

Phuket Gazette

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A brown widow spider has been ruled out as a likely cause of death. Photo: Vincent Spahr

‘Spider bite victim’ likely drank himself to death: officials

THE man who died after allegedly being bitten by a spider in Phuket more likely died from complications brought on from excessive drinking, a preliminary examination has revealed.

Phuket Public Health Office Deputy Director Wiwat Seetamanotch told the *Gazette* on Tuesday that preliminary findings of an autopsy on the body of 30-year-old fruit vendor Wanchai Wonglakorn, revealed that pre-existing medical conditions were the likely primary cause of his demise.

“The full autopsy official report will be issued in about 30 days, but according to unofficial results obtained by staff at the Police General Hospital in Bangkok, Mr Wanchai’s heart was double the normal size. He also suffered from liver disease,” he said.

“I believe his drinking behavior was involved,” he added.

“He probably was bitten by a poisonous insect, but its poison should not have been able to kill him. The real cause of death would be his underlying disease,” he said.

Dr Wiwat earlier told the *Gazette* that he was made aware that the Mr Wanchai was on a drinking binge over the Chinese New Year, during which he downed a bottle of Thai whiskey each day.

— Chutharat Plerin

Patong bar protest reaches Parliament

By Chaiyot Yongcharoenchai

THE issue of lifting the 2am closing curfew on bars in Patong was raised in Parliament on Wednesday.

The news follows confirmation that Government Spokesman Prompong Nopparit spoke with Pheu Thai ministers on Tuesday about lifting the curfew by making Patong a special administrative zone.

In front of a protest of about 1,500 people on Soi Bangla last Saturday night, Mr Prompong proposed making Patong a semi-autonomous town “just like Pattaya”.

On Wednesday, a Pheu Thai Party official told the *Gazette*, “Yesterday’s meeting [Tuesday] was just an internal affair, but we will bring the topics we discussed, including the request for Patong to be a special administrative zone, before Parliament on Wednesday afternoon.”

At the time this edition went to press, the results of the parliamentary discussion had yet to be released.

During his visit to Phuket last



The 2am closing time is killing business, say Patong entertainment business owners. Photo: Chaiyot Yongcharoenchai

weekend, Mr Prompong met nightlife industry leaders, including Patong Entertainment Business Association President Weerawit Kurasombat, who handed Mr Prompong a letter of complaint.

Mr Weerawit argued that the current closing time of 2am within the “entertainment zone” – and even earlier outside the zone – was hurting Patong businesses, which

cater primarily to foreign tourists.

The protest followed a recent crackdown on venues in Patong ordered by the new Phuket Provincial Police Chief Chonasi Wattanavrangku.

The crackdown came in the wake of the vicious, near-fatal stabbing attack of Sri Panwa general manager Vorasit “Pla-wan” Issara in a Phuket Town pub at

4:30am on January 4.

Not to be left behind on what could be more late-night partying, 500 nightclub operators in Muang District, which includes Phuket Town, staged a protest at Phuket Provincial Hall on Monday.

The protest was led by Rassada Mayor in his capacity as head of the Muang Phuket Entertainment Business Operators Club.

Bankrupt tour agency leaves Russians stranded

THE bankruptcy of one of the largest tour operators in Russia has left thousands of Russian tourists stranded around the globe, including 340 in Phuket.

Soopakij Chearavanont, Russian Honorary Consul for Greater Phuket, said the sudden bankruptcy of Lanta Tour Voyage has cost Phuket resorts from tens to hundreds of thousands of baht.

Most of the Russians stranded bought tours of 10 days or longer, staying at resorts in Patong and Kata-Karon, he said.

Some of the tourists have already checked

out. The consulate’s mission now is to take care of those still in Phuket by negotiating 40% discounts on room rates. Tourist Police are also involved in the negotiations, he said.

The hotels will suffer more than the tourists, who can be reimbursed through their travel insurance when they return to Russia. Most of the Russians stranded have enough cash on hand to comfortably cope with the ordeal, he said.

Mr Soopakij said the scandal was a tough lesson for Phuket hotel owners about the Russian market, which is now the single largest source of inbound tourists to Phuket.

Russian authorities will have to take steps both in Russia and its outbound markets to better guarantee hotels and other tourism businesses are reimbursed for services provided on credit, he said.

Meanwhile, a source familiar with the Russian market in Phuket said the collapse of Lanta Tour has left over 20 “sitting guides” out of work and unpaid for work already performed.

The sitting guides were hired at a rate of 800 baht per day to ride along with the tour group in order to meet Thai labor law requirements, the source said.

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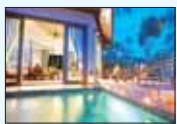
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Asia's heads of cricket attend the opening of ACG. **Page 44-45**

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'We're not elephant killers', say siblings

By Chutharat Plerin

JARUWAN Wathanapumchoo and her brother Prasit have publicly refuted all allegations that they were in any way involved in the trafficking of elephant meat to Phuket to serve as "exotic food" in selected restaurants.

According to Ms Jaruwan, the *Daily News* and *Thai Rath Today* published articles stating that their vehicle, a black Phuket-registered Suzuki Vitara, was involved in the transportation of elephant meat from Kaeng Krachan in Phetchaburi province to restaurants in Phuket.

Ms Jaruwan believes the allegations are a case of mistaken identity resulting from a trip she and her mother made in December to visit her brother Prasit, who manages the family's rubber plantations in Kaeng Krachan.

"I wasn't paying attention when I first heard the news about a black Suzuki Vitara with the same Phuket vehicle registration number as ours. I thought it was just a coincidence," she said.

"It wasn't until I read the newspapers that I realized what was happening," she added.

Ms Jaruwan has run the local accounting firm AC Consulting for



Jaruwan Wathanapumchoo and her brother Prasit denied any involvement in elephant meat trafficking. Photo: Chutharat Plerin

more than 10 years. "I have never been involved with the restaurant business and have never had anything to do with elephant meat," she stated.

"We have to put a stop to those implicating us in the murder of elephants. We are willing to be charged in order to have our names cleared," she said.

"Please don't accuse us without having any proof," she added.

Ms Jaruwan reported that after hearing the allegations she took her Suzuki Vitara voluntarily to be

examined by the investigating police officers in Kaeng Krachan.

Despite being given the all-clear by the Kangkrajana Police, she still intends to visit the Royal Thai Police Headquarters in Bangkok to proclaim her family's innocence in the matter.

"In terms of suing or legal action, I cannot say yet. I'll leave that to our lawyer," she said.

Mr Prasit also denied any wrong doing. "You know we love elephants. I would never ever harm any elephant," he said.

School kids busted on meth in derelict Phuket Town disco

SIX students in their first year of secondary school have been caught skipping school to get high on *ya bah* (methamphetamine) in an abandoned disco in the heart of Phuket Town.

First year secondary school students (Matthayom 1) are typically 13 years old.

The students, all enrolled at an unspecified Phuket City Municipality school, were caught red-handed by truancy officers.

Most were caught with small amounts of *ya bah* (methamphetamine), although one student had a small quantity of *ya ice* (crystal meth).

Appearing before Phuket

Muang District Chief Supachai Pochanukul and school administrators, the six confessed to getting high on meth in the abandoned Hollywood Pub, on Bangkok Road, around the corner from Muang Phuket School.

After testing positive in urine tests for *ya bah*, all six confessed to having skipped school that day to get high. They admitted to having done the same the day before.

Kriangkrai Boonda, deputy director of the Education Ministry's Semarak Center, said that all of the children's parents had been made aware of the situation and the details are now part of their records.

— *Siangtai Daily*

Shot and thrown overboard

A YOUNG Cambodian man who was shot in the chest and claims to have been tossed into the ocean afterwards, is being treated at Vachira Phuket Hospital.

A source visiting the hospital on January 25 told the *Gazette* that the man was a 23-year-old fisherman who had been aboard a trawler before the shooting.

However, staff at the hospital have been unable to identify the man or confirm his story due to the language barrier.

Methavee Maneesri, who works in the hospital's international division, looked into the case.

The only known facts are that he is 23 years old and has a bullet

lodged in his chest, she said.

"We think he was shot by someone he knew during a drinking session," Ms Maneesri said.

As a government hospital, we divide foreign patients into four groups: tourists, registered guest workers with insurance, retirees and illegal aliens, she explained.

We are duty-bound to treat critically-ill people in all four groups, she said, addressing the concern that the man had been denied treatment due to his lack of identification or inability to pay.

We gave him a CT scan to locate the bullet in his lungs and drained blood from his pleural cavity as he was suffering from hemothorax, she said.

The treatment was effective and he is now able to breathe and eat on his own, but he has trouble speaking and none of the staff at the hospital understand Khmer, she explained.

Ms Methawee described the case as "very normal".

"We get cases like this every day here," she said.

As for further surgery to remove the bullet still lodged in his lung, she said doctors had yet to make a decision.

Sometimes such operations are too risky, so it is safer just to let the bullet remain in place and hope the wound heals around it, said Ms Methawee.

— *Stephen Fein*



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CENTARA GRAND BEACH RESORT PHUKET

An end to plastic bags

THE provincial government campaign to Phuket of plastic bags will start in earnest on February 27, when retailers across the island will start handing out free cloth bags to shoppers over the course of one week.

The campaign aims to hand out 840,000 free cloth bags in 84 days to honor the 84th anniversary of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Phuket Vice Governor Somkiet Sangkaosuttirak said, "The second MoU has just been signed by more than 40 government departments, schools, shopping stores, clubs and associations. The campaign is ready to be launched on February 27, 2012."

Members of the public visiting government offices will be given preferential treatment for bringing cloth bags, V/Gov Somkiet said.

"The shopping malls will start the campaign by not giving out plastic bags one day a week. People coming to shop will be given free cloth and paper bags."

"Discounts and extra loyalty points will be awarded to those who keep bringing their own cloth bags to the same store," V/Gov Somkiet explained.

Armed gunman plunders bank in less than a minute

By Warisa Temram

PHUKET City Police are scouring the streets of Phuket for a man who robbed a Kasikorn Bank branch at gunpoint, making off with 694,000 baht in less than a minute.

Police were alerted to the robbery, at the Tesco Lotus Chaofa shopping complex in Wichit, at 6:15pm on January 29.

"There were only a few customers waiting in the queue. Then this man, wearing a helmet and covering his nose and mouth, came running inside the bank, straight into the manager's office," said one teller at the bank who was on duty at the time.

The man was wearing a black leather jacket and jeans, she said.

"When he saw nobody in the office, he looked at us and threatened us with a gun, telling us to put money in his bag. He said, 'Only 1,000 baht notes'," the teller said.

Looking to keep the situation calm, Boonlert Chaitaweessub, as-



The robber, caught only by the bank's security cameras, was gone in less than a minute. Photo: Warisa Temram

sistant manager at the branch, pleaded with the robber, "Please don't hurt anyone", another teller told the *Gazette*.

"The robber took about one minute to rob the bank. From the three counters open, he got about 694,000 baht in total, then

he sped off on a motorcycle with no license plate," Mr Boonlert said.

Phuket City Police Superintendent Chote Chidchai, armed with deputy superintendents and inspectors, led the investigation in person.

Police Deputy Superintendent Chaiwat Auykham told the *Gazette*, "We have checked every CCTV camera in the area and we now know where the robber was heading to."

He declined to give any further details about the investigation.

Case closed on mystery death

THE body of a Brazilian tourist found dead in a Patong guesthouse last month has been returned to his family in New Zealand.

Relatives do not think the death was suspicious, police say.

Officers at Patong Hospital confirmed to the *Gazette* that according to hospital records the body of Daniel Rocha Jordan Brasileiro, 30, was claimed by the Brazilian consular staff on January 4.

