Angola and Liberia. Each poet returns at one point to Mexico City, where they discover that they have long been forgotten on the trail from ardent youth to bitter middle age.

The one constant, returned to again and again, is a long tequila-fueled night in 1976 when the two poets interview the aged poet Amadeo Salvatierra. They are on the track of a poetess from the 1920s, Cesarea Tinajero, who eventually disappeared in Sonora.

And then we come at last to the novels conclusion, again taken up in Juan Garcia Madero's journal in the car trip to Sonora in the last 55-page section called "The Sonora Deset (1976)". Their mission now is not only to keep Lupe from her pursuant pimp Alberto, but to find the long-lost Cesarea Tinajero.

The narrative strands come together in one final spasm of violence and the reader thinks: I endured all these meandering plot twists for this?

To be fair, there are some rewards. The story of how a hapless Ulises Lima is shanghaied on a plane full of leftist poets to Nicaragua to attend a "solidarity" meeting with Sandinista poets is richly comical.

And the concluding pages of the detective section, when a terminally ill Arturo Belano finds a new life in Africa, are rewarding. The section on the Liberian civil war elevates the novel with traits that had previously been lacking: Action, plot, dialogue and vivid description. A pity you have to wade through so many pages to get there.

Before his death in 2003, Belano produced another novel 2666, weighing in at 1,100 pages. I will give this a wide berth.

Behold the royal jewels in a book

THE first Thai book about the Royal Family's jewelry collection – most of it from Fabergé and Cartier – is an opulent eye-popper.

Changthong Luang Haeng Phramahakasat ("The King's Royal Goldsmiths") by Rattakorn Mongkolthum traces royal gems since the reign of King Rama V in a series of beautifully illustrated articles.

"I have great respect for our monarchy, which inspired my book," says Rattakorn, who earned official access to the collection.

"I'm particularly impressed by Her Majesty's profound interest in art, as reflected in her *Silpacheep* initiative to support craftsmen."

King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) appointed Fabergé and Cartier as official Royal goldsmiths. Over the years, the Siamese court fostered distinctive designs that combined Western and Eastern styles.

Rattakorn knows his subject well. He studied in France, obtaining a bachelor's degree in archeology and a master's in art history with a major in the history of jewelry from the Sorbonne.

"The royal jewelry collection reflects Siam's drive for modernity," Pharani writes.

"Fabergé and Cartier [jewelry pieces] were like the cultural symbols of the Western superpowers. And with their jewelry in its possession, Siam itself was sending

out a message that it was joining their ranks.

Rama V was the first Siamese monarch to visit Europe, making two trips, in 1897 and 1907. While forging diplomatic links there, he acquired many exquisite works of art, including jewelry from the House of Cartier in Paris and from Peter Carl Fabergé in St Petersburg.

Along with his own purchases, there were the gifts of jewelry from European royalty, among them Tsar Nicholas II of Russia.

Nicholas II's gifts piqued interest in Fabergé gems among other members of the royal family, so much so that Karl Fabergé was invited to visit Siam in 1904. His representatives were even on hand to help celebrate King Rama's 40th anniversary on the throne.

In 1911 Fabergé mounted an exhibition at the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok. There was an array of remarkable items made for Rama V, including enameled pigs and elaborate Buddha statues and finely detailed bowls for his son.

Rattakorn reports that it is difficult to find any Cartier pieces in the royal collection now, probably because they were dispersed among Rama V's many descendants.

However, says Rattakorn, King Chulalongkorn's fine gold-enameled work can be viewed at the Vimanmek Teak Palace.

– *The Nation*

Pulitzer prize winners announced

WINNERS of the 2011 Pulitzer Prize were announced earlier this week. There were 17 prizes for journalism and seven arts prizes doled out. Here's a pinch of what some international media said about the winning titles.

The fiction prize winner was *A Visit from the Goon Squad* by Jennifer Egan. Set in New York in 2020, the two main characters reflect on their lives, recounting tales all the way back to the 70s. *Random House* said: "From a trenchant look at the vagaries of the music business and the ebb and

flow of celebrity to incisive dissections of marriage and family to a provocative vision of where America is headed, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* is unnerving, exhilarating, and irresistible."

The prize for biography went to *Washington: A Life* by Ron Chernow, which chronicles the life of George Washington. *The Telegraph* said: "This combination of endurance and decency is a challenge for any biographer, but this book brings a lost world to light and skilfully places Washington – statesman, general, family man, lover – firmly in it."

The prize for non-fiction was awarded to *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* by Siddhartha Mukherjee.

The Guardian writer notes: "He calls this great and beautiful book a biography, rather than a history, because he wants his reader to understand his subject not just as a disease, a scientific problem or a social condition, but as a character – an antagonist with a story to tell through its eerie relationships to the wider biological and animal world that is also, inexorably, our story."

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DAN THE MAN: Chef Danilo has started a pizza school on Phuket.

IF YOU want to learn how to make pizza and pasta like an Italian chef, now you can.

The island's first Italian cooking school has opened in Kathu, and for budding chefs – or food fans with no cooking experience – you can learn tricks of the trade first-hand from a professional chef.

Italian chef and CEO of the newly opened Food Services Asia, Danilo Sangrigoli, is the man who will guide you in your new

culinary adventure.

But the 42-year-old said his company doesn't just specialize in teaching. Far from it. Food Services Asia also deals in the production of homemade pasta and pizza, as well as providing consultancy services to a number of Phuket resorts.

"We are the first to do this on Phuket, and I'm sure our professional service will mean the company will be a success," he said.

Danilo, who spent most of his life working in Switzerland as a pizzaiolo, has won the Pizza Acrobatics World Championship three times and operated successful pizza production facilities.

"Who would not want to learn how to make pizza from a three-time World Champion?" Danilo says.

Danilo hopes restaurants

around the island will send their junior kitchen staff to his cooking school.

"We want to increase the quality of pizza and pasta services on the island to help local businesses. We will support of customers with a competent and serious partnership,"

– *Phuket Gazette*

he adds.



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Phuket Gazette

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The Spy uncovers a fresh food gem

IT'S easy to drive past this boutique restaurant without ever noticing it. A make believe suburban cottage almost hidden by abundant foliage, it stands whimsically aloof, unmindful of the busy traffic on Chao Fa Road West.

At the front gate a green oval nameplate, evocative of a sense of wellbeing, announces it as Chanya Healthy Cuisine. Inside, it exudes a feeling of privacy with comfortable old style furniture, paintings of epic scenes and a small collection of antiques such as His Masters Voice gramophone and a grandfather clock.

You are cordially greeted by the owner cum chef, Atiporn (Toey) Jittanonta, 24-year-old daughter of Dr Suchon, who runs the Phuket Animal Hospital across the road.

Commenting on how as a graduate in multimedia design from Silapakorn University in Bangkok, she drifted into the noble art of cooking, Toey says "Our family had difficulty finding a decent Thai food place around here. Most Thai food tends to have MSG, sugar and coconut milk and is cooked mainly in palm oil."

So she started Chanya to cook mainly seafood and organic vegetables using rice bran and cold press extra virgin olive oils, soymilk and a minimum of sugar.



Her transition to chef was easy, as she modestly claims to have learned everything about good cooking from her mother Waraporn. Even more modestly she explains the restaurant is named after her great grandfather who was the governor of Phuket in 1957.

An incredibly talented young Phuket chef, Toey cooks ever dish herself. From the 60-item menu, almost everything priced under 100 baht, we ordered mushroom spring rolls as a safe starter but were lucky to also choose the more exotic shredded coconut shoot salad with fried shrimps.

Two separate vegetables – red organic spinach and assorted Japanese mushrooms stir fried with olive oil, green curry with homemade fish balls and soy milk and yellow curry with shrimps formed out main meal with every dish cooked to perfection.

Alas, we had not left enough room for Toey's signature desert of chocolate lava with homemade vanilla ice cream. But it was a delight to have discovered a place with a most friendly ambience, unpretentious prices and superb food.

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

April 23-24. I Ching: Ancient Chinese Divination Workshop

The I Ching (Book of Changes) is the foundation book of Chinese culture and the basis of most Taoist systems, including Feng Shui. It is said to be the oldest oracle of all, dating back 4,500-5,000 years. This workshop is held by Dr Gerald Tur, a student of Diego Gavelli under Chinese Grandmaster Chan Khun Wah. Sifu Gerald teaches the art of divination from more than nine years of personal experience. He was introduced to the Confucian and Taoist systems of I Ching divination by his teacher. From 9:30am to 4:30pm at the Phuket Meditation Centre. Contact Tobi or Parn (English, German or Thai) at T:087-279755 E:info@phuket-meditation.com or visit W:phuket-meditation.com

April 23. TSLC IronKids

The TSLC IronKids Phuket Triathlon, for children aged from 6 to 15, offers age-appropriate races and training with an emphasis on fitness, fun and safety. Swim, bike and run. Ages 6-8 yrs old: 50m, 3km, 500m. Ages 9-11 yrs old: 150m, 6km, 1.5km. Ages 12-15 yrs old: 300m, 12km, 3km. Sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*. Contact: Claire Ratcliffe at T:076-336000 E:claire@ironkidsphuket.com for more information about the event.

April 23. Saturday Brunch

Enjoy a delicious buffet and drinks, and listen to live music with Mj and Megan every Satur-

April 24. Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Sunday is "Family Day" at the Friendship Beach Resort in Rawai. For the kids there's the "Great Friendship Beach Easter Egg Hunt", starting at 3:30pm. There will be great prizes to be won, a fun child's candy basket for every hunter, a special kids menu, and a beautiful beachside pool. For mum and dad there's the April promo Happy Hour from 3pm-7pm. Draught beer at 60 baht, plus our usual enticing menu of edible delights.



Residents: don't forget your SCE Card for 15 per cent off. Beautiful views, swimming pool, delicious food, refreshing drinks, and happy kids. What more could you want from an Easter Sunday?

Contact Charlie Maurer at T:089-7285304 E:michael@friendshipbeach.com or visit W:friendshipbeach.com.

day at Two Chefs, Kata Center. Parking nearby. 395 baht only, including VAT. You can also find Two Chefs on Facebook. Contact Krister or Mattias from 12pm to 3pm at Two Chefs Restaurant, Kata Center at T:076-330065 E:krister@twochefs.com or visit W:twochefs.com

April 23. Wine Tasting @ Wine Lovers Rawai

This is the second edition of monthly wine tastings from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm at the Fisherman's Way after mini Tesco Lotus. Red and white wines and tapas buffet @ 499 baht only. Contact Gumrai at T:076-384663 E:info@wine-loversphuket.com or visit W:wine-loversphuket.com

April 23. Wine dinner at The Pavilions

Keep this date free and come to an evening with acclaimed winemaker Pascal Jolivet, from the Loire Valley in France. The Pavilions' Executive Chef Alec Lomas and his team will prepare a six-course dinner created especially to pair with Jolivet's stunning wines. Hurry and book because seats are limited and going fast. Tickets are 2,600 ++ baht and the event is from 6:30pm to 10:30pm. Contact Francois Poletti at T:076-317600 E:fb.phuket@thepavilionresorts.com or visit W:thepavilionresorts.com

April 23. RPM Salsa Night

Welcome all dance lovers. Let's dance the Cha-cha, Bachata, Samba, Rumba and more with DJ Miscaro & Oy from 6.30pm. Free entrance. Snacks buffet available from 8pm to 10pm at 350++ baht per person. Dress code: Colorful. Contact Anna at T:084-0517455 (Thai, English) or Didier at T:084-3062016 (French, English), or contact Murat (RPM) at T:081-7973364 E:muratc@royalphuketmarina.com or visit W:royalphuketmarina.com

April 24. Family Brunch on the Boardwalk

Les Anges at Royal Phuket Marina will be hosting a "Family

Brunch on the Boardwalk" every Sunday from April 24 onwards, from 11am to 3pm. Mums and Dads dine on the buffet, including one complimentary cocktail. Kids can enjoy all their favorites. Price: 795baht++ per adult, including one glass of house wine. 50 per cent discount per child age under 12. Free for children under 5. From noon there will be face painting and balloon twisting, and each child will have the chance to win fabulous prizes from Coco the Clown. For reservations, contact Les Anges staff at T:076-360803, or Chef Pascal at T:081-9680738. E:muratc@royalphuketmarina.com or visit W:royalphuketmarina.com

April 27. Party for Japan

Party for Japan is a fundraising event for the people of Japan from 7pm to 10pm at DaVinci Restaurant in Nai Harn. Organized by the Rawai, Nai Harn Business Asso-

ciation. All proceeds will be sent to the Japanese Rotary Club. Contact Mark Norris at T:080-5251400 E:mark@davinciphuket.com or visit W:rawainaiarn.com.

April 29. Resort Property Market Update

AMCHAM Thailand's Greater Phuket Chapter and *Property Report South East Asia* (PRSEA) invite you to a seminar at which a group of Thailand's leading property experts will discuss the resort markets of Greater Phuket, Koh Samui, Pattaya and Hua Hin. Learn who's hot and who's not, and share some insights into today's real estate market. There will also be a special update on hotel transactions – past, present, and future. It will be at the Holiday Inn, Patong. Speakers include David Simister, Chmn, CBRE Thailand, Patima Jeerapaet, Chmn, Colliers International Thailand, Duangjai Kraus, MD, Engel & Volkers Thailand and Andrew Langdon, Sr VP, Jones Lang LaSalle. Hotels Moderator will be Andrew Batt, Managing Editor, PRSEA. Attendance is open to the public. Admission is 200 baht, free for AMCHAM members. Cash bar for networking cocktails starting from 6:30pm. Contact Sheree Tanpensuk, at T: 02-2541041(ext 212) E:sheree@amchamthailand.com or visit W:amchamthailand.com

April 29. Indian Feast

Introducing an "Indian Feast" at Les Anges in RPM. Enjoy Indian cuisine every Friday evening from 7pm to 10pm. On April 29, and every other Friday night thereafter, homemade Indian food will be prepared and served by experienced Indian chef Padam Kahtri. Come on down for a truly authentic Indian food experience. Price: 495 baht net per person. Contact Les Anges restaurant at T:076-360803 E:pascal@lesanges.com or visit W:lesanges.com

Free Computer Clinics

Is Windows driving you nuts? Want to know about the best Internet connections in Phuket? Need help finding a repair shop or a dealer that knows what they're doing? Join *For Dummies...* author and local Windows guru Woody Leonhard in his free weekly seminars. Sponsored by Woody's Sandwich Shoppes and the *Phuket Gazette*.

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May 8 – Laguna
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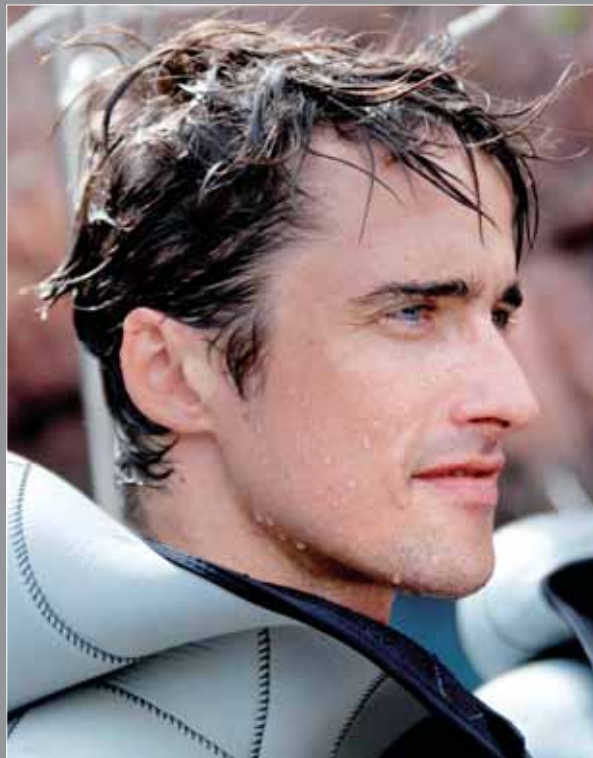
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Pierre-Yves Cousteau is coming to Phuket.

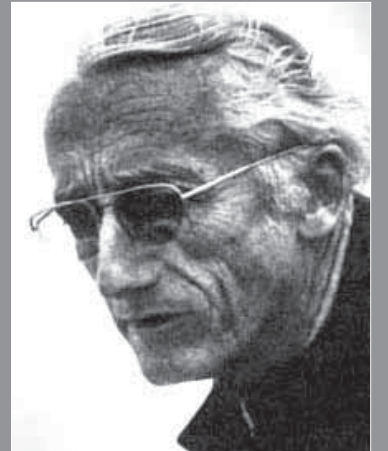
Cousteau here all week to eye marine matters

GUIDING the legacy of famed oceanographer Jacques-Yves Cousteau is his youngest son Pierre-Yves who will visit Phuket from April 25 to 28 to promote the Cousteau Divers global initiative.

Pierre, 29, has taken the reins of his father's work to further drive environmental awareness of our oceans. While in Phuket he will meet with local divers, dive companies that promote marine resource awareness, schools and others interested in marine preservation.

Known as the "Commander", his father Jacques, pioneered new levels of marine exploration by introducing new technologies such as the Aqua-Lung, which he developed with Emile Gagnan. Before he died in 1997, he made over 120 documentaries, wrote 50 books and established an environmental protection foundation with more than 300,000 members so that future generations may enjoy our planet's largest unexplored area.

In this exclusive interview with the *Phuket Gazette*, Pierre-Yves answers questions about key issues facing the Phuket diving community: coral bleaching, the killing of sharks, artificial reefs and pollution.



Jacques-Yves Cousteau

Phuket Gazette: What is the purpose of your trip to Phuket?

Pierre-Yves: I am spearheading a worldwide program to unite divers for the protection of the oceans (www.cousteaudivers.org) using divers as active agents for the study and preservation of marine life which will allow us to obtain a near real-time diagnosis of the health of oceans worldwide and to react to environmental alerts – much like an immune system for the oceans. I come to witness the state of the diving community of Phuket, to explore potential partnerships, and I must admit, to have fun diving.

Are you familiar with any environmental issues relating to diving in Phuket? If so, what?

There are a number of environmental issues related to diving that apply virtually everywhere. Divers want to see a healthy marine environment during their dives, and the business of diving directly benefits from the health of the seas. Hence, it is in the interest of Thailand's multi-million dollar recreational diving industry to create and enforce marine protected areas such as 'no-take zones', where all kinds of fishing is strictly prohibited.

Beginner scuba divers regrettably, can pose a threat to ecosystems. Poorly trained or inexperienced divers who cannot properly control their buoyancy can cause serious damage to the delicate benthic (lowest level of a body of water) organisms, such as corals.

One aspect of particular concern to divers on Phuket is the killing of sharks for shark fin soup. What is your position on this matter?