The cause of Mr Brasileiro's death is uncertain and is likely to remain a mystery following a decision by relatives to not send his body to the regional Forensics Police center in Surat Thani for autopsy, said hospital officers.

Mr Brasileiro was found dead in the morning on December 27 by a friend who was sharing a room with him in Patong.

The pair were on holiday from



Mr Brasileiro died after a night out on Soi Bangla (pictured).

New Zealand, where the late Mr Brasileiro had been living for about seven years.

"Mr Brasileiro probably died of a pre-existing condition; however, we don't know the real cause of his death. His parents did not have any suspicions about the circumstances," said Patong Police duty officer Jakkapong Luang-aon.

"His parents said he had a problem with breathing when he was

sleeping... He was quite big, and his condition was more serious when he was drunk," he added.

Capt Jakkapong stressed that the cause of death was unassociated with the bar girls that Mr Brasileiro and his friend brought home on the night of his death.

The two men talked after the women left the room and there were no signs of any issues or problems at that time, he said.

A reliable source who was at the scene after Mr Brasileiro body was discovered told the *Gazette* that a quantity of erectile dysfunction medicine was found in the room.

— A. Khamlo and S. Fein

Phuket to get its own Administrative Court

PARLIAMENT this week approved draft legislation to establish Administrative Court regional branches in Phuket, Petchaburi and Nakhon Sawan, reports Thai daily newspaper *Matichon*.

Attached to the bills was a remark that the Administrative Court and all related agencies should expedite processing of all funding and legal issues so that all three courts would operating within three years of the new legislation's publication in the *Royal Gazette*.

The Administrative Court system is made up of two tiers: The Administrative Courts of First In-

stance and the Supreme Administrative Court. Phuket falls under the Nakhon Sri Thammarat Administrative Court.

The Administrative Court has long wanted to set up a branch in Phuket. In September 2009 senior Administrative Court officials met in Phuket to announce that a Phuket Regional Administrative Court would be built in Mai Khao.

The court would serve Krabi, Phang Nga, Ranong and Phuket, making it easier for island residents to seek justice.

The court would open in 2011, it was announced at the time.



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Patong Rotarians assist homeless fire victims

By Atchaa Khamlo

THE Rotary Club of Patong Beach will assist a mother and 16-year-old daughter left homeless after a house fire on January 24. Offers of assistance have been pouring in to the *Phuket Gazette* since the news was posted online. One reader even offered to rent his house out to them for six months for a token price of one baht.

Larry Amsden of the Rotary Club of Patong Beach confirmed that the Club had set up a special account to handle donations to help Prapha Pongkunchorn, 52, and her daughter Mookrin.

"Please note that this account is dedicated only to funds raised for the lady in your story. Ten thousand baht has already been donated to this account by our Rotary Club," said Mr Amsden in an email to the *Gazette*.

People wishing to help can transfer donations to the following account: Account name: Rotary Club of Patong Beach. Bank: Siam Commercial Bank.



Mrs Prapha was reluctant to ask for help. Photo: Atchaa Khamlo

Account number: 633-2-4965-8.

"People can also donate through PayPal account treasurer@rotarypatong.org," said Mr Amsden.

"For any donations made to this account, we need an email from the donor to ensure that the donation reaches Khun Prapha, since this PayPal account is used for many purposes," he added.

After the fire destroyed the home they were living in, Mrs Prapha and her daughter slept on hard concrete in a covered storage area nearby.

"We slept here after the fire, but we had to move because the electricity and water to the storeroom was cut off," Mrs Prapha said.

"Also, it's quite dangerous. It's very dark at night and it's open to dangerous animals like cobras and centipedes, so we have to leave our belongings here and sleep at a friend's house," she said.

She was reluctant to call on friends for help and did not want to bother people by asking them for assistance, she added.

Regardless, she was elated to receive a donation of 5,000 baht from a foreigner to help them.

"We really appreciate it," she said.

Anyone wanting to make donations directly can transfer money to her bank account: Account name: Prapha Pongkunchorn. Bank: Thai Military Bank. Branch: Vachira Hospital Phuket. Account number: 4952211391.

Mrs Prapha, who does not speak English, can be contacted at 081-592 5331.

Mega wedding day



Wanted: 108 couples to say 'I do'. Photo: Suanluang Inter Wedding Company

COUPLES wanting to tie the knot in Phuket on Valentine's Day might consider taking part in a mass wedding ceremony to be staged at Laem Phromthep in Rawai this month.

The organizers are seeking 108 Thai and foreign couples to take part in the event, intended to promote Phuket as a wedding and honeymoon vacation destination.

The event is being organized by the Suanluang Inter Wedding Company, which hopes to sign up 108 couples in time for the event.

Packages start at 49,000 baht for the first nine couples, according to the event website.

The five-day packages include pick-up and send-off from Phuket Airport and include accommodation at host resorts and a variety of events including an "exotic" dinner (not elephant) at Kan Eang@Pier Restaurant in Chalong; dinner and a cultural stage show at Phuket FantaSea in Kamala; merit-making ceremony with 99 monks at Chalong Temple; and

sightseeing and souvenir shopping tours. Thai-style wedding dresses will also be provided.

The promotion is supported by the Phuket Provincial Office, Phuket Rajabhat University, Rawai Municipality and sponsor hotels including the Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket.

A recent survey released by Korean firm Hana Tour found the island was the top choice (23.9%) to wed among Korean couples, followed by the Philippines (16.4%), the US state of Hawaii (7.4%), the Indonesian island of Bali (6.9%), and destinations in Western Europe, which combined attracted on 6.3% of the vote.

No less enthusiastic about Phuket's nuptial potential are Indians, who are famed for elaborate wedding feasts.

Phuket is prepared to host several lavish weddings for Indian couples tying the knot in 2012, with top Phuket officials offering their help to smooth the way for wedding parties.

Freedom Beach death was suicide say police

AN UNIDENTIFIED man was found strangled in a hilly area near Freedom Beach in Phuket on the afternoon of January 25. Police believe he took his own life by hanging.

Police found the body in a sitting position on the ground next to a pond. The body was partially suspended by a rope wrapped around his neck and tied to a tree branch above. However, his legs were still on the ground.

The police believe the man, whose shoes had been removed and were next to him, to be 25 to 30 years old. He was bearded, had a mustache and was dressed in white shirt and white, baggy shorts. He appeared to be a for-

eigner. Unable to find any traces of a struggle or wounds to the body, police believe the man committed suicide.

Police were unable to find any documents on the body, but confirmed he was not a guest at the nearby Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort.

Because he was not seen walking from the hotel by anyone, Chalong Police believe he walked from the Freedom Beach area.

Kusuldham Rescue workers transported the body to Patong Hospital for examination.

Anyone who thinks they can help identify the man should contact the Chalong Police at 076-381247 or 191.

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Jet-ski touts defend their turf

OFFICIALS in Phuket are stepping in to stave off a potentially lethal situation brewing over three unregistered jet-skis being rented out to tourists at Bang Tao Beach, on Phuket's west coast. Phuket Gazette reports.

ADDING to the fury of the other jet-ski operators at the popular tourist beach, all of whom are members of the "Phuket Jet-ski Club", is the claim that the new jet-skis for hire are run by a foreigner using a Thai as a front man.

Ma-ann Samran, president of the Cherng Talay Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) said "We need the relevant officials to solve this problem soon. I'm afraid that if we let them deal with this alone, it may get out of hand and could even come to a fight."

"I have even heard that guns are 'being prepared' if anything bad happens."

Mr Ma-ann explained his concerns to a meeting of officials called together on January 26 to stave off potentially serious conflict over the dispute.

"The three unregistered jet-skis have been in operation for three months now, but according to the Phuket Governor's order, no more jet-skis are allowed to be operated in Phuket."

"The three jet-skis, which are believed to belong to a foreigner with a Thai local person in front, are not among the 286 registered to be operated in Phuket. It's against the agreement that has already been set," said Mr Ma-ann.

He added that there are 38 jet-skis currently in operation at Bang Tao Beach, run by 11 operators.

Phuket Marine Office Chief Phuripat Theerakulpisut explained that the three jet-skis are not among the 286 currently allowed.

The new number of 286 jet-skis now allowed to operate in Phuket accounts for the 219 previously allowed and 70 more that were being illegally operated but then fostered into the system with no penalties levied against the law-breakers.

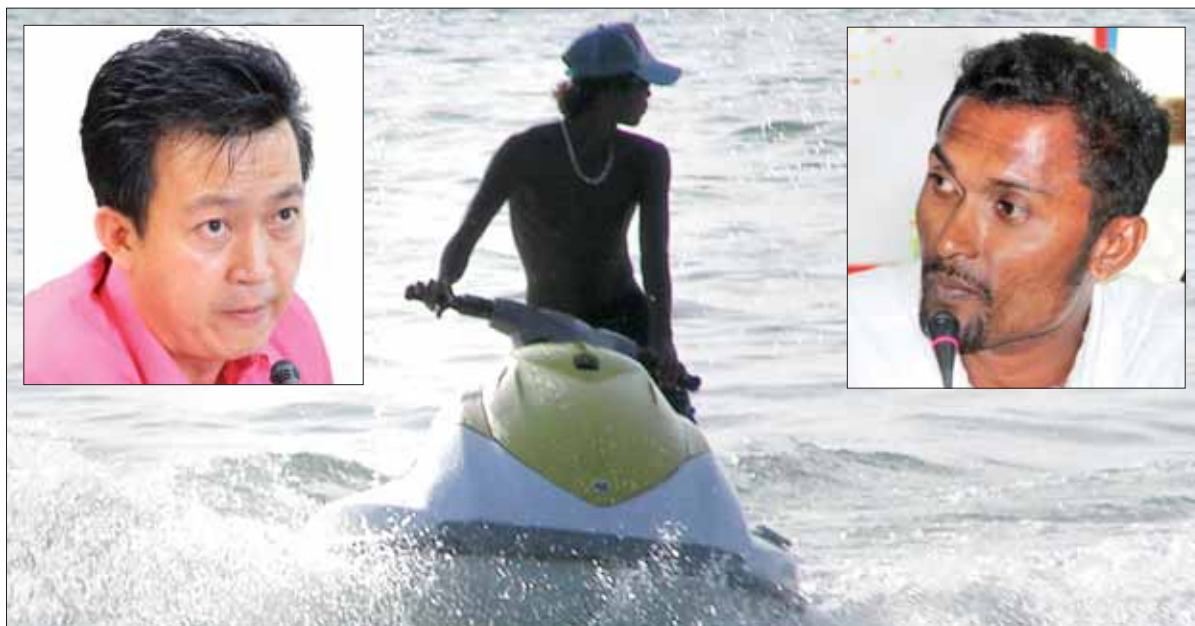
Chief Phuripat added that the Marine Office fined the operators of the three jet-skis only last year because the machines were reg-

istered in Samut Prakarn province and offered for use only in the Gulf of Thailand.

"Officers from Cherng Talay *OrBorTor* found out and informed the Marine Office," he said.

"After that incident, the operator of the three jet-skis applied to the Marine Office in Samut Prakan to be allowed to operate the three jet-skis in the Andaman. However, I sent a letter to the director-general asking that the request be denied in order to support Phuket's policy of no more new jet-skis."

"The Marine Department Director-General, Thawanrath Onsira, supported my request and



Phuket Marine Office Chief Phuripat Theerakulpisut (left) has all the facts to act, but will it be enough to prevent violence erupting. Bang Tao Jet Ski Club president Anusorn Saree (right) thinks not.

the application to allow the jet-skis to operate in Phuket was denied," he explained.