Today, over 80 million sharks are killed each year for their fins, to provide this delicacy to the Asian market. That's 200,000 sharks a day. At that rate, needless to say, it will not be long before they become extinct altogether. Divers will go out of their way to dive with sharks. Fishing and marine products play an important role in the livelihoods and economy of the Asian community. It is in their own interest to protect sharks, which help keep the ocean healthy and drive a lot of money to the recreational diving industry each year.

Eating shark fin soup is a cultural behavior. It has no nutritional value, and I have been told is quite tasteless. The reason why this tradition is having such a profound impact on global shark populations is because so many people are repeating that tradition. With seven billion people living on this planet, we must ask ourselves which elements of our cultures and everyday lives have nefarious environmental effects when millions, or even billions, of people repeat them each day.

'The more people, the more power, the more hope,' my father once said. The more

people with raised awareness of our planets beauty and fragility, the more power to impose the interest of our well-being and ultimately survival, the more hope for a golden future of prosperity and harmony with our environment.

Another issue is coral whitening because of warm seas. Thai authorities are planning to close some dive areas in national parks. The diving community would like to see more artificial reefs

created to help offset this. Are you supportive of such a move?

Closing dive sites in national parks can help the recovery of benthic organisms. However, there are examples of sustain-

able and economically interesting exploitation of dive sites. Creating artificial reefs can help marine life develop in some areas. The most important thing is to create these reefs under supervision of qualified scientists, after assessing the potential environmental impacts.

Both pollution of the seas around Phuket with run-off from the land and plastic bags from tourism and shipping are problems. What solutions would you suggest for this type of issue?

Eliminating throw-away plastic is a step

forward that the whole world needs to make in the very near future. Pollution and sewage from cities, industries and resorts must be treated and re-used with industrial ecosystem applications before going to the sea. The ocean is no longer a bottomless well that we can throw everything we don't like into. In searching for ways to 'close the loop' on our waste products, we can discover respectful ways of living in harmony with nature. Environmental consciousness is an engine of innovation.

What other issues would you like to raise awareness about while in Phuket?

The importance of Marine Protected Areas for the resilience of marine ecosystems. Scientists tell us that we need to have 20 per cent of the world's oceans declared 'no-take' zones (where fishing is not allowed) in order for the oceans to recover from all the pressure we are putting on them (pollution, fishing, global warming, etc). Today, less than one percent of the oceans have such a protection. Our survival depends on that of our oceans. They provide us with 50 per cent of the oxygen we breathe, with proteins that are vital to hundreds of millions of people living off the sea and with climate regulation.

Pierre-Yves Cousteau's visit is sponsored by: Indochine Group, The Adventure Club, Calistoga Yacht Charters, All4Diving, Asia Yacht Agency, Headstart School and Phuket International Academy.



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The wonders of Wingman

SKY HIGH: Phuket pilot Les Vorosmarthy has been a busy man of late. He awed revellers with a one-off acrobatic performance in the skies above Patong during the Songkran holiday, and last week hosted another death-defying display of sensational skills at Phuket Airpark.

At the Songkran show, stunned locals and tourists watched as Les performed spins, stalls, slips, slides, barrel rolls, snap rolls, wing-overs, loops, waterfalls, and a host more spectacular stunts above Patong.

Pictured above, Les sits on his beloved 300 horsepower, Extra 300L stunt plane. Keep your eyes to the sky for Les and his signature red plane in the coming months; there's bound to be more awe-inspiring shows soon. Photo: Dan Miles



Good reason to splash out

SALA Phuket welcomed the Songkran holiday with a "long drum procession" and dance performance, followed with water blessing and traditional Songkran games.

Laugh a minute



THESE three funny men sent Phuket expats into fits of giggles earlier this week at the Phuket Punchline Comedy Club's latest event.

Pictured from left: British compere David Morgan, Scotsman Vladimir McTavish and Dan Evans put on a laugh-a-minute performance at the Holiday Inn resort in Patong on Wednesday night.

After the Phuket gig, the comedy trio were due to head to Hua Hin on Thursday and then Bangkok on Friday and Saturday as part of their Thailand tour. The Punchline Comedy series is sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*. See future issues of this newspaper for the next side-splitting night of comedy. Photo: Dean Noble



Mom Tri's Kitchen

kata beach

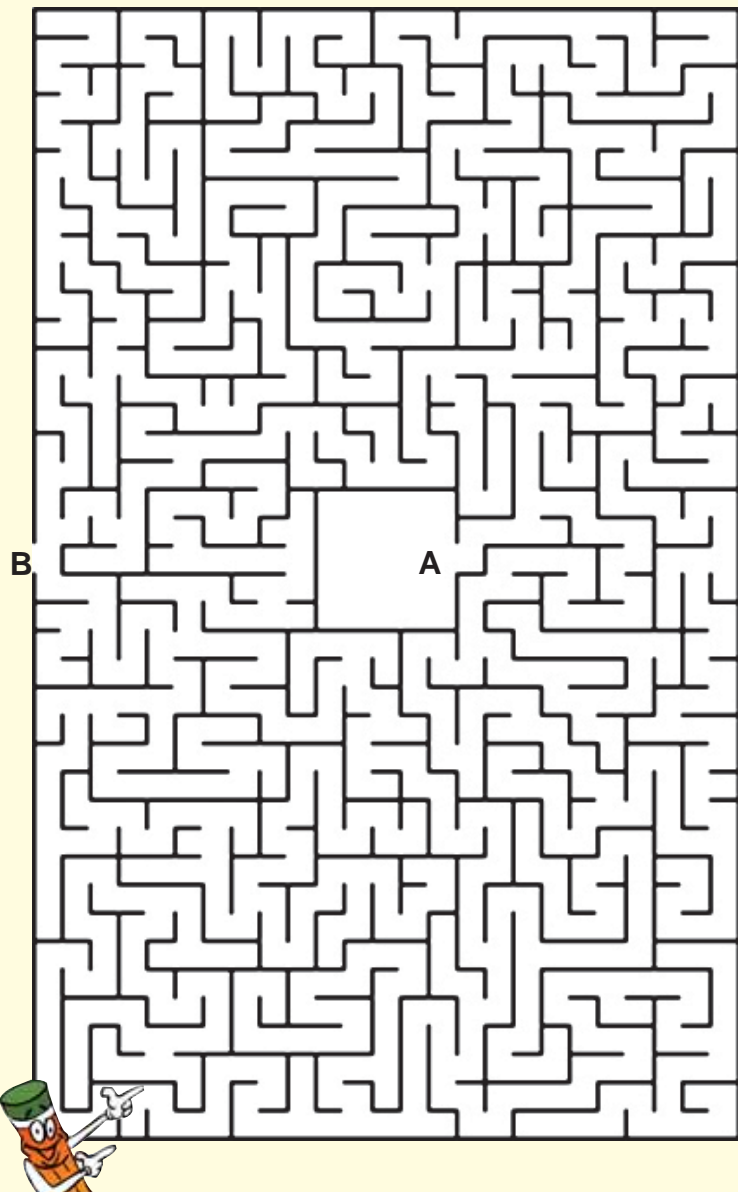
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A *Gazette* staff member completed this maze in 46 seconds. Can you beat their time? Make your way out of the maze.

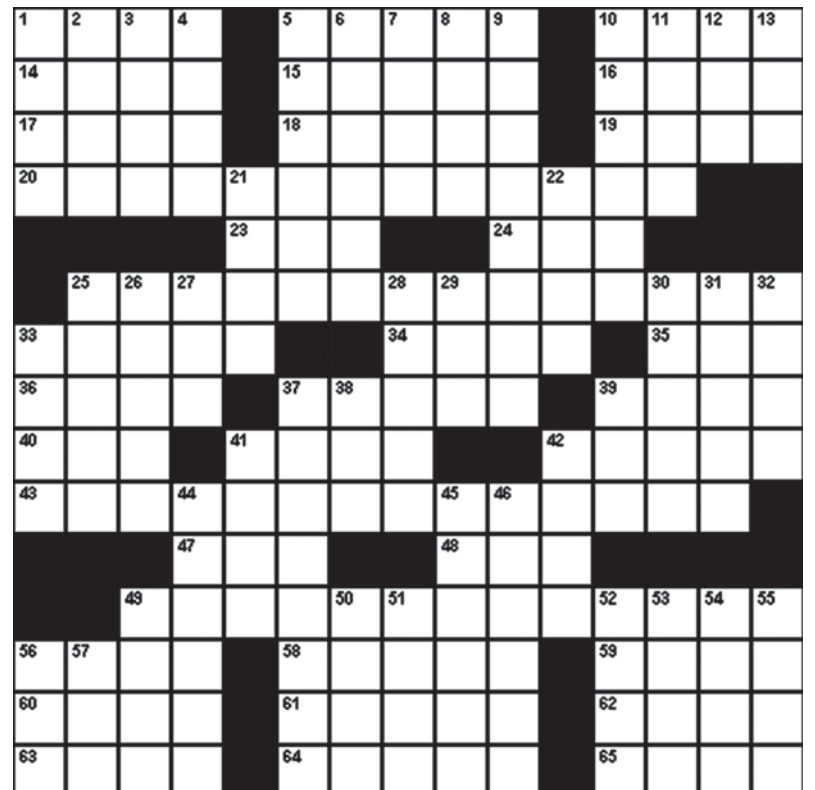


Across

1. Baseball's Sandberg
5. Slumbered
10. Queens stadium
14. Someone who isn't closing their eyes
15. Stopwatch
16. Price
17. Fruit filled pie
18. Licorice like flavoring
19. Peter Fonda title role
20. Impossible to forget
23. Almost deer
24. Dine
25. Foundation
33. Wood nymph
34. Listen attentively
35. Skye cap
36. Electric fish
37. Grimy
39. Basic monetary unit of Ghana
40. *Much _ _ About Nothing*, play by Shakespeare
41. Melt together
42. A critical _ _ _
43. Rebellion
47. Besides
48. Sheet music abbr.
49. Intellects
56. Lump of earth
58. Destitute
59. Earthen pot
60. Hindu princess
61. First name in photography
62. Film _ _ _
63. Tailless amphibian
64. Brit's bottle measure
65. Checked out