Chief Phuripat added that the proposal to allow rental jet-skis to be registered under a special category in Phuket – so they can be included in a special insurance scheme – was also now with the Director-General for his overall consideration.

He also said that operators have asked the Marine Office to be able to rent jet-skis at more locations in Phuket, including a new rental operation at Koh Maphrao and even more jet-skis in Patong.

But at the meeting at Provincial Hall on January 26, Anusorn Salae, president of the Bang Tao Jet-ski Club, asked that no more jet-skis be allowed to operate anywhere in Phuket.

"It will only lead to trouble in the future," he said.

"If jet-skis were banned in Phuket at the beginning, there would be none in Phuket now. But

we already have them, so we should have them controlled," said Mr Anusorn.

Chief Phuripat said he would consider Mr Anusorn's request seriously before acting.

At the end of the meeting, Phuket Provincial Chief Administrative Officer Chaiwat Taephee

asked officials in all the relevant agencies to arrange meetings with involved parties (including the Cherng Talay Police, Tah Chat Chai Police and the Phuket Marine officers) to further discuss how to manage the recurring problems in controlling the ever-increasing number of jet-skis.



Ma-ann Samran worries about the potential for armed conflict.



Wine and Dine Boathouse Wine & Grill



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Tuesday 14th February 2012

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Unidentified body found at Coral Island



The body was transported to Vachira Phuket Hospital.

CHALONG Police are trying to identify the badly decomposed body of a man discovered at a popular dive site on January 27.

The crew of a fishing boat discovered the body floating face down about 20 meters offshore from Koh Hei, also known as "Coral Island", and reported it to authorities at about 4:30pm.

The body, recovered by workers from the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization's Tourist Rescue Center, was brought ashore at Chalong Pier, Capt Atthawat Suwanarat said.

From there, Phuket Ruamjai Kupai Foundation workers transported the body to the morgue at Vachira Phuket Hospital for further examination and storage until it can be claimed by relatives.

Identification could be difficult as the face was too badly decomposed to determine the man's race.

Police estimated the time of death at five to seven days before the body's discovery.

They suspect the body may be that of a foreign tourist because it was more than 170 centimeters in height and had a light complexion.

The discovery is the latest in a spate of unidentified bodies recovered by Phuket authorities this high season.

Alarm raised over pooch snatch

EXPAT Frank Lamine was reunited with his lost dog "Micky" after raising the alarm on potential dog snatchers operating at Nai Harn beach, but his fears for other owners and pets remain.

"During my efforts to get some information from locals at the beach, I learned that I am not the only one who lost a pet at that place," said Mr Lamine.

Mr Lamine explained that his encounter with the local dog owner who paid 3,000 baht to get his dog back alerted him to the prospect of a dog-snatching gang operating in the area, stealing dogs and then collecting any rewards offered for their return.

In a response to the situation John Dalley of animal-welfare charity Soi Dogs posted on Facebook, "Certainly there is a history of people taking dogs and then returning them for rewards, also they can sell pedigree dogs."

"We know gangs are now operating over a wide area and 'rumor' has it they are also operating here – though we have no concrete evidence of this yet," said Mr Dalley.



Concerns have been raised over the number of dogs, such as Micky (inset), that have gone missing at Nai Harn.

After checking with police, Mr Lamine learned that Rawai Municipality has CCTV cameras posted at the beach.

The CCTV footage recorded Micky being carried off by a Thai woman at 4:51pm, he said.

In his search for Micky, Mr Lamine met a woman who also lost her dog at the beach. Her dog "Klara" was last seen at Nai Harn on January 1.

"She saw Micky at a restaurant

about two kilometers from the beach, at about 11:30pm on January 27. She recognized him from photos I sent her," he said.

The lady at the restaurant said she "got the dog from somebody", said Mr Lamine.

"I am not sure what to believe, but I am happy to have Micky back. Someone has taken good care of her. It is obvious she was taken to a pet clinic – but she has been totally shaved. There's not a

hair left on her," he said.

Mr Lamine counts himself lucky to get Micky back. "The more I talked to people at the beach the more I learned that many dogs have disappeared from there."

"Now I know how these people feel. Every time you mention her dog [Klara], she starts crying," he said.

"Her dog has been missing since January 1, and she's still looking for her," he added.

Phuket drug dogs 'on indefinite leave'

TWO dogs that underwent training to sniff out drugs on Phuket are currently "on leave" from active duty as their owner tries to find new handlers for them.

Muang District Chief Supachai Pochanakul, the owner of a beagle named Bebe and a pitbull named Boo Boo, told the *Phuket Gazette* this afternoon that the two dogs are "healthy and happy" at their home in the Phuket International Dog School on Koh Sireh.

The duo underwent intensive training at the school to learn how to sniff out drugs, especially ya



Boo Boo on the hunt.

bah (methamphetamines) and ya ice (crystal meth).

The training appeared to be a major success. Just five minutes



Bebe was ready to work this year.

into her first-ever assignment in June last year, little Bebe sniffed out 44 ya bah pills and 500 milligrams of ya ice from beneath the seat

cushions of a car at Suan Luang Park. Two men were arrested.

To find out why a string of similar arrests hadn't followed, the *Gazette*, contacted Mr Supachai. The dogs were currently on leave because their former handlers were no longer available to serve alongside them, he said.

"We want to continue the project, but it is on hold until we find a new handler. We need to find the right person, as they have to develop a very close bond with the dogs," he said.

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'Possessed' girl leads cops to naught

POLICE spent hours dredging a pond in Songkhla province earlier this month after a 17-year-old girl told them she was possessed by the spirit of a young boy whose murdered body was dumped there.

Officers eventually abandoned the search after failing to find any remains – except for the skeleton of a dead dog.

Mrs Ploi said her daughter Fa (names have been changed) came home from school on January 13 and began speaking in a voice that was not her own.

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Fa claimed to be the spirit of a dead schoolboy called "Boy" who had been murdered. His body had been dumped in a pond behind Wat Khaotoknam and the corpse was hidden under three plastic tanks on the bed of the pond, Fa claimed.

Fa said Boy was killed after fighting with his stepmother and that his father had covered up the crime. The voice even gave the address where Boy lived as well as the names of his parents.

Fa repeatedly asked that the police be informed and the body could be recovered, eventually Mrs Ploi agreed to take her to the police.

The family arrived at Rattaphum Police Station on January 15, quickly persuading them to launch a search for Boy's body.

Officers went to the pond together with a fire truck and local volunteers. A crowd of at least 100 villagers gathered to watch.

After pumping water out of the pond and dredging the sandy bottom, officers found three plastic water tanks, just as Fa had said.

They kept digging in the sand for another three hours, eventually finding some bones. Excitement was tempered, however, when a dog's skull was found accompanying the skeleton and the search was later called off.

Police went to the house described by Fa, finding that the occupants were not as the girl described and there had never been a boy called "Boy" living there.

At the time Thai-language reports of the affair appeared on January 16, Fa was apparently still speaking in a strange voice and claiming to be Boy's spirit.

Rattaphum Police Station Superintendent Phitak Phuttawiro said he had advised Fa's family to take her to the hospital for treatment.

Nitirat controversy grows

THAMMASAT University is at the center of a political storm over the Nitirat group of law academics and their controversial proposals to amend the Constitution and Article 112 of the Criminal Code, which bans any criticism of the Monarchy.

Nitirat, a group of seven Thammasat law professors, advocate reform of the current Constitution in order to reduce the likelihood of future military coups in Thailand.

They recently produced a 15-point guideline on amendments to the 2007 Constitution, which was adopted while Thailand was ruled by the military junta that overthrew Thaksin Shinawatra's administration in September 2006.

But it is Nitirat's proposal to amend Article 112 – the *lese majeste* law – and Chapter 2 of the Constitution that are attracting most criticism.

Prompting most consternation is the group's suggestion that the

AROUND THE nation

head of state – HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej – should swear an oath in front of Parliament before taking his post.

Last week, a group of Thammasat law graduates from the class of 1958, including former prime minister and Democrat Party leader Chuan Leekpai, called for the firing of the Nitirat lecturers.

The alumni issued a statement calling for an end to Nitirat's use of the university as a venue for their activities, and alleged that the group had defamed the royal institution.

Since the lecturers were government officials, but did not support Thai democracy with the



Book cover calling for reform of lese majeste laws. Photo: The Nation

monarchy as its head of state, they should be fired, they argued.

Army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha said the police should look into the matter and determine whether or not Nitirat had broken the law.

Thammasat University subsequently appeared to bow to pressure, banning Nitirat's activities on campus grounds.

In a statement written on his Facebook page, Thammasat rec-

tor Somkid Lertpaithoon explained the move.

"The University is a state agency. If we allow [them to continue their campaign], people may believe that Thammasat agrees with or disagrees with the campaign," he wrote.

"[The campaign] could also cause severe conflicts inside the university campus [and] we may not be able to ensure the safety of staff and property," he added.

Thammasat University has long been a center for political dissent in Thailand, most notably in 1976 when police killed scores of students protesting military rule. The protesters were accused of being disloyal to the monarchy and conducting a display offensive to its members.

The university was founded in 1934 by Pridi Banomyong, a former prime minister of Thailand, WWII resistance hero and member of the group of young radicals who overthrew the absolute monarchy in 1932.

Four dead in Southern violence

TROOPS killed four suspected insurgents in Pattani last week, though local people claimed the killings were unlawful and the men had no connection to the ongoing violence in the Deep South.

Among the dead were an old man and a teenager. The victims were returning from a funeral in a pick-up truck in Pattani on Sunday when the alleged gunfight broke out, police said.

"Army rangers saw a pick-up truck and asked it to stop. They heard a gunshot and assumed they were being fired on, so they pounded the truck with gunfire, killing four men and injuring five others," said a police report on the incident, as reported by AFP.

The report added that two guns were found in the truck, though the driver claimed the weapons did not belong to anyone in the vehicle.

Akara Thiproj, the regional army spokesman, told Reuters that a pair of unknown gunmen had appeared from behind the truck and opened fire on troops before fleeing on a motorbike.

Relatives of the dead were not convinced. A group of them gathered on Monday to protest against the army's conduct. The shootings were unlawful and the army was covering them up, they claimed.

More than 5,000 people have been killed in a long-running insurgency in the Southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat since 2004.

Officials: Chang in sashimi recipes

THAILAND has developed a taste for a shocking new delicacy, wild-life officials say: raw elephant meat.

Damrong Phidet, director-general of Thailand's wild-life agency, said his officers found two dead elephants in Kaeng Krachan National Park close to the border with Burma last month.

"The poachers took away the elephants' sex organs and trunks... for human consumption," Mr Damrong told AP.

Some of the meat was to be

eaten raw, like "elephant sashimi", he said.

Restaurants in Phuket are believed to among the destinations for the meat. The controversial delicacy is also finding its way to resorts in Surat Thani and Hua Hin, an official said.

Police in Phuket are investigating the allegations, though Governor Tri Augkaradacha has denied that "elephant sashimi" is on the menu in any restaurants on the island. [See news page 1 and opinion page 9]



Wild elephants Photo: The Nation

The poaching of wild elephants, as well as trafficking elephant body parts, is illegal in Thailand. While some experts claim the body-parts-for-food trade is an urban myth, all agree that elephant tusks – ivory – remains highly sought after.

Soraida Salwala, the founder of Friends of the Asian Elephant foundation, told AP that a fully developed pair of elephant tusks could be sold for 1 million to 2

million baht, while an elephant's penis could fetch more than 30,000 baht.