Down

1. Queue after Q
2. Bring forth young
3. Soft ball brand
4. This, in Tijuana
5. Person of experience
6. Passenger ships
7. Expel gas or odor
8. Annoyance
9. Exchequer
10. Carve



11. Gap
12. Compass point
13. Broke bread
21. Hollow grass
22. Male deer
25. Hives
26. Parachute material
27. _ _ _ Kapital
28. Trio
29. Informer
30. In _ _ _ (unborn)
31. Radioactive gas
32. Chieftain, usually in Africa

33. Faculty head
37. Like some ulcers
38. AOLeg
39. Dernier _ _ _
41. Comic sans eg
42. French basic verb
44. Frank
45. Commando
46. Sock pattern
49. _ _ _ Isle in West Scotland
50. Filmmaker Riefenstahl
51. For fear that
52. Nada
53. Satiating
54. *Night* author Wiesel
55. Reddish, brown gem
56. PC monitor
57. Philosopher _ _ _ Tzu

Provided by BestCrosswords.com.
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Puzzle solutions on page 39

ARIES (March 21-April 20):

Arians are advised to be wary of a business proposal from an earth sign this week. There are signs that this idea could prove to be pie in the sky. Other fire signs can be relied upon and your chances of success in May are strong. As April draws to a close, your mind could be occupied with thoughts of a relationship that ended earlier this year. The person in question is likely to reappear soon.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21):

The stars are ready to encourage Taureans to go in a more exciting direction this week. Inspiration is forecast to come from people who you haven't been in contact with recently. A business deal that has been in the pipeline for too long should now start to take shape. Those with a birthday during the last week of April can look forward to a year in which they can make their mark.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21):

Geminis are advised to listen to their voice of reason this week. During the final days of April you could be likely to react too hastily to unconfirmed stories. The stars indicate that May will be the month

to take action. Your creative energy is strong at the moment and this is the ideal time to consider a new pastime. Another air sign has interesting suggestions this weekend.

CANCER (June 22-July 23):

The atmosphere is clearer for Cancerians this week. Your luck in business increases and there are signs that financial gain will come by the end of April. The source could be promotion or a new enterprise if you are self-employed. Romance is likely to be sweet and sour – those who were hoping for a relationship with an earth sign are likely to be disappointed, but an old flame is ready to reappear in your life.

LEO (July 24-August 22):

New challenges and opportunities are waiting in the shadows. Leos are advised to spend the last week of April sorting through their lives and eliminating responsibilities that are bringing too much work and little reward. Your financial outlook improves. Those waiting for Cupid to act on their behalf should be pleased by events this weekend. Your lucky number this week is seven.



VIRGO (August 23-September 23):

Virgoans are strongly advised to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to something that is irritating or upsetting early next week. The stars hint that there will be nothing you can do in this situation and your energy is better put to use elsewhere. The course of true love may not be as smooth as you had hoped for, but friends help you to put personal problems in a healthier perspective this weekend.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23):

A fire sign friend or partner could tempt you to spend more than you can afford this weekend. Librans are advised to remind themselves which bills will have to be paid at the end of the month. Your ideas for a summer holiday are forecast to be altered by information received from overseas. Those with a family should consider everybody's point of view before making concrete plans.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22):

Scorpios could find it difficult to know where to direct their attention this week. Those who are regaining strength after being under the weather should focus on their own needs. Another water sign could try to send you on a guilt trip on Monday or Tuesday try suggesting tactfully that this person should concentrate on their own business. Keeping your romantic hopes realistic brings more satisfaction in a new relationship.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21):

Events could be moving more quickly than Sagittarians would like this week. The stars suggest that an air sign could try to persuade you to make up your mind before you are ready. Business related decisions will be best taken in May as this is one of the luckiest months of the year for you. Romance with an air sign looks hot, but a casual relationship with a water sign cools down.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20):

Those born under the sign of Capricorn could be particularly vulnerable this week. The stars advise taking a step back

from people and situations that could stir up your emotions. Money matters are well-starred, with financial gain highlighted midweek. A water sign is ready to tug your heartstrings this weekend, but all is not quite as it appears to be.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19):

A missed opportunity is forecast to come back in another form during the last week of April. Aquarians are advised to remain alert for communication from those with influence – this is not an auspicious time to head for a remote island. In the realm of romance, a situation that you did not see coming could cause some confusion this weekend.

PISCES (February 20-March 20):

Pisceans are advised to put less effort into impressing others this week. The stars advise that you concentrate on who you are and what you can do and positive results will follow. Developing more interest in the arts is forecast to occupy your time as April ends and May begins. This could lead to travel to far-flung places during the summer. Lucky days for romance are Tuesday and Wednesday.

PROPERTY Gazette

News | Construction | Gardening | For sale | For rent | Classifieds

Istana scoops top award for Asia-Pacific

PRISM Estates, developers of the Istana Phuket residential development in Nai Thon, has won three Asia Pacific Property Awards in the categories Architecture Multiple Residence, Development Multi Residence and Development Marketing.

The presentation of awards will be at a gala presentation dinner at The Longemont Hotel in Shanghai during the Property Summit on May 30 and 31, to be attended by hundreds of leading property professionals from across the Asia-Pacific region.

Istana Phuket features 19 individually designed residences by



Richard Cohen

world-renowned principal of GFAB Architects Gary Fell. They offer sophisticated architecture based on intelligent contemporary design, ultimate quality and environmental harmony.

Ten of the villas are still avail-



PURE STYLE: The design, marketing and multiple residence aspects of Istana were voted best in the Asia-Pacific.

able for sale at prices starting at US\$4.25 million for the four-bedroom configuration, US\$6.45mn for the five to six-bedroom configuration and US\$8.45mn for the seven-bedroom Villa 19.

The villas bested entries from a record 21 countries taking part in the Asia Pacific Awards this year, including entrants for the first time from Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Cambodia.

The awards are part of the International Property Awards, which were established 17 years ago and cover residential as well as commercial developments.

As the world's most prestigious

property competition, the awards are supported by Bloomberg Television, Google, *The New York Times* and its international edition the *International Herald Tribune*.

The prime focus of the competition is to seek out the best real estate professionals worldwide.

"We are delighted that the international community has recognized our dedication and passion to the quality design we've lavished on Istana," said Richard Cohen, Director of Sales at Istana Phuket.

"We're honored to represent Thailand in this regional competition and pleased that our philosophy of developing luxury

homes while remaining environmentally sensitive has resonated with the judges," he added.

Winners from the Asia Pacific Property Awards, now including Istana Phuket, will compete against other winning companies from Europe, Africa, the Americas and Arabia to find the World's Best in each category.

Both in 2009 and 2010, the Asia-Pacific region scooped no less than seven World's Best awards.

The industry is now watching with great interest to see if this feat can be matched – or beaten – at the final awards at London's Savoy Hotel on December 12.

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Laguna Village. Phuket.

Property 101: Teaching dictators how to surf

WHOEVER said "Charlie don't surf" must have not been to Phuket lately. It's the crack of dawn and drifting quietly on a surfboard, just past the point break at the northern end of Bang Tao Beach, is a sleepy Muammar Gaddafi.

Despite being one of the most despised leaders in the chaotic pineapple upside-down cake of current affairs, for locals he's known simply as Charlie.

Stepping foot on the island only a few days ago, he decided a little "personal - me time" might clear the cluttered mess of domestic insurgency.

He came across an ad on Craigslist during some late-night Internet browsing down in the bunker. The tagline "surf school for dictators" beckoned the click of his gold-plated mouse.

Of course other options were crying out from the screen, such as Muay Thai training, meditation, detox and Northern hilltribe culinary classes, but it was the motion of the ocean that stirred a quick click to action.

Growing up in a tented camp deep in the desert, the young dictator-in-waiting was tending to camels when he first heard the Beach Boys' *Surfin' USA* on a small transistor radio for the very first time.

While that was indeed many years ago, it is a memory he clings to all these years later, just like the Hauser automatic pistol he grips tightly each night when he falls asleep.

SSD, or Surf School For



SHOOT THE TUBE: High-end oceanfront properties appeal to all walks of market niches. Photo: Mila Zinkova



Dummies (not to be confused with the neo-Nazi movement for Dummies), is the brainchild of a trio of ex-surfers turned real estate brokers.

Though the three amigos, as they call themselves, Mick, Chet and The Bruiser were at the top of their game living the dream a few years ago, the global financial crisis came like last call at a

bar full of binge drinkers.

Yes dark times emerged, but let's just put the specifics aside and leave it at that.

Sobriety was a new-found calling card and during one late-night relapse with multiple bottles of Sang Thip whiskey littering the floor like fallen toy soldiers, a plan was hatched to tap into an emerging property market: relocating deposed dictators.

But of course, just like twisted songwriters, the guys understood that a clever hook was needed to first get prospective purchasers to Phuket.

Fishing where the fish were made absolute sense and while the resort property market had tanked faster than yet another Adam Sandler movie, the opportunity to create a niche segment made their eyes grow larger than flying saucers - or it may have the other chemicals they were using at the time.