In addition to elephant tusks and sexual organs Edwin Wiek, the secretary-general of the Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand notes that baby elephants can

be sold for 800,00 to 900,000 baht.

Thailand is believed to have fewer than 3,000 elephants left in the wild.

'The poachers took away the elephants' sex organs and trunks... for human consumption'

— Damrong Phidet

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Drug war: no more 'pet projects'

IT IS sad that Phuket's two specially-trained drug dogs have been suspended from "active duty" for lack of dedicated handlers, especially given the time invested in their training and the phenomenal results displayed by the beagle Bebe on her first day on the job last July (See page 6).

Despite a steady stream of highly-publicized drug arrests and seizures over the past year, there can be little doubt our island is still awash in illegal narcotics, especially *ya bah* (methamphetamine) and its crystallized version *ya ice* (crystal methamphetamine).

Crime statistics released by Provincial Police show that drug-related arrests accounted for 3,385 crime cases recorded in Phuket in fiscal 2011, more than half (54.1%) of all crime cases in the province over the period. This was a 6.2% increase year-on-year in the number of drug cases, which was almost five times the number of cases in the second most popular crime category: gambling. With figures like these, it comes as little surprise that drug convicts make up about 75% of inmates at Phuket Prison.

The ease with which these drugs are obtained was highlighted yet again recently, when six Matthayom 1 students were found to have skipped school and broken into a derelict disco, where they smoked meth on two consecutive days. How 13-year-olds can come up with the money to pay for these expensive drugs is anyone's guess, but the fact that it happened puts the role – or lack thereof – of parents at the forefront.

Despite such worrying trends, suppression efforts by both police and provincial drug units have largely remained static in approach. Where "innovation" has been called into play in terms of improving detection ability, the results have bordered on the comical. As anyone who follows the local news is aware, mountains of *ya bah* pills have been smuggled onto the island over the years aboard tour buses running the Bangkok-Phuket route.

Yet, rather than train up drug-sniffing dogs to check the baggage holds of buses and suspicious vehicles crossing onto the island at Tah Chat Chai, the powers-that-were a few years back instead opted to invest millions to buy Alpha 6 "molecular resonance" detectors, even after the "technology" they were based upon had already been completely discredited abroad.

Thus was it an exciting breakthrough when Muang District Chief Supachai Pochanakul's beagle Bebe sniffed out stashes of both drugs just five minutes into her first assignment last July. Unfortunately, she and her handler have since parted ways and what looked to be a very promising career is now on hold, indefinitely. It is time the police themselves got into the drug dog-training business, rather than leaving it as a "pet project" of one well-intended civil servant.



Quick-conclusion police work

Re: Gazette online, Unidentified foreigner found hanged in Phuket, January 26

I saw photographs of the man mentioned in this article in a Thai-language newspaper, and there were drag marks in the mud and what looked to be abrasions several places on his body.

Perhaps we could easily write the event off as a suicide or erotic asphyxiation, besides the fact that the body was in a sitting position (hardly the height one hangs oneself from) and his all his clothing were on.

Too often police seem to quickly write off questionable situations as suicides. I don't know if this is because: the media is constantly pressing them for answers they simply don't have and they don't want to lose face by saying they don't know; if it comes from a lack of effort from the "men in brown"; or if there are outside powers playing their hands out.

No matter the reason, suicides as questionable as this one and the one concerning the security guard from Freedom Beach deserve proper investigations with a more comprehensive account published in any paper following the story.

Henry Brunson
Thalang

Scammer spotted

Re: Phuket Gazette, Protect yourself from ATM skimming, January 28

I read the ATM skimming article by Woody Leonhard with interest. I was on my guard after previously being accosted at the ATM of the main branch of Bangkok Bank in Rat-u-Thit Road in Patong last week. The first time, a tall man in his thirties, wearing a bottle-green sweatshirt, had quite aggressively attempted to con me into telling him my PIN

Letters to the Editor

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

number. A couple of days later I received further offers of help after some technical hitch at the same machine. After my helper had punched some keys on the keyboard I was surprised to see my PIN number up on the screen for all those waiting to see. I put my hand over the number and managed to get it off the screen. I went into the bank and told a man in a glass cubicle what had happened, but he did not show much interest.

Hugh Green
Patong

Red Tuk-tuks vs black plated taxis

Re: Phuket Gazette, Bangkok squad to tackle illegal taxis, January 28

I have on occasion accepted the terms and conditions of these so called 'black taxis' and got a lift home. Yes, of course it has cost a bit more than normal, but that's generally because it's well past three in the morning.

So far I've never had any trouble once the negotiations over the price have been finalized. I'm of the opinion that you're safer travelling in a closed car with seat belts than you are in an open-sided tuk-tuk with only a large sound system to hang on to.

Are there unscrupulous black taxi drivers out there? I'll bet there are, but I'd also bet they're outnumbered by some of the not so honest tuk-tuk drivers.

I imagine that most of these 'black taxi' drivers do so to earn

a living without having to pay off the Patong mafia. I'm not saying that they are heroes, but if you look at the numbers, how many more times do tuk-tuks make the headlines than black taxis?

Dave the rave
Kathu

Warmth through generosity

Re: Gazette online, House fire leaves Phuket poor homeless, January 25

It always humbles me how little some people have to call their own. I remember when an uncle of my wife died, his family put everything he owned in a super-market bag to throw away.

Wonderful to hear here of the offers to help these people, particularly for the young girl's school fees. I guarantee that a thousand baht given will give you a much warmer feeling inside than a night in the bar. Make sure it happens.

Spot
Gazette forum

Body found, again

Re: Gazette online, Phuket Police recover human body off Coral Island, January 28

A body matching this description was seen floating off Phi Phi 3 days ago. I called the Phuket marine police who said, "Not our area, call Krabi". I called Krabi marine police at 2.30pm. They said they would come. An hour later I called again they said they were on the way. I called every half hour, but they did not come. By sunset the people on the yacht lost sight of the body. Thankfully it was found again.

Disgusted,
Gazette Forum

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Editor: Pana Janviroj

News Manager: Chris Husted

News Editor: Stephen Fein

Features Editor: Neil Quail

Managing Director: Oranee Hildebrand

General Manager: Natthira Susangrat

Production Manager: Suchart Changate

Publisher: The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd

Contact us:

Editorial: news@phuketgazette.net

Advertising Sales: adsales@phuketgazette.net

Classified Advertising: classads@phuketgazette.net

Website services: anna@phuketgazette.net

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General: info@phuketgazette.net

Telephone: 076 273555 (10 lines) Fax 076 615240

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Kids can save Rawai

FIRST PERSON

EDUCATING children so they understand and love the environment is very important. It's not enough for them to be studying the environment and natural resource protection in the classroom, because they don't see the real problems in the world around them.

Rawai has changed a lot during my lifetime. It has become more like a city. There is noise pollution, air pollution and even pollution from the migrant worker camps in Rawai, which aren't properly cleaned.

The environment is being sacrificed by capitalists, so they can have what they want. I am very worried about Rawai's future. The forest is gone. I don't want to see anymore negative changes in Rawai. I want to bring it back to how it was. I don't want to see Rawai end up like Patong, which is totally destroyed. I know it's not possible to prevent change, but at least we can try to slow down the negative changes happening in Rawai.

All the members of our group, the Rawai Environment and Natural Resource Protection Volunteers, are constantly working to save the environment. We often hold activities to impress upon children and adults their responsibilities to nature.

Last year, we had outdoor educational activities for students, 11 to 13 years old, from *OrBorJor* Muang Phuket and Wat Sawangarom School. We taught them about the environment and natural resource protection.

We choose children at that age because they are old enough to



Sommhai Naoprai is President of the 50-strong Rawai Environment and Natural Resource Protection Volunteers network and has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Here he talks about his worries for Rawai and the importance of educating the children of Phuket about the need to protect the environment



Children gather on the beach after activities put on by Rawai Environment and Natural Resource Protection Volunteers.

clearly present their thoughts and views, but their minds are still pure.

We divided them into groups and they drew pictures of what was happening to Phuket's nature, what they would like Phuket to look like in the future and what they think about waste in Phuket.

What was really impressive was that they drew maps showing Phuket overflowing with waste and the ocean covered with waste also.

That was what they thought would happen if they didn't take responsibility for Phuket's environment.

This year we will hold a similar activity in May, after the children return from summer break.

Educating children is better than educating adults, because when you teach children they pay attention and don't act like they already know the material. Also children get very excited and will go tell everyone what they learned.

I would really like the camp to be a two-day and one-night event, so we could have more time to educate the children. If the children were to stay overnight, with their parents visiting and taking part in activities. Everyone should be concerned and take responsibility for the environment.

At the moment we don't have enough personnel to take care of the children overnight, so this year it will only be a one-day event.

Jumbo problems for Thailand and Phuket

Island View

By Ken Diamond

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



Are tourists to blame for poaching?
Photo: Benjamin Vander Steen

RECENTLY I read an interesting opinion piece in *The Nation* newspaper entitled "Thai elephants are being killed for tourist dollars" written by Edwin Wiek, the secretary-general of the Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand.

The headline seems to imply that tourists were to blame for the elephants' deaths, so I read on.

In a nut shell the article points out that in recent weeks at least six wild elephants have been found dead in national parks after having been killed to provide "bush-meat" for foreign tourists. One location cited as a destination for this meat was Phuket, although no evidence for this has been found. Unfortunately the global media have now taken this story and spread it. Google "eating elephants" and Phuket is now linked to over 200 stories about this. There is no doubt that poachers are now hunting wild elephants, but Mr Wiek suggests the elephants were killed for another reason linked to tourism – to steal baby elephants, which he claims are worth up to 900,000 baht a piece.

Over the years I have lived on Phuket, I have seen more and more of these young animals chained up around the island for the amusement of tourists. Though I have always found the sight distressing, I had never thought about how these animals came to be on Phuket and had presumed they were born here, as I'm sure some were. But given the monetary value quoted, I can see poaching is another likely reason, and on re-reading the headline it now makes sense.

Mr Wiek's also points out a loophole in the law whereby there

is a nine year period to register the birth of a baby elephant (ample time to fabricate a parentage) and he suggests that DNA tests be carried out on all young elephants to determine their origins.

It now appears that his call for a national register of all Thai elephants (including DNA testing) is being considered. It's a start. However it is the tourists themselves who need to consider whether their patronage of such spectacles is the real reason more of these elephants are being exploited on the island. If tourists themselves refused to participate in propagating this trade in baby elephants then maybe that would mean the poaching would stop and it is courageous articles like Mr Wiek's that get the ball rolling.

Issues & Answers...

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

Duty of care

After reading the stories about the MMA brawler who went on the run, eventually contacted the US Embassy before turning himself in, I realized I didn't know what the embassy's role in these situations is. So, what can the embassy do and what can't it do in this sort of situation?

Trevor Green
Rawai

US Embassy Spokeswoman Kristin Kneedler replies:

Any time a US citizen is the victim of crime or has been accused of a crime, the US Embassy provides detailed information on the host country legal system and retaining counsel, and communicates with the individual's family, if the individual wishes us to do so. While in Thailand, US citizens are subject to Thai law and must work within the Thai justice system to resolve any legal issues.

The US Embassy endeavors to ensure that US citizens in Thai-

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MMA Junie Browning Photo: Facebook

land are afforded the same rights under Thai law as the citizens of any other country.

Sign causes watertroubles

About three weeks ago I picked up a new sign for a friend's business and left it leaning against my house-gate for him to pick up. The same day, the water-meter man came to check my meter. My water is not connected to my house because I have a well, so I only pay the standard 85 baht for the meter. However, this time I received a bill for 351 baht.

When I called the Phuket Waterworks Authority (PWA) I was told that a sign had been seen outside my house, so I was billed 300 baht for my meter, as if it were a business meter.

I went to the PWA office and told them I didn't have a business at my home and I didn't have a sign outside my house.

They insisted I pay the 300 baht or they would disconnect my meter. After speaking with three different people I gave up and paid the 300 baht.

Why did I have to pay if the



Water meter in Thailand.

sign was not mine? What is the justification for charging 300 baht for a meter that is not connected? If I did decide to run a business from my home, what difference does it make to my meter?

Swerv, Thalang

Supawadee Sangsanoi, of the Phuket Provincial Waterworks Authority Water Fee Collection Department, replies:

If you are business, you have to pay 353.10 baht for the water meter in case you use the maximum allowed usage of 17,000 liters of water, even if you don't use any water from us at all.

That fee insures you the right to use water from us, in case your pump stops working or you have other issues and still need water.

If you come to see us in person we will send an officer out to inspect your house to make sure that it isn't a business. Because we saw the business sign at your house we charged you accordingly.

I suggest that if you have your own pump and do not intend to use water from us that you come in and see us. You can leave your meter with us and we will take care of it for an annual fee of 428 baht. This way you will not be bothered with paying a the minimum standard fee every month.

DaVinci charts steps forward for 2012 Bay Regatta

IT'S not unusual when marinas and yacht brokers cross over to the restaurant business, but co-sponsor of the Bay Regatta 2012, Phuket's iconic Italian restaurant DaVinci – scored a first when they crossed in the opposite direction.

Sponsoring yachting and yacht racing is one thing – and DaVinci has shown other island businesses how that should be done – but what's an Italian restaurant doing dipping its toes in the yacht charter market?

According to DaVinci partner, David Roberts, also CEO of Aedas, the world's largest architectural outfit, the move should come as no surprise.

"The restaurant and boats are individual business units, but as part of the same brand they're complementary – as will be our future real estate and retail businesses. The key underlying thread is our 'lifestyle concept', which is not limited to any one type of business," he explained.

A clever master plan or just a bit

of a hobby? Neither really.

"I don't subscribe to any hobbies; DaVinci is a viable ongoing business, but it all began quite casually over a bottle of fine wine with my business partner Mark Norris," said Roberts.

"As an architect, I'm in the business of creating buildings and places that are ever more a reflection of lifestyle aspirations. DaVinci is my interpretation of what a lifestyle brand can be in Asia and, after the purchase of my first boat in 2010, the charter business seemed a natural progression for the DaVinci lifestyle concept, at the same time as promoting the brand through yacht racing," he said.

From that first boat purchase in 2010, the fledgling DaVinci Yacht Charters already operates four vessels: an *Andaman Cabriolet* sailing catamaran, a *Sunseeker Manhattan* 50 flybridge power yacht, a classic sailing yacht, (*Willow II* – based on a 200 year old design) and

the soon-to-arrive *DaVinci 007* 'Hovpod' hovercraft.

On whether it makes sense for a restaurant business to take a crack at the yacht charter market, Roberts said, "DaVinci offers a different approach, whereby boating alone is only part of the experience – and not necessarily the major part. Our bespoke packages meet the expectations and needs of our customers, for whom entertaining, adventure or simple relaxation may be their main motivations."

But where does sponsorship fit into all this? Mr Roberts said, "As with all my businesses, community engagement is a key pillar of being relevant to the communities in which we live and do business. This keeps us relevant and tuned in with people and places, as well as informing us on business opportunities, while enhancing the reputation of our brand. Yachting is great way to get rid of the stress



NOSTALGIC LIFESTYLES: The *Willow II* classic sailing yacht is based on a 200-year-old design and is one of four of DaVinci's charter yachts.

and pressures of business. I've always enjoyed sailing and participated in a few King's Cup Regattas, so yachting was a logical choice as a sponsorship vehicle."

Sponsorship has certainly helped establish brand recognition for DaVinci the restaurant; high profile Phuket Raceweek sponsorship for three consecutive years, the donation of a floating pontoon to Ao Chalong Yacht Club and the purchase of a training Optimist dinghy for young Thai sailors in Ao Yon have all contributed to the brand's exposure.

"Taking on the role as a major

sponsor of Phuket's own Bay Regatta was the logical next step as we move forwards with our yacht charter business. Not only does it reinforce that we're serious about DaVinci's yachting arm, but as the region's premiere cruising lifestyle regatta, there's a perfect fit," said Roberts.

But what about Roberts' own time on the water? "I must confess that, although we're serious about the business side, I have priority on taking the boats out and thoroughly enjoy the time we spend on them with family and friends," he said.

–Phuket Gazette

PIMEX boosts marine-triangle tourism

AT THE forefront of Asia's growing marine leisure industry, Phuket island is one of the top five cruising destinations in the world, and lies in the heart of the emerging 'Andaman Marine Triangle'.

Consisting of Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi provinces, the Andaman Marine Triangle is home to some of the most stunning sailing grounds in the world.

Indeed, the natural attractions and associated marine leisure industry, is the single largest asset for the area's tourism industry.

Highlighting the industry's rich offerings is Asia's largest in-water boat show, the Phuket International Boat Show (PIMEX) – this year's event be held from March 29 to April

1 at the award-winning Royal Phuket Marina on the island's east coast.

PIMEX plays an integral role in creating and stimulating demand for marine products and services in Asia. Over 5,500 visitors attended the 2011 show to view the US\$ 100 million of boats on display, as well as a magnitude of other marine and lifestyle offerings.

PIMEX connects buyers with sellers in the marine and luxury lifestyle space, and with the largest in-water display in the region, allows potential buyers to view boats first hand. International buyers often choose to leave their boats in Phuket's marinas, so they can enjoy the facilities and surrounding cruising grounds at their leisure.

The trend of marina growth can be seen expanding from Phuket to other parts in the Andaman Marine Triangle. Namely, there are two new marinas in Krabi including the Krabi Boat Lagoon and Krabi River View, in addition to one more, the Port Takola Marina in the pipeline, adding almost 400 berths to the triangle, upon completion.

Over one billion baht of marina infrastructure development spending is expected in the Andaman Marine Triangle over the next five years.

As marinas in the Asian region are filling up, PIMEX is positioned as a key marketing and promotional tool for Phuket and beyond, helping to position the Andaman Marine Triangle as the marine leisure playground of Asia.

Both international and domestic markets are proving significant.

"We welcomed over 15 visitor nationalities last year, and of particular interest was the growing numbers of Russians and Chinese. A number of exhibitors noted a growing trend of Thais showing interest in buying into the marine leisure lifestyle," commented Show Director, Andy Dowden.

"We are seeing more interest in exhibitors from China, Australia and New Zealand in particular this year. PIMEX has become the boat show in Asia to showcase boats, marine and lifestyle products to a large international audience," added Dowden.



IN DEMAND: The growth of the marine sector calls for more boat berths.

Targeting high net worth individuals and marine leisure enthusiasts, top international boat brands will be on display as well as leading marine brands and lifestyle products including luxury real estate and marina developments.

Phuket is the gateway to the Andaman Marine Triangle with more than 200 direct international flights weekly from major tourist markets in Asia and Europe. The three provinces share the same coastline and marine environment. Together they have become the marine playground for the rich and famous, wealthy, celebrities, and tourists from around the world.

With its long established and well developed infrastructure, Phuket holds a pivotal position in the Andaman Marine Triangle, and is home to four world-class marinas with a capacity of over 750 boats.

As reported by *Channel News Asia*: "The amount of private wealth in Asia is estimated to triple to US\$16 trillion by 2015, according to Swiss private bank Julius Baer's annual wealth report done jointly with CLSA."

It is this growth in regional wealth, combined with the desire of boat owners wanting to relocate from traditional cruising grounds, that continues to fuel the growth of the marine leisure industry in the region.

In line with this growth, large-scale marine infrastructure in Phuket continues to develop. Further investment by established Phuket marinas is expected to be over 500 million baht, and a likely expansion of berth capacity by more than 20% over the next five years.

For more information, visit www.phuketboatshow.com.

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Cool solutions to cut costs

By Steven Layne

DESPITE rising energy prices and the scorching heat outside, home and business owners in Phuket can reduce their electric and utilities overheads by taking advantage of the latest energy saving innovations.

Up until recently, Phuket's green energy market has been supplied with only a limited offering of environmentally friendly technologies and energy saving solutions.

Notably, a handful of key players have stepped up. In addition to Thai electronics household brand Amorn Group, the market has also lured several foreign-backed initiatives such as MonoSun Technology Co Ltd, ABO Trading and piloting newcomers, Powerrup – all offering a familiar pitch: "Save the environment, Save money".

With the available solar and wind power systems, islanders can now afford to sustain moderate energy needs ranging from water heating and pumping, to running basic appliances such as indoor and outdoor lighting, fans, radios, televisions and even lite refrigeration.

However, due to limitations of the current technologies, or supply thereof, there has seemingly been less cost incentive to go green for larger residential, commercial and industrial applications, which have higher energy requirements.

Save Energy Asia Co Ltd is one UK-Thai joint operation whose objective is to provide and implement the latest, energy efficient and cost saving solutions for the broader Thai market.

Specializing in ground-breaking, green technologies, which can be implemented on small and large scales, the Bangkok-based firm has an eye on the Phuket market.

"We are discussing setting up a branch in Phuket as we do get a lot of enquiries

from down south," Director Simon Fox told the *Phuket Gazette*.

"We think there is a huge market for solar air conditioners in Thailand. We have two factories here in Bangkok and are now starting to manufacture [solar] panels here," he said.

"We are more than happy to provide installations in Phuket, and do currently have projects in the south" Simon added.

"The solar panels we sell can be 'retro' fitted to most air conditioners and improve the [energy consumption] efficiency by between 30% to 40%.

"They work best on systems in offices and factories which use air con mainly during the day. If the air con is used only in the evening then the efficiency is only improved by around 10%," he explained.

"Additionally, we have DC [Direct Current, e.g. battery power] inverter air conditioners which are a lot more efficient than conventional air conditioners.

"We also can install 100% solar powered solar air conditioners which work on 24V DC," he added.

To convert an existing air con to a solar assisted air con system would cost about 16,000 baht, Simon noted, adding that a new installation from scratch would be between 30,000 and 100,000 baht, depending on the size of the units.

"The 100% Solar systems are more expensive, starting at about US\$ 2500 (about 80,000 baht) for a complete set which includes air con, solar system, controllers and batteries.

ies. But for locations where there is no power supply, they are worth it," he said.

Simon went on to share his thoughts about the green energy industry.

"In fact, there are many cost effective ways to save energy. The main thing we



COST EFFECTIVE: A solar powered air conditioner system that utilizes DC power is more energy efficient than a conventional air-con system that depends heavily on grid energy.

have noticed is that there is a lack of professional companies that can actually give accurate technical information.

"Many companies here are happy to sell you something but will not tell you if it is actually cost effective or not. That's the difference with our company. We will look at the situation first and advise which products are suitable," Simon noted.

"We are also now working with several companies on the new ISO50001 certification. Our main role is to advise and prepare the company for the certification and to carry out the energy audits," he added.

Other than solar air conditioning, his company also specializes in other solar and wind powered systems including solar swimming pool systems, water heating, pumping, and lighting – which are mostly already available in Phuket.

William Amonoo, Director of Phuket's MonoSun Technology Co Ltd, told the *Gazette* that he is optimistic about the future of

the island's green energy market.

"Most energy needs across Phuket can be supplied by renewable energy. Water heating and street and traffic lighting could easily be powered by the sun," said William, a Scottish national who started in the energy sector initially as a chemist and oil drilling engineer.