Brainstorming sessions ensued and while no one could figure out

if in fact Idi Amin were still alive or when Noriega was due for parole, one thing was for sure - that the catchment of high-net-worth-soon-to-be-Xboxed head honchos was on the upswing.

And with Phuket's ample supply of ready-to-buy ultra villas, a plan was hatched.

Soon the parade of private jets were queuing for clearance to land at Phuket Airport and the rest as we know is history. Well, sort of.

It's bowling night as the motley crew board their minibus and head down to the alley at Jungceylon. Charlie has dressed for the occasion, swapping over his trademark robe for a pair of Quiksilver boardshorts, Sanuk sandals and sports some new cornrows in a reggae theme.

For some this may seem like a scene out of the Theatre of the Absurd, but on this island the guys fit right in. After all, it's just another way to sell real estate.

In brief...

Hospitality giant Boutique Group going commercial

LEADING Thailand hospitality firm, the Boutique Group, is set to diversify into community shopping malls.

Lead by founder Prab Thakral, the expanding company operates four extremely popular Citadines Serviced Apartments and two Oakwood branded properties in Bangkok.

The latest development is into a retail center is called Rain Hill, and will open before the end of this year on Sukhumvit Soi 47.

Anantara Vacation Club targets Phuket

SHARED ownership is looking to gain market share in the challenging resort property market and new entry, Anantara Vacation Club (AVC), is targeting Thailand's resort islands.

Having launched two initial offerings for their branded resorts in Phuket and on Koh Samui, the firm is working on a flexible points-based system, as compared to the old-school system whereby weeks are offered.

The group has announced plans for expansion this year in Bali. Also in the pipeline are robust regional plans which include China.

Members are able to use points for stays at both Phuket and Koh Samui while destinations are expected to quickly expand.

AVC has also teamed up with exchange provider RCI (formerly Resort Condominiums International), which offers a wide variety of international destinations.

Bali condotels draw mass local buyers

ASIA's popular tourism destination Bali is experiencing huge growth in its real estate market.

Recent research found that sales pace for 2010 and for the first quarter of 2011 remains high. One key segment is the condo hotel (commonly referred to as condotel) segment, with over 4,000 units in the market.

Indonesian buyers, mostly from Jakarta, are flocking to these both for investment and lifestyle/usage.

Do you have any breaking news about Phuket property? Email property@phuketgazette.net

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Demand grows for ultra-luxury at Surin Beach

SURIN Beach, on Phuket's west coast, is a small, unassuming beach town that has slowly – and quietly – evolved into one of Asia's hottest tropical property markets.

With luxury buyers now returning to the Phuket market after the world economic crisis, local experts suggest demand for exclusive Surin Beach real estate will soon surpass supply.

Helping to alleviate this supply shortage for high-end properties is Yang Som, a newly completed five-bedroom, six-level estate villa recently listed on the market for US\$5.8 million.

Last year, adding to the Surin property market mystique, a local five-star residential resort sold over 15 luxury homes off-plan at prices ranging from US\$6-8 million.

"There is already a very limited amount of high-end inventory for sale in the Surin Beach area," says Tom Travers, Managing Partner of Indigo Real Estate.

"There are no projects in the planning stage for the area, so it will be years before supply catches up with the demand," he added.

Yang Som is set on a double-size sea-view plot of 2,458 square meters with a



One of the completed Yang Som 'ultra villas'. massive 1,530sqm of living space and substantial 20m pool.

This six-level home is serviced by two elevators and is ideal for those wanting one of the most sophisticated villas in the Surin area.

Built in the Northern Thai architectural style, every level of the home soaks up the afternoon sun with vistas over Surin and Bang Tao beaches.

The villa is part of an established residential development with on-site management, security, clubhouse, tennis court and restaurant.

Already recognized as one of the world's most beautiful and hippest tropical destina-



ENDLESS SUMMER: Luxury buyers are returning, seeking those priceless villas and views.

tions, Surin Beach showcases luxury Asian icons including the ultra-exclusive Amanpuri and Twin Palms Resort.

The area also continues to host a growing number of the island's best restaurants and beach clubs, such as the trendy Catch Beach Club and hip Stereo Lab.

Located a 30-minute drive from beach cousin Patong, Surin Beach is sandwiched in the middle of one of Thailand's most exclusive and expensive real estate regions, which includes the Kamala, Surin, Bang Tao, Laguna and Nai Thon areas.

To say this growing "Asian Rivera" and the surrounding Andaman region offers lifestyle choices is an understatement.

The region is consistently rated as one of the world's best sailing, diving and golfing playgrounds, plus there are many superb beaches and natural wonders to explore.

Factor in Phuket's range of world-class hospitals, restaurants, nightlife and shopping choices, and the reason soon becomes clear why Phuket has long been on the road to becoming Asia's leading tourist and second-home destination.

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Unearthing soil pH level woes



Gardening
By Patrick Campbell

TORRENTS of unseasonable rain in recent weeks have provided an opportunity to test the soil in my garden.

Good soil tester sets are, in my experience, not easy to find in Thailand, and this one came courtesy of an American friend who had recently been back to California and remembered my soil-testing grievances.

The set consists of four separate testing kits: One for testing the pH level and three smaller kits for testing Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potash (or N, P and K for short). The letters, incidentally, are often all you get when buying bags of artificial fertilizer. All plants have



GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY: It's best to check soil conditions before planting.

a pH preference, and an ideal pH helps them to better utilize nutrients in the surrounding soil.

As readers will know, pH lev-

els are an indication of an acid, neutral or alkaline soil. Soil conditions in Phuket are likely to veer towards alkalinity (a pH of 7 or higher), especially if the property is newly constructed and the planting area has not been redressed with some top soil.

One of the good things about this very thorough kit is that it also provides a list of more than 400 plants and their pH requirements. Top of the acid soil needy list are: azaleas, rhododendrons, hydrangeas, heathers, most lilies and orchids, mountain laurel, camellias, magnolias, cardinal flowers, hybrid tea roses, and some ferns. None of these will enjoy soil with a pH much higher than 6.0, and will react adversely if there is lime in the soil, especially if it is present as a result of cement spoil or other waste that has been buried underground by the builders.

Most of these plants are from temperate climates anyway, many originate in North America. So if you do decide to cultivate them in Phuket, they will generally do bet-



THRIVING: Soil testing kits are hard come by in Thailand, but if you can get your hands on one, it's worth it. Photos: United States Department of Agriculture

ter in containers which can be maneuvered around to change their sunlight ration, and where you can ensure that the potting mix is suitable. Moss or sphagnum peat, by the way, is highly acidic (about 3.5) so it is particularly useful stuff to have around.

Among tropical plants, insectivorous ones such as the pitcher plant and the venus-fly trap are acid loving. So too are certain trees such as mangoes, pomegranates and figs. Even the humble potato prefers a lime-free environment. And if you think about it, most tropical shade plants such as those in the Dieffenbachia genus are partial to such conditions, since they replicate the moist, humus-rich ones in the rainforest undergrowth area.

First, the pH kit was tried in border soil near the swimming pool, where the test reading was 7.5. Definitely on the alkaline side. But this was a predictable result, since here, cement-laden water from the construction of the pool's

raised walls had inevitably run into the surrounding soil. The addition of plenty of top soil had probably reduced the alkalinity somewhat, but it was, and still is, no place for any of the plants mentioned above.

Other results were more unexpected. Phuket has a reddish, clay-based subsoil that is not very supportive of plant life. Usually a few inches below the top soil, it sometimes – and especially after the excavations of building work – lies on the surface. Tested, this sub-soil gave a reading of 7.0. Neutral, but with a pH still not ideal for many shrubs. And of course, it lacks much goodness.

But the really unforeseen result came from one of those proprietary bags of compost we all use. Instead of being acidic, it had a pH of between 6.5 and 7. So this stuff won't significantly lower the alkalinity of your soil. Surprising. Next week we'll learn more about testing for nutrients.

If you have a garden that you would like to be featured on this page, please email pcampbell45@gmail.com

Tip of the week

Trimming and shearing

MANY gardeners confuse pruning with trimming or shearing. In general, pruning benefits the plant by helping it to grow more effectively, and should not obviously compromise its natural shape.

Trimming and shearing on the other hand, are used to create formal hedges and borders that significantly alter the shape of the shrubs that are used. Normally, the hedges created are rectangular in appearance, their symmetry a triumph of man over nature.

Thai gardeners are skilled at creating these geometrical patterns, using shrubs that tolerate this draconian treatment such as ixora, pigeon berry, and small-leaved, evergreen holly and privet. Topiary represents this art at its highest level.

There are two potential drawbacks. One, shearing new growth means a reduction in, or absence of flowers. Two, the process will result in thick leaf growth on the outside of the shrub and may lead to die-back within the crown.

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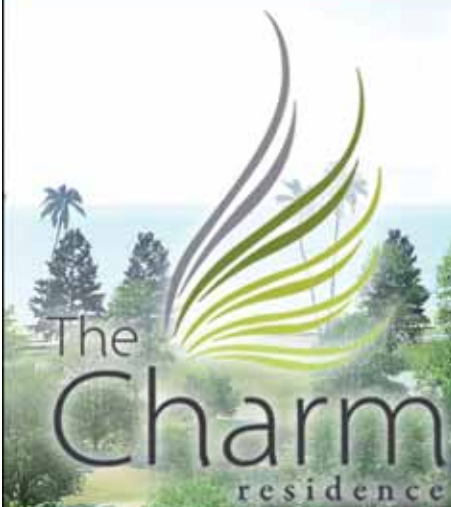
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Near the main road to Baan Don-Cherng Talay. 68sq wah. 1.1 million baht. Tel: 089-472 9118. Email: honda.1437@yahoo.co.th

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Building at Sai Yuan. 28sq wah, 3-storey. Price: 4.7 million baht. Tel: 081-606 7600 (Thai), 085-095 0599 (English).

PRIVATE SALE OF HALF ARAI

At Ao Makham. Land is located opposite Port of Phuket and next to Bel Air Cape Panwa Resort. Price 4.2 million. Tel: 081-891 5932, 089-035 6702.

1 RAI LAND PLOT

Located at Mission Heights Estate development with underground electricity and security. On Highway 4027, only 500 meters from golf course. Ready to build. Sale directly from owner. Price: 3 million baht only. Tel: 081-343 0777.

VERY LOW PRICE 8.5M



5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 1 gallery, 2 living rooms. Total: 320sqm, with garden. Teak furnishing. 3 Chanote titles. For sale or rent. Tel: 080-893 3208, 0041332510034 (Switzerland). Email: love.kangza@hotmail.com

HOUSE & FURNITURE

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

LAND AT CHERNG TALAY

390sq wah, nice flat land, quiet area, Chanote. In Pasak Soi 5 near Laguna Home. Price: 6 million baht. Tel: 089-472 9118, 086-709 2933.

PATONG 2-BED CONDO

Large, 148sqm, 2-bedroom luxury condo. Fantastic sea views. Includes fixtures and fittings. 20th floor. Tel: 076-292150, 080-373 7741. Email: showbus1@msn.com For further details, please see our website at www.patongapartmentcondo.com

GREAT LIVING HOME



Single house for sale or rent located at Phanason 3 (Thalang). Land area 63.3 sq wah, 3 bed, 2 bath, large living area, furnished, ADSL, tel, landscaped garden and 24hr security. Sale price: 2.85 million baht. For more info, call Phing. Tel: 087-278 0067. Email: sweetpinkylive.co.uk

LOVELY HOUSE



At Manik. The Valley project 2.2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Price: 2.7 million baht. Tel: 085-095 0599.

BRAND NEW CONDO



Mid Town, Royal Place Project, 2nd floor, 37sqm. Studio condo, fully furnished, reasonable price. Tel: 086-476 9612.

PENTHOUSE FOR SALE, KAMALA

3-bedroom penthouse in Kamala with private plunge pool and sauna. Price: 12 million baht. Tel: 080-699 2436. Email: kokakat@gmail.com For further details, please see our website at www.kingdomrealities.com

SURIN BEACH

Land on Soi Haad Surin 2 for sale. 2.2 rai, 5 mins walk to Surin Beach. Email: costello@hotmail.net.au

LAND AND HYDRO FARM

For sale. 17 rai (Nor Sor 3 Gor). Price: 6.8 million baht. 30 minutes from airport. Tel: 087-020 0191.

LAND AT PA KHLOK

1 rai 13.6sq wah with Chanote. Located on Tha Ruea-Pa Khlok-Muang Mai Rd. 11km from Heroines Monument, near Mission Hill. Price: 3.9 million baht. Tel: 089-4729118.

SEAVIEW LAND IN AO MAKHAM



For sale. Chanote title, easy access in and out with concrete road. Price: 12 million baht per rai. No agents! Tel: 087-270 9093.

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THE ROYAL PLACE CONDO

Near Tesco Lotus. 1 bedroom, 2 balconies, fully furnished, with pool, gym and restaurant. Price: 3.35 million baht. Contact John. Tel: 081-083 0460.

RAI NEAR LAGUNA AREA

near Layan Hill estate & 4 Villas, easy access, quiet location. Price: 2.3 million baht. Tel: 081-078 0014. Email: homeinphuket@live.com

KAMALA HOTEL

New. 17 modern rooms. Successful opening. Tel: 081-085 6715 (English). Email: surlamer05@yahoo.com

NICE AND SPACIOUS HOUSE

In Heritage project, Kathu. 2 floors, fully furnished, 3 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 1 maidroom. 234sq wah. 18 million baht. Tel: 081-8920190 (Warit), 089-6464823 (Rattana). Email: prayoon_jp@hotmail.com

PATONG TOWNHOUSE

In Baan Benjamas for sale. In a corner position, with 2 bedrooms. It's neat, light and airy. Quiet, central location with garden and undercover carpark in maintained estate. Price: 6.7 million baht. Tel: 087-900 8445.

SONGKHLA, YO ISLAND

Best location, 4 rai, 212 sq wah. Former restaurant, villa, house. View lake, town, bridge. Tel: 054-223039, 084-608 3240 (English), 089-997 6606 (English & Thai). Fax: 054-323217. Email: gemballa_baldu@yahoo.com

VILLA WITH ROOM RENTALS

Thai style villa including three one bedroom rentals and pool. Good rental return. European quality. Only 13.9 million baht. Tel: 084-838 7801 (English). Email: kjartan.haraldsen@gmail.com

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2-STORY HOUSE IN PATONG

sea view. 50 Pi Road, 49sq wah. 4-bedroom with balconies, 2 bathroom, aircon, fully furnished. Chanote. Price 17 million baht. Tel: 087-270 9093. Email: a.pueng@gmail.com

NICE HOUSE 88 SQ WAH

4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 3 aircons, sofa, cable TV. Near Jomthong Village on Khwang Rd. 6.5 million baht. Tel: 086-774 2034. Email: hataimata@hotmail.com

NICE PLOT

Urgent sale. Behind Layan Hill Estate (Manik-Bangjo Area). 1,364sqm. Original price: 7.2 million baht. Now: 6.9 million baht. Tel: 080-520 2989.

SEAVIEW VILLA FOR SALE

Seaview Villa in Rawai with IT company for sale. Tel: 082-812 2018 (English). Email: david@phuketutopia.com For further details, please see our website at www.phuket-muay-thai.com/fisherman/fishermanway

LAND AT NAI HARN

1km to beach. Total of 12 rai with Chanote title. Price: 12 million baht per rai. Contact Owner. Tel: 080-528 8578.

KAMALA BEACH HOUSE

Very nice. 2 bedrooms, 2 aircons. Price: 2.55 million baht. With garden and carpark. Call Simon. Tel: 084-852 8457.

CHEAP LAND FOR SALE

Close to Phuket International Airport. 4 rai. Chanote title. 3.8 million baht per rai. Tel: 081-868 7676. Email: phuketann@gmail.com.

SEAVIEW LAND FOR SALE

Near Supalai Resort on the east coast of Phuket slope. A 3-rai plot with road and electricity access. Price: 3.6 million baht per rai. No agents please. Tel: 080-520 2989. Email: pakaporns@yahoo.com

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8 bedrooms, 8 bathrooms, air-conditioning, swimming pool, living room, kitchen, roof garden. In Patong, 550 meters from entertainment center. For long-term rent: 50,000 baht per month. Sale: 20 million baht. Tel: 087-267 7281 (Italian), 085-243 3878 (Thai).

LAND 0.5 RAI

Thalang, east side. International school, Tonsai National Park. Airport and beach only 10 minutes away. 1.2 million baht. Tel: 086-108 2745 (English & Thai), 081-005 5701 (English & Thai). Email: hansphuket@gmail.com

3-BEDROOM HOUSE

Chuen Chuen Lagoon Soi 3 at Koh Keaw. 2 bedrooms, 3 aircons, fully furnished. Price: 3.95 million baht. Negotiable. Contact Scott. Tel: 081-866 8716.

LAGUNA LAKE VIEW

1 rai plot for 7 million baht. 1/2 rai for 4 million baht. At a prime location. Good investment. Tel: 081-187 3840.

KAMALA THE CLUB, APARTMENT

Located in the very popular "The Club". 50-sqm, 1 bedroom fully-furnished and equipped apartment with kitchen. 5 mins walk to the beach. Rental management service, maid service, laundry service, big pool area with jacuzzi, restaurant and more. WiFi, cable TV. Only 1.9 million baht! Tel: 082-807 2392. Email: info@hyrahushphuket.se For further details, please see our website at www.hyrahushphuket.se/Objektillsalu_21.html

LAND FOR SALE

1 rai with Chanote title. 5 minutes to Rawai beach in secure area. Contact owner directly. Tel: 089-472 9870. Email: d_chaibut@yahoo.com

BUYING REAL ESTATE?

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PHUKET'S ALL POOL CONDOMINIUMS
Actual photo taken September 2010

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3.04 rai, chanote title, on the way to Nai Thon. 7.5 million baht per rai. Tel: 089-871 7130 (English & Thai). Email: chattaporn.t@gmail.com

180 DEGREE OCEAN VIEWS

Big 155sqm, 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom apartment with private roof terrace, 5 minutes from Nai Ham Beach. It is fully furnished with a pool. Price: 3.7 million baht. Email for more information. Tel: 087-897 4421, 359-897 4421. Email: bisop5@yahoo.co.uk

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HAVEN LAGOON PATONG

1 bedroom, 1 bathroom, fully furnished with common pool and gym. Quick sale. Good offer. Price: 4.1 million baht. Tel: 081-878 2199. Email: sumonmarn@phuketreallife.com

HOUSE IN KAMALA

For sale. 2 houses on land. 1 ngan 89sq wah. Chanote title, near mountain, peace and safe, 10 minutes from the beach. 7.5 million baht direct from owner. Tel: 083-180 2143. Email: yaris.vios@gmail.com

PATONG APARTMENT

Condotel 9th floor. 10 minutes to beach. 28sqm. Fully furnished. Price: 1.4 million baht (fixed). Tel: 089-909 3882.