MonoSun not only supplies solar and wind systems, but has designed a number of systems for small resorts on islands off Phuket.

Indeed, there is much incentive for individuals and companies in Phuket to finally go green; if saving the environment weren't enough, then the "bottom line" of reducing costs should certainly tip the scales for those who have yet to bite the bullet.

For more information about saving energy, see W:saveenergyasia.com. Also, for local green energy supplies, see W:taspower.com the website for MonoSun Technology.



William Amonoo, MonoSun Technology director, in front of a solar water heater.

Eateries expensive

THE Ministry of Commerce (MoC) is holding discussions to address the problem of increasingly expensive menu prices at rice and noodle eateries across the country.

According to a report on the MoC website, the need for discussions arose after the ministry had received a wave of consumer complaints about rising menu prices, despite cheaper food base costs.

Consumers have asked the MoC to issue formal price suggestions for 20 common menu items, to be kept within the 25 to 35 baht range.

As a result of floods in the last part of 2011, rice and noodle menu items in Bangkok rose to as much as 45 to 50 baht per plate/bowl.

However, consumers feel that the increases aren't justified since market prices have decreased for many food base items such as palm oil, pork and eggs.

During the Abhisit-led government (first half of 2011) for example, palm oil was at about 45 baht and even as high as 60 to 70 baht.

This is compared to its current price at about 42 baht, while raw pork was as previously as much as 160 baht per kilogram compared to 115 to 120 baht now. Likewise, class three eggs priced 4 to 5 baht are currently fixed at 2.6 baht per egg.

Lower base prices are credited to some of the controversial policies being implemented by the Yingluck Administration.

Meanwhile, Phuket last week received a fresh, 35-ton shipment of shallot onions grown by farmers in Si Sa Ket province ("Hom Daeng Si Sa Ket").

In their latest campaign, the Thai government is encouraging consumers nationwide to take advantage of the low prices for subsidized Si Sa Ket shallots.

Offered at a rate of 27 baht per kilogram, the shallots are being sold in front of the provincial hall and at markets across Phuket. A 20 kilogram basket full is priced 570 baht.

—*Phuket Gazette*

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Why are we being throttled?



Live Wire

By Woody Leonhard

CONTINUING my series of articles answering questions that I hear most often... the next question has to do with internet speeds here in Phuket, as measured on the Phuket Internet Speed reporting site phuketinternetspeed.com:

"Woody, I've read your articles in the *Phuket Gazette*. I understand why we're measuring international download speeds – for most farang and many Thais, international Internet speeds are more important than domestic speeds. I understand why we're using the specific speed test that's been set up – because many speed tests that claim to measure speeds outside of Thailand don't: the Internet Service Providers cache those tests, so they only measure speeds to Bangkok.

"That's what I understand. Here's what I don't get. Two things, actually. First, why do all of the TOT packages give basically the same international speed? You'd think that people who are paying a fortune for fiber optic connections would get much faster international service than the ones like me who only spend 499 baht for a cheap line.

"Second, why are the speeds on 3BB lines so much faster than everybody else? Even the cheap 3BB lines are five times as fast on international download as the other telephone companies."

Good questions, and I think I finally have some answers.

It all comes down to something called network neutrality. It's a hot topic in the U.S. and Europe right now, and it's going to become more prominent in

Asia soon.

Net neutrality basically means that your Internet service provider can't play favorites. You get the speed you pay for, but your ISP can't jiggle things around so some services work slower than others. Net neutrality also says that your ISP can't restrict content, sites, platforms, types of equipment that can be attached to the network, or modes of communication over the network.

Right now, in the U.S., people are trying to pass laws that require ISPs to keep their hands off Internet connections. If a customer wants to download a ton of files, the laws say, their ISP isn't allowed to slow them down just because they're using a lot of data. Similarly, an ISP in the US that provides television or movies for rent isn't allowed to slow down access to Netflix.

As you might imagine, the ISPs don't like the laws, and so far they've been very successful at keeping them from being passed.

In Thailand, we have the same net neutrality concerns as in the rest of the world, but we have one more wrinkle that I've never seen discussed.

In Thailand, we have a problem with ISPs throttling international access. It's a bit odd, but the inescapable fact is that ISPs here intentionally cut back on international download speeds, regardless of demand.

If Thailand had a net neutrality law, ISPs would (probably) be required to simply open up the international data pipes and let data flow without restriction. Sure there should be some way to slice things up so customers with more expensive plans would get a larger slice of the



WHOA THERE: It doesn't matter which package you have, or how much money you pay, from the cheapest ADSL line to the most expensive Fiber Optic, all of the TOT internet packages in Phuket have similar international download speeds. Photo: Gunther Hagleitner

available pie. But speeds would only be held back by the limits imposed by the size of the pipe.

Based on my experiments and the speeds we've seen reported on phuketinternetspeed.com, it's become apparent to me that ISPs in Phuket arbitrarily restrict international data speeds.

Which brings me to the rather comical situation with TOT. For reasons I can't begin to fathom, TOT has decided to put the same international speed restriction on all of its customers, regardless of which plan they have, or how much they pay. Thus, the rather bizarre situation you can see in the graph on this page, where people paying a pittance for their TOT lines get the same international download speeds as those paying through the nose for a 20Mbps fiber optic line.

Is the fiber line faster? Yes, sure. On domestic hops, fiber's much faster than the cheap ADSL lines. But if you spend most of your time working outside of Thailand, there isn't much reason to spend a lot more for a fiber connection.

Looking back at the data on phuketinternetspeed.com – which you can download and

massage for yourself – I'm now reasonably certain that somebody at TOT decided to throttle international connections for fiber optic customers around October of last year. That explains the abrupt fall in fiber optic speeds I described in my Live Wire column last November. More than that, it looks like all TOT customers get throttled in the same way: when somebody at TOT threw the switch to cut back Fiber customers, they applied the

same throttling as all of the other TOT customers. It doesn't make sense, but that's exactly what it looks like.

Next, consider the peculiar case of 3BB. I honestly don't know if we should feel flattered or swindled, but it looks like 3BB has poked a hole in the throttling for one specific internet address, and that has led to 3BBs extraordinary speed results on the test site.

Let me explain. On phuketinternetspeed.com, we all

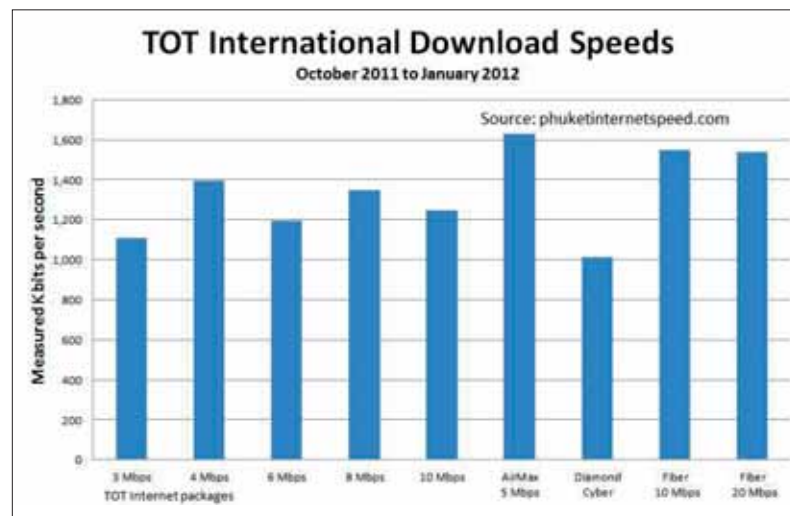
sible speed to that site in Los Angeles, with no throttling. Frequently, that's four or five times as fast as most other ISPs. By simply opening the flood gates for this one site, 3BB has done an admirable job of stacking the deck in their favor. At the same time, they've also demonstrated how fast their international lines could be, if they would just stopped throttling international access.

The bottom line is that you can't compare 3BB's results in our tests with any other ISP's, and you can't rely on our speed test to give you a fair idea of international speeds from 3BB.

I haven't yet figured out how to make our test immune to this kind of fudging, but at the same time I'm flattered that 3BB puts enough stock in our speed results to goose its numbers. That actually bodes well for Phuket – somebody's listening to our complaints.

Seth Bareiss holds computer sessions on every-other Wednesday afternoon, from 1 to 3pm. If you have a Windows problem that needs to be solved, drop by one of Seth's free afternoon sessions, or come to one of our free Sunday morning roundtables at Sandwich Shoppe Chalong. Details in the Events Calendar. Sponsored by the Phuket Gazette and Khun Woody's Sandwich Shoppes.

Live Wire is Phuket Gazette columnist Woody Leonhard's weekly snapshot of all things internet in Phuket. Shoot him mail at Woody@KhunWoody.com, follow him on Twitter @PhuketLiveWire, or "like" his page at facebook.com/SandwichShoppes.



run one specific speed test to one specific location, in Los Angeles. That makes the test results reasonably replicable, both across different ISPs, and month to month. The speed reporting site has turned into a valuable crowd sourced tool for seeing how well various ISPs perform at different locations around the island.

3BB has been watching what we're doing, and as best I can tell, they've decided to jimmy the results. Based on my tests, it looks like 3BB is throttling international access from Phuket to every single site around the world, except for one. And that one site with the spigot wide open just happens to be the site we're using for speed tests. Clever.

If you run our standard speed test on a 3BB connection, the speed you see is the fastest pos-



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Black gold

NOW we are fully into the swing of 2012, the Christmas tradition of good will to all men seems a lifetime away.

When I get out of bed and go on my now regular morning beach run, yes my New Year's resolution is still being adhered to, global problems seem to be a million miles away. However, one of these global problems could very much affect us all sooner or later.

I consider ourselves very lucky with regards of fuel prices and don't mind at all filling the car with 1000 baht of 95, but I foresee a potential hike in prices. All this could potentially stem from the friction we are seeing between the West and Iran.

Now this has been going on for quite some time, but we are now starting to see things getting a little more serious. Iran currently supplies the European Union with 5% of its total oil consumption and 25% to China, however impending sanctions on Iran has led to talk of Iran closing the Straights of Hormuz. The strait, a 34-mile-wide sea passage, connects the petroleum-producing Persian Gulf states to the ocean, making it a strategic choke point on the world's economy. This would seem unlikely to happen, but the talk now seems to focus on Iran banning the sale of oil to specific countries, and what effect this would have on some of the EU economies has yet to be seen.

If this does come to fruition, many of the EU states will have to look elsewhere for their oil supplies and this may hike the price of oil

upwards resulting in a rise in petrol prices.

The EU gave preliminary approval to new sanctions against Iranian oil on Monday. On the table is a total ban on European purchases of Iranian oil - a sanction that would hit not just Iran but key EU buyers including Greece, Italy and Spain. Everyone is well aware of the delicacy of Greece's current economic dilemma, so in turn the effect of Greece having to pay more for their oil imports could have disastrous effects on an already strained economy and could push the Euro zone into further danger.