PHUKET CONDO FOR SALE

2-bedroom condo for sale. Price: 1.6 million baht. Contact Khun Prisana for more details. Tel: 076-263717, 081-676 4849 (English & Thai), 081-737 2968 (Thai). Email: n_amonoo@yahoo.com

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for sale. Please contact for more information to K. Gerrit. Tel: 081-842 3961, 087-276 7997. Email: gj.bijlsma@gmail.com Website at: www.phuketbutler.com/node/1544

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New boat parking place. Khun Ped. Tel: 086-940 3927. Website: www.sarinaboatphuket.com

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40Hp and 5Hp engines. Can carry 8 persons. Like new. Price: 230,000 baht. Tel: 089-658 5664.

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URGENT: BOAT FOR SALE



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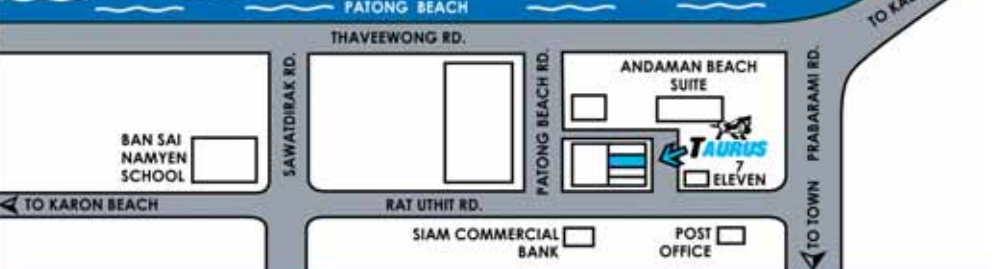
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Qualification:

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- Preferably long term collaboration
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Interested candidates are invited to submit their resume (English only) including portfolio, expected salary and conditions to following e-mail address: hr@ablearchitects.com

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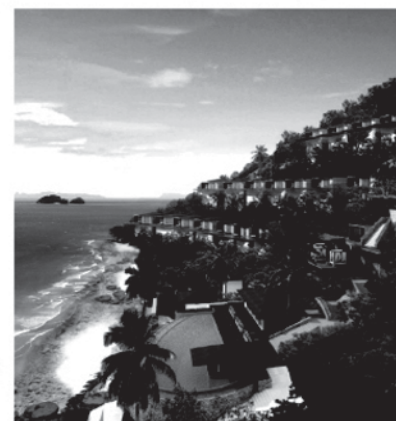
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DIVISION 1 FOOTBALL



Phuket trounce Chiang Mai

ON FORM: FC Phuket forward Kone Adama (green) takes aim as two Chiang Mai players lunge for the ball in last Sunday's match. Photo: Apinun Saithong

By Stephen Fein

FC Phuket rebounded from two tough away losses to demolish Chiang Mai FC by a score of 4 – 0 at Surakul Stadium last Sunday.

Crowd favorite Sarach Yooyen, returning to play after a suspension, got the scoring underway at seven minutes after a deft pass from Rapeepan Poonsawat.

Just before the end of the first half, Nirun Phunthong set up Nene Bi Tra Sylvestre, who found the target with a close-range header to put FC Phuket up 2-0.

Despite the comfortable lead, FC Phuket continued to press and stayed on the offensive at the start of the second half.

Chiang Mai were unable to

capitalize on the few chances they had to counterattack, and Nitirot Sokuma, who had just stepped on the field to replace Sarach, scored another from close range at 77 minutes.

Watcharapong Jun-ngam, sent in to replace Kone Adama at 75 minutes, concluded the rout by heading home the final goal three minutes before the end of full time.

To view all four goals, go to: www.siamsport.co.th/Sport_Football/110417_248.html (Note: scroll past the Thai text to the video player at the bottom of the page. It might take a few minutes to load.)

Despite being the only FC Phuket player to pick up a yellow

card, left wing Nirun Phunthong was named man-of-the-match. Two Chiang Mai players were also yellow carded in the match, which was relatively clean, but once again marred by excessive simulation of injury and stoppages on both sides.

The win moved the Southern Sea Kirin into fifth place on 14 points, but with a game in hand due to the cancellation of the Songkhla match due to flooding.

The two top teams, Big Bang Chulalongkorn University and Buriram FC, both collected three more points on home wins last Sunday.

Hard-luck RBAC FC earned their first points of the season by drawing at home to Bangkok United.

Thus far teams in the 18-team Division 1 have won 26 home matches, compared to just 19 away wins.

FC Phuket is among six teams who have yet to win on the road.

After the match FC Phuket coach Surachai Jirasirichote told reporters: "Our lads played extremely well and completely stuck to the plan. It made a big difference having Sarach and Choi Jai Won back in the starting lineup, which gives us more strength up the middle. I believe it makes a big difference."

FC Phuket's next match will be another home fixture, this time against Thai Honda next Sunday, which is also National Labor Day.

Kickoff is at 6pm. Admission: 50 baht (adults), 20 baht (children).

Team	P	Pts
Buriram	9	21
BBCU	9	21
Rajapracha	9	18
BUFC	9	15
Phuket	8	14

Last weekend's results:

Rajpracha 2 – 1 Chantaburi
Air Force Utd 2 – 0 Samut Prakarn
Chainat 5 – 1 Thai Honda
Suphan Buri 2 – 2 Bangkok FC

Buriram FC 2 – 0 Saraburi
BBCU 1 – 0 PTT Rayong
JW Rangsit 1 – 0 Songkhla
RBAC 2 – 2 Bangkok Utd

Brazilian Soccer Schools to bring World Cup footy to Phuket

BRAZILIAN Soccer Schools (BSS) has announced they will hold their football World Cup at Thanyapura Sports and Leisure Club (TSLC) at Phuket International Academy.

The tournament will kick off on April 20 from 9am to 1pm and is open for

children aged 6 to 14 years. BSS World Cup medals are up for grabs and registration is a mere 500 baht per player.

Also announced this week are details for the BSS Champions League 3x3 tournament to be held at TSLC. On May 7, the U-8s and U-10s will take to the pitch while May

8 sees the U-12s and U-14s compete for their respective titles.

Term three of BSS Phuket's schedule is now available for bookings and will avail of facilities at TLSC, Quality Schools International (QIS) and British School International (BIS).

Registration for both the BSS World Cup and Champions League 3x3 tournament can be made via telephone or email.

– Neil Quail

For more information contact Tracey on 081-5393371 or E:bss.phuket@icfids.com.

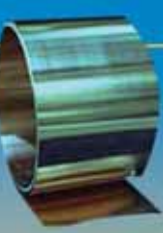
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Sidewinder storms to first Victron win

ACYC RACE SERIES

By Neil Quail

RACE two of the Victron Energy Series organized by Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC) was held on April 10 through variable wind conditions that evoked plenty of emotions among the fleet of six.

The course, set by Australian Scott Duncanson, followed a route around the island and concluded with a "sausage", or "link to link" leg, in Chalong Bay.

First off the line in the downwind start was the catamaran *Sidewinder*, which sped off to take line honors in an uncontested win against *Ni a*, her sole competitor in the Multihull class.

The battle of the day was in Racing class, and the competition between newcomer *Linda* and long-time ACYC racer *Emerald Blue*. Although *Emerald Blue* managed a better start, *Linda* soon passed her and led at the turn around Koh Bon.

Reaching the channel marker mark six minutes ahead of her rival, *Linda* stopped sailing and looked as if she was more interested in packing her wardrobe. *Emerald Blue* sailed past and gestured to move forward.

By the time *Linda* resumed the course she was trailing the ketch and crossed the line almost nine

minutes behind *Emerald Blue*.

Simone finished third in Racing class, suffering the effects of a "dirty bottom" (growths on the hull) which clearly slowed her out of the race.

The only boat in Cruising class was *Chetak*, which sailed a comfortable yet good race to complete the course.

"It was a great day with spinnakers gracing the bay under mainly sunny skies," said Leslie Hand of ACYC.

"Thanks to Race Officer Scott Duncanson for setting the course and for Kathy de Cruz for getting the fleet around.

"Cheers to the ACYC crew for their hospitality and for keeping the drinks cold and the providing

the buffet," she added.

ACYC Commodore Grenville Fordham is calling for volunteers to help organize the club's Open Day on April 24

"It's shaping up to be a fun day when we expect to introduce a lot of new people to the club – and hopefully gather in a few new members.

"We desperately need volunteers. We plan to have an ACYC booth dealing with membership inquiries/applications, RYA course information and t-shirt/polo shirt sales.

"If you could spare some time during Open Day to man this booth please email me at gren@image-asia.com – or grab me at the bar and let me know. If we get a few keen volunteers, we can organize shifts," he said.

"There will be other work to be done, especially during setup on Saturday, April 23, so if you're not up for manning the booth, but would like to get stuck into helping set up, please contact Mick at mick@octopusasia.com," he added.

Race three of the Victron Energy Series is scheduled for May 8.

For more information on all events visit W: www.acyc-phuket.com



ON COURSE: 'Linda' races into second place during the ACYC Race Series.

What's coming up at ACYC...



April 24. Ao Chalong Yacht Club Open Day & Family Fun

COME and enjoy Ao Chalong Yacht Club's fantastic waterside bar/restaurant, gardens and clubhouse from 11am to 9pm. The club always has a warm welcome for non-members and guests. We can promise a fun-filled afternoon of dinghy sailing, kayaking, a bouncy castle, Easter egg hunting, a BBQ lunch (250baht, kids: 100baht), live music, raffles, prizes and silent auctions. Go aboard a 40ft catamaran and view our exhibitions. You can browse the many things to buy or relax at the full bar with fresh coffee. Park on the main road at the entrance and catch our *songthaew* up the short road to the Yacht Club. We will have a temporary "bus stop" sign. Please do not park on the access road. This upsets our neighbors, who we love. Contact Grenville Fordham (Commodore) at T:081-7979754 E:gren@image-asia.com or visit W:acyc-phuket.com/so_cial.htm.

Patong CC clinch league title by an inch

THE Island Furniture League played out to a dramatic conclusion on April 10 when Patong CC faced arch rivals Laguna CC in the 35-over final.

Captain of Laguna, Stuart Reading, won the toss and elected to field, a decision that quickly paid dividends. Patong CC kept the run rate at a decent level, but valuable wickets fell quickly, and the responsibility of anchoring the innings fell to Anthony Van Blerk, who top scored with 58 runs before his demise at the hands of Joji's bowling.

Anil Rawat entered the fray at number seven and just failed to reach his half century before being bowled for 46 runs by Sameer Khan.

Patong CC's tail enders could not influence the score to any great degree and Joji polished off a fine performance with five

for 38. Laguna CC withdrew for lunch having bowled Patong CC out for 169 runs after only 25 overs.

After the break, Laguna CC knew it was imperative to bat out the 35 overs. Completing this task would surely give them the title, but a decisive 30 minute spell from Patong CC took three wickets and a glimmer of hope appeared.

Andrew Cole partnered his captain well until Reading was dismissed for 43 runs. Joji was next to the crease and by the time his wicket fell the score had jumped to 143 runs for five wickets.

Requiring only 26 runs for victory, Raju Seemant called for one last effort from his seemingly defeated crew. Rawat had one over remaining and used this to dispatch Sammy for nine runs.

Cole kept ticking off the runs, and at 164 for six the match as a contest was all but over and the fat lady began the warm up for her aria.

The Patong CC players needed a miracle and it was Joshi Naresh whose dislike for opera became clear by bowling a stunning triple wicket maiden.

Nine wickets down, Laguna CC needed five runs to win from the last over and Marish took the ball for the last over. Two nervy singles began the over and a refusal to run two on the fourth ball meant an opportunity to tie the game was lost.

The penultimate ball gave Cole a chance to push for one, but Tariq failed to back up his partner and was run out by a matter of inches attempting to ground his bat.

Patong CC had retained the title in one

of the most astonishing turn of events ever witnessed in Phuket cricket history.

Cole finished on 57 not out after a sterling performance batting from the second over.

Anthony Van Blerk was ecstatic with his team's performance.

"Laguna certainly played well, but they didn't lose the game; our boys won it through determination," he said.

Richard Folds of Patong CC put his team's comeback in perspective: "He who dares wins – I can't believe we won from that position."

Rawat was awarded man-of-the-match for his 46 runs and two wickets for 14 runs.

The meeting of both teams again on April 24 to challenge for the T20 title at Cherg Talay school promises yet another thrilling match.

– Neil Quail

**THE NO.1
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Young shows his mettle at Sepang Circuit

By Neil Quail

PHUKET'S Formula One (F1) hopeful Dylan Young reacted well to technical problems in his first JK Racing Asia Series event in Malaysia and is raring to get back in the drivers seat.

In his first practice session on the Sepang International Circuit in Kuala Lumpur on April 9, the 22-year-old Australian lost all power his car when his master switch turned off after running over a curb. The mechanical failure meant he could complete only two laps.

"I was pretty frustrated, but I quickly regrouped and mentally prepared for the afternoon qualifying session," Dylan said.

Despite the disastrous start, Young qualified in 14th place on the grid for both races out of 18 top caliber drivers from countries which included Malaysia, Russia,

Switzerland, Austria, India and Korea.

Dylan got off to a flier in race one, but an error later in the first lap caused him to drop several positions. Dylan drew on his experience, and with a spirited drive, finished in 15th place.

"I got off the line well, but was cautious to avoid contact. After that, I just put my head down and passed a few drivers. I'm starting to feel more confident now that we have more seat time," Dylan said.

The next day, prior to the Petronas Malaysian Formula 1 Grand Prix, F1 bosses watched Dylan in action for race two. Again he accelerated well from the start, but jockeying for positions ahead of him caused Dylan to lose ground near the end of the lap. Dylan picked his battles, and methodically worked his way through the field to finish a fine performance in 13th position and

just over half a second from a top 10 position.

Although his season did not have an ideal start, Dylan is still positive. Race data analysis shows his performances consistently improved.

"I closed the gap on the leaders each time, so we are getting better. Seat time is crucial and looking at the data after each session indicates where we are gaining. We have to find the budget to keep improving. I am confident we can crack the top 10 pretty quickly and then we will be pushing for podiums as the season goes on," Dylan said.

Sponsored by EMCT Romania, Dylan is also very proud to have adorned his car with the Phuket logo for the race, but is still searching for a major corporate backer.

For more information visit W: www.dylanyoung racing.com



IN FOCUS: Phuket race driver Dylan Young is still focused on a career in F1.



WHITE ON TRACK: Dylan Young in his white car at Sepang in Malaysia earlier this month. Photo: Dylanyoung racing.com



Awesome twosome

VOLLEYBALL ACES: Tanarattha Udomchawee and Yupa Phokongpoly

FRESH from her training on Phuket, nationally-renowned volleyball player Yupa Phokongpoly and new partner Tanarattha Udomchawee demolished the field at last week's Songkhla round of the 12th Samila-Chang Asian Beach Volleyball Tour 2011.

After some partnership rearrangements, Yupa and Tanarattha were ranked as Thailand's number three team. They proved rankings are not always right, winning the tournament outright without losing a single set. Victories over pairings from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Australia took them to the final, where they comprehensively defeated Thailand's number one team in two sets: 21-14, 21-12.

"I am absolutely thrilled. I feel like all the hard work in Phuket has paid off. The goal is getting to the Olympics in London and I couldn't have wished for a better start to the season," Yupa said.

Bob Selznick, who coaches Yupa during her training retreats to Phuket, is delighted with the recent result.

"Yupa deserves this win and it's a fantastic boost for important upcoming tournaments. We know the sands of Karon Beach provide an ideal training ground, and winning last week is a great advertisement for volleyball in Phuket," Bob said.

This week sees Yupa and the Thailand teams head to Batam, Indonesia for an Olympic qualifying tournament. From there they will head to Vietnam and China for further FIVB tour competitions.

- Neil Quail

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Time for the Rugby 10s

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY

By Neil Quail

TEAMS for the 13th Phuket International Rugby 10s have been confirmed, with Phuket's own Vagabonds intent on providing stiff opposition for would be challengers in the event.

Karon Stadium will again play home to this hugely popular event from May 27-29. And after recently hosting the Phuket International Cricket 6s, stadium ground staff are busy preparing for a massive influx of rugby fans and players.

Phuket Vagabonds rivalry with the Bangkok Bangers will certainly entice local support, while two more teams from Thailand, the Asian Japanese Dragons and the Thai Legends, will fend off opposition from Australia, South Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Last year's champions the Kriel Roosters (RSA) will be back to defend their title as will last year's Coffin Dodgers Veterans champions, Morrabbin Rams (AUS). The tournament promises three days of great rugby and fun for

all the family. The event will also raise funds for the Children's Scholarship Program, which is run in conjunction with the Asia Center Foundation (ACF).

Director of ACF, Mr Roelien Muller, said the relationship between the Phuket Vagabonds, ACF and the Rugby 10s event, was an important one for the community. "The relationship started during 2004 by invitation of Patrick Cotter who knew about our work with disadvantaged students in a slum area of Patong," Mr Muller said.

"In 2005 we began the Scholarship Program to help students affected by the tsunami and the teams that arrived for the Rugby 10s that same year brought donations that immediately benefited the program," he added.

The efforts of Mr Muller and Mr Cotter were recognized in 2008 when they both received the "Spirit of Rugby" award for their contributions to the community through rugby.

"The majority of the financial support for the Program comes



Photo: Robert Brewer

Phuket Vagabonds - 2010 Weasel Cup Winners

from teams and individuals that participate each year in the Phuket International Rugby 10s tournament. We are extremely grateful for all the support the local and International teams gave in the past and continue to give to the ACF Scholarship Program,"

Mr Muller said.

One major boon for rugby fans on the island, is the waiver of entrance fees for spectators for the entire event.

In addition to the action on the field, players and their entourages will enjoy a range of social

events, yet to be scheduled, and of course the now iconic "Tour Virgin Beauty Pageant", held on the Saturday evening of the tournament.

For more information visit [W: www.phuketrugby10s.com](http://W:www.phuketrugby10s.com)

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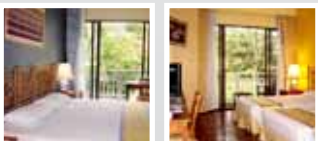
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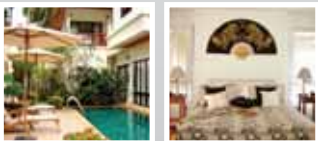
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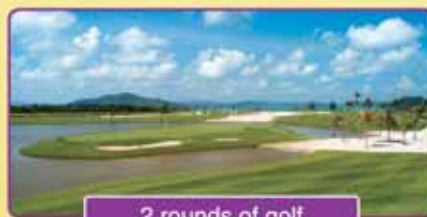
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