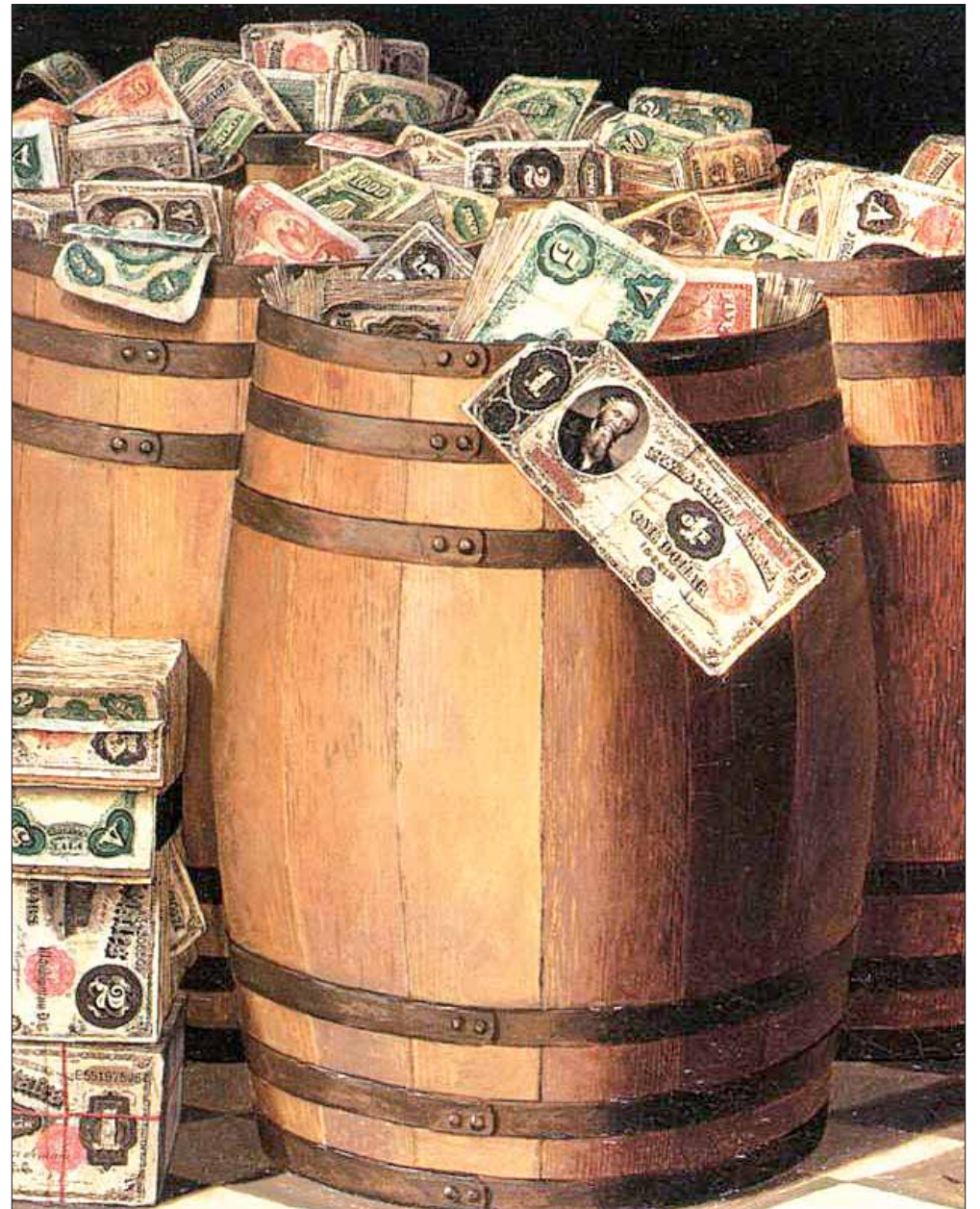
The UK, Germany, France and the Netherlands had been leading calls for nothing more than a three-month delay before the sanctions bite, but Greece, which fears its economic woes will worsen if it cannot find alternative suppliers at Iran-style preferential rates - has urged a much longer phase-in to ease the pain.

We will have to wait and see what happens in the next few weeks; however the price of oil will surely increase and with it comes the subsequent increase in petrol prices. From an investment point of view, this could present a good opportunity to buy over the shorter term, but only if you have the stomach to handle high levels of volatility and as always this should be held as part of a larger portfolio.

For more information please contact alyman@montpeliergroup.com.

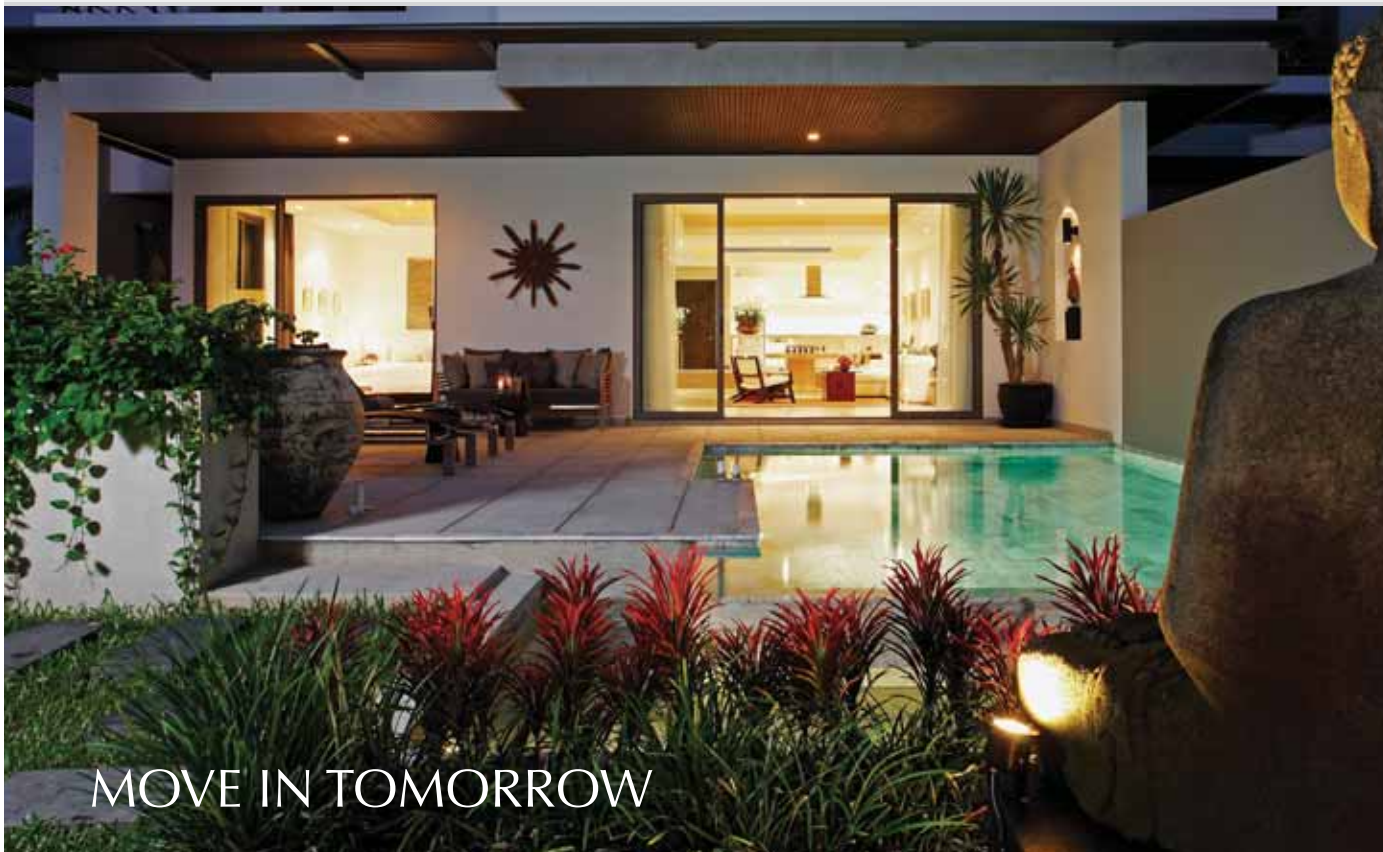
Island Investor

By Anthony Lyman



VOLATILE: From an investment point of view, this could present a good opportunity to buy over the shorter term. Photo: Barrels of money by Victor Dubreuil

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Restoring the historical buildings of Phuket Town

Premises such as the Standard Chartered Bank and the police station in Phuket Town will soon be restored to former glory.



RAISING STANDARDS: The old Standard Chartered Bank building will be renovated to give visitors a chance to look back into history.

By Bruce Stanley

IT'S ALWAYS interesting meeting with Pranee Sakulpipatana, who works to ensure that local people learn and celebrate their heritage. She comes from a Chinese/Thai family who were originally merchants on Thalang Road, Phuket City's "Road of Culture".

Pranee taught at the local Rajabhat University for over thirty years and developed the Phuket Culture Center on the campus. Since her retirement a few years ago, she has redirected much of her energy into finding funding for the restoration of the many classic Sino-Portuguese buildings that are in disrepair around the city's inner core.

"Perhaps two of the most well known buildings in town are the former police station and the Standard Chartered Bank buildings, which sit on opposite corners of Phang Nga and Thepkasattri Roads. Both are featured on post cards and promotional materials for Phuket and both are falling apart. We are now working to have them restored and used as public museums to attract more visitors to town," said Pranee.

She is the island's most active historian and goes on to explain that one hundred years ago, King Rama V and his son (later King Rama VI), both saw the potential for the development of tin mining and rubber farming on Phuket based on similar industry happening in Malaysia at the time. However, there was little investment money to be found on the island until an arrangement with the Standard Chartered bank allowed them to open a branch on Phuket.

"Up until 1910, the only money lenders on Phuket were the *chettiar* community from southern India and their interest charges were too high for local business. The introduction of Standard Chartered Bank, that offered lower interest rates for

"The police building was modeled on colonial structures popular at the time, with a space for a clock. Back then, people could not afford to buy watches and they depended on the clock tower. But there was no budget to buy a clock so the space stayed empty.

After 40 years, a clock was purchased in Penang, but it never made it to Phuket as the boat that carried it, sank. We finally got a clock over 50 years after the police station opened," she added.

Pranee has many stories about Phuket City's historic Sino-Portuguese buildings.

"Many are in bad repair because they are very expensive to restore. The original building materials were not strong and generally made with local limestone, which holds water. There are no government funds to help maintain these buildings while

another issue is that family disputes arise when various members of a family cannot agree if and how to preserve their historic home," Pranee said.

Fortunately, we have been given permission to restore the Standard Chartered Bank and we will reconstruct how banking operations were conducted from over a century ago. This will be of great interests for visitors to Phuket. Currently, we are receiving donations for the renovations. We

are hoping to restore these buildings to their original beauty," she said.

To make a donation to the historic building project, contact Pranee at 081-693 3576.



The clock was put in place 50 years after the police station was built following the loss of one clock which sank with a delivery boat.

tin dredging operations, meant the local economy could grow. The bank was built in a classic Sino-Portuguese style and the police station was then con-



HERITAGE HERO: Pranee Sakulpipatana is working hard to ensure Phuket's old buildings are revitalized.

structed across the street to provide protection," she said.

The police building had the island's first clock tower, but oddly, had no clock was installed for over 50 years.

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BIS kids get the blues

By Marc Mulloy

PHUKET is in for a treat at this year's Phuket International Blues Rock Festival as the main act is none other than Chris Thomas King who has sold more records and appeared in more successful movies than any other blues artist this century.

Seeing him perform live is one thing but imagine being able to get "up close and personal" with the star afterwards. This will now be possible thanks to an initiative organized by the British International School (BIS) and sponsored by the *Phuket Gazette*. On February 27, the Monday following the festival, Chris Thomas King will put on a special workshop and performance at BIS between 2 and 5pm. King will recount his experiences growing up in Louisiana in a musical family, how he shot to stardom in films like *Ray* and *O, Brother Where Art Thou?* and how he has integrated R&B and

hip-hop into his blues music.

There will then be a question and answer session followed by some tips on playing the blues where a few of the school's best guitarists will get to learn some riffs. Head of Arts at BIS, Neill Thacker told the *Gazette* "This is an opportunity for everyone, not only BIS students, to get up close and personal with such a successful artist. The workshop will end with a performance after which Chris will give away posters, sign autographs and sell CDs.

The auditorium can hold up to 400 people and we're hoping to get at least a hundred people to cover our costs." Book early to avoid disappointment.

Tickets are 600 baht and are available at the Blues Festival itself, from the BIS Marketing office, from the Phuket Gazette office and also through The Phuket Gazette's new online ticket service - Phuket Tickets - at PhuketGazette.net/tickets.



TALKIN' BLUES: Chris Thomas King has sold more than 10 million records in the USA and has his own label.



BLUESWORTHY: BIS students Paul Mulloy, Bao Han Tran Le and Joseph Mahler are eager to learn more from the master bluesman himself.

What's so funny, wee man?

In the run up to The Phuket Punchline Comedy Club's February 29 'Whose Line is it Anyway?' show, the *Gazette* asks each of the comedians about themselves. This week it's the diminutive Ian Copping.

Phuket Gazette:

Where and when were you born?

Ian Copping:

I was born in Dublin in 1970. I was actually born in my parents house, my mother didn't like the fuss of having babies in the hospital so I was born at home, however as soon as I was born I was very ill and had to be rushed into hospital anyway, so I ended up spending my first Christmas in hospital.

PG: How, When, Where, Why did you become a comedian/comedy performer?

IC: I did my first ever comedy show in school when I was 16. I was in a double act called "fat mans picnic basket" and there was a Christmas show on. everybody else in the school was in a U2 cover band so myself and a friend decided that we would do comedy instead. I was addicted from the first laugh.

PG: Did you/do you have any comedy heroes? If so, what do you like about them?

IC: I have always liked Monty Python and in the very early days I was a big fan of Charlie Chaplin. Later in life I found Seinfeld and loved that. in terms of stand up I really like Dylan Moran, Steve Hughes, Tom Stacey and Glenn Wool. There are loads of others, too many to mention.

PG: Which current comedian makes you laugh and why?

IC: I recently did a show with Carey Marx and he really made me laugh.

PG: Have you been to Thailand before? If so, when, where and what did you like and dislike about it?

IC: I have been to Thailand a couple of times before. I really like it but sadly when I am there I tend to work every night and therefore don't get to see as much of it as I would like to see. I really love the food. there is a Thai restaurant around the corner from me in Dublin and it's so disappointing whenever I go in there because, although the food is good, it is nothing like what you get in Thailand. I will have to go sometime in the future and spend a good long time just traveling around.

PG: Have you performed in Thailand before? What was it like?

IC: I have performed there a couple of times in the past and I really like it. The audiences are great. In the past I have only done stand up so I am really looking forward to doing the improvisation show there as I think that the audiences will really love it as they



Ian Copping

are such a big part of the show.

PG: Any other useful info for an article about you?

IC: The show that we are doing in February contains some of the original people from the TV show "Whose line is it anyway?" and is much better than the TV show, as the audience is a real part of it. It's great fun. We have toured the world with this show and are really looking forward to doing it in Phuket.

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whose LINE IS IT? anyway!
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Veerachan Usahanun

HINDU god with elephant head, gyrating naked bodies, exploding skulls, slithering serpents, copulating couples, explicit sexual organs, twisty vines, other-wordly landscapes, dark and somber palettes are the elements that make up the fantasy art of Veerachan Usahanun.

Veerachan, who turns 51 years of age this year, has two passions: art and rock music. In his mid-twenties, while deciding which way to go in life, his artistic talent was discovered by a visiting Austrian who recruited him to be part of the team restoring a baroque-style mural in a public castle in Krems, Austria.

There, Veerachan remembers starting his career right at the bottom of the artistic ranks.

"I was literally working my way up the ladder. First I was assigned to paint the bottom part of the mural – the trees, mountains, and the likes. Once I proved my worth, I moved on to the animals. Then after some months of training, I was allowed to paint the gods and the angels. It was an exhilarating experience."

While working there, one Austrian maestro in particular caught his imagination, and Veerachan found his guru in Ernst Fuchs, one of the founding members of the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism. Under the tutelage of Fuchs, Veerachan was encouraged to explore the theme of Eastern belief in his work.

That, together with the love of

THAI gallery By Nanthapa Pengkasem

rock music with its dark science fiction undertones, combine to make his art what it is today.

After a successful exhibition of his work during 2002 in Bangkok – a series of commissioned "fantasy portraits" of Thais living in Vienna – Veerachan created a large mixed-media painting for a prominent Thai art collector. Entitled "Triphum", it measures three by five meters and depicts the worlds of heaven, earth and purgatory and took three years to complete.

With opportunities opening up, the lure back to Thailand was strong, and soon the artist returned to his homeland. He married Chalida, also a Thai artist and they settled in Phuket. From his studio at Bang Tao Beach, a new body of work emerged as a series of large and complex paintings entitled "The Miracles of Ganesha".

Ganesha, or the Hindu elephant deity, is the patron god of the arts and goodwill. In Hindu mythology, Ganesha is manifested in no less than 32 forms or avatars and Veerachan has so far painted 16 representations of this. The collection was exhibited

in Bangkok, Hua Hin, and Phuket in 2006, to critical acclaim.

However, Veerachan is reflective of his achievement. The success he receives is not without its ramifications. Some Thais regard his depiction of Ganesha offensive to the point of sacrilegious. He was attacked vehemently on the internet by detractors, but remains faithful to his ideals.

"I absolutely respect Ganesha. He's my supreme god. I depict him according to the Hindu mythology of creation, destruction, and of the transient quality of life. Isn't it obvious that sex and naked bodies are part of the universal truth?"

Despite the controversy, foreign collectors are willing to pay a handsome amount of money for the works. But Veerachan is reluctant to sell. He believes the paintings should remain in Thailand to be appreciated by future generations of artists.

To reconcile the reality of life with his dreams, Veerachan plans to compile the Ganesha series into a book. Once that's done, he may be more willing to depart with his work.

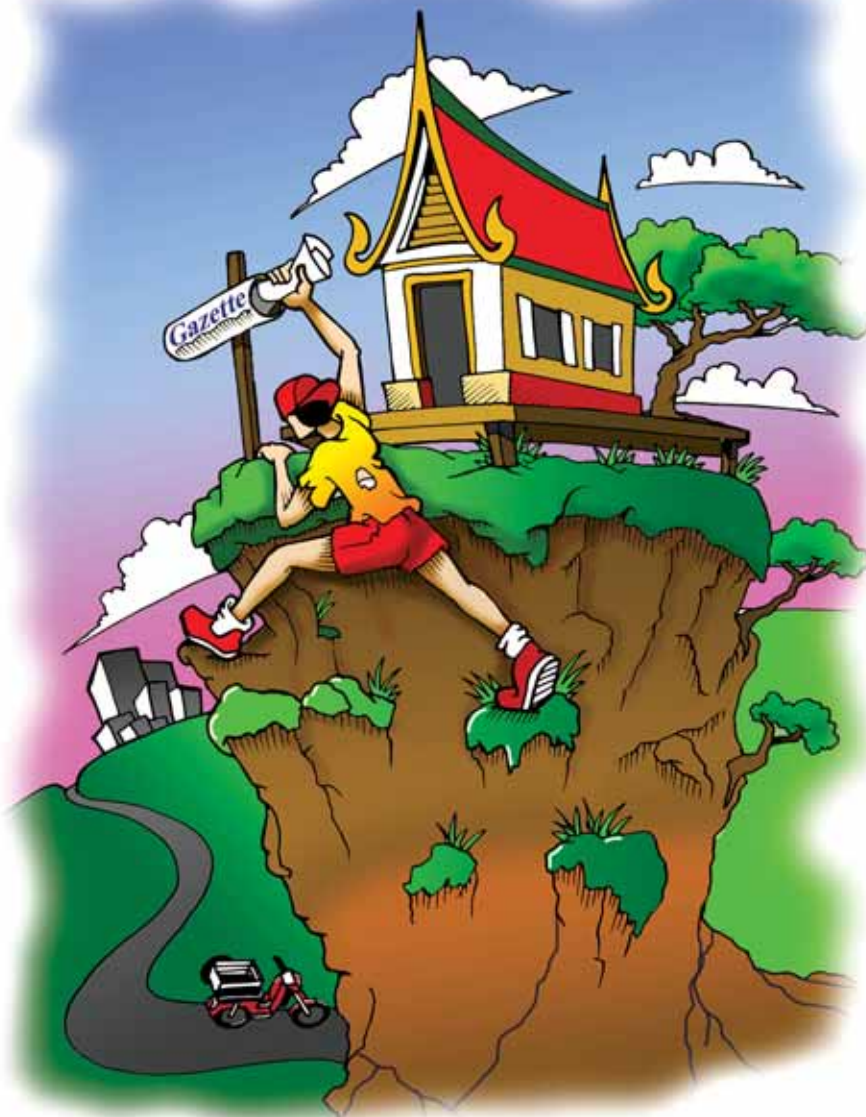
Commenting on the creative landscape in Phuket, Veerachan says:

"When looking for Southeast Asian art, many European collectors seem to bypass Phuket for Bali. We should reverse the trend and turn art into one of the island's commodities. If we can achieve that, we won't have to rely on seasonal tourism any longer."



About Thai Gallery

The individuals profiled in "Thai Gallery" are chosen on the basis of their contributions to Phuket as an *international* community, and, often, for having made those contributions through successful social and/or working relationships with foreigners. This implies some foreign language skills and an interest in interacting with different cultures. They are people who in our experience help make the lives of expats far more enjoyable here than might be the case without them.



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The all-American horror tale of a tough childhood

IN 1989, Tobias Wolfe published his block-breaking memoir *This Boy's Life*, later made into a movie with Robert DeNiro and Leonardo DiCaprio. Tobias Wolfe was the mentor of Mary Karr who published her own masterpiece memoir in 1995: *The Liar's Club*.

These two books about hard-scrabble childhoods marked the emergence of a new literary era and unleashed a floodgate of memoirs, but few have reached the standards that Wolfe and Karr set.

You might think Karr had a tough life growing up in the oil refinery town of Port Arthur, Texas, the daughter of an alcoholic father devoted to bars and pool halls, and an equally alcoholic mother devoted to poetry and painting. But along comes Walls with her memoir of a much worse life, *The Glass Castle* (Scribner, New York, 2005, 288pp).

Karr's father was an oil worker who kept a roof over her family's head and food on the table. Walls's father was an electrician who was constantly fired, drank up what money there was and left his four children hungry. Her mother was a poet and painter and equally indifferent to her children. They bounced around little desert towns in the American West before settling in Welch, her father's home town in the mountains of West Virginia's coal country. He becomes the town drunk as the children sink

Books

By James Eckardt

deeper into hunger, cold and raw poverty, and the mother remains dreamily above it all.

"We fought a lot in Welch," the author writes. "Not just to fend off our enemies, but to fit in. Maybe it was because there was so little to do in Welch; maybe it was because of all the bloody battles over unionizing the mines; maybe it was because mining was dangerous and cramped and dirty work, and it put all the miners in bad moods and they came home and took it out on their wives, who took it out on their kids, who took it out on other kids. Whatever the reason, it seemed that just about everyone in Welch — men, women, boys, girls — liked to fight."

There are innumerable scenes of melodrama, like the Christmas when the drunken father stood up in church and cursed out the priest and then went home and set the Christmas tree on fire along with all the presents. The mother put up with the father because she is Catholic and refuses to go on welfare because it will be bad for her children's character.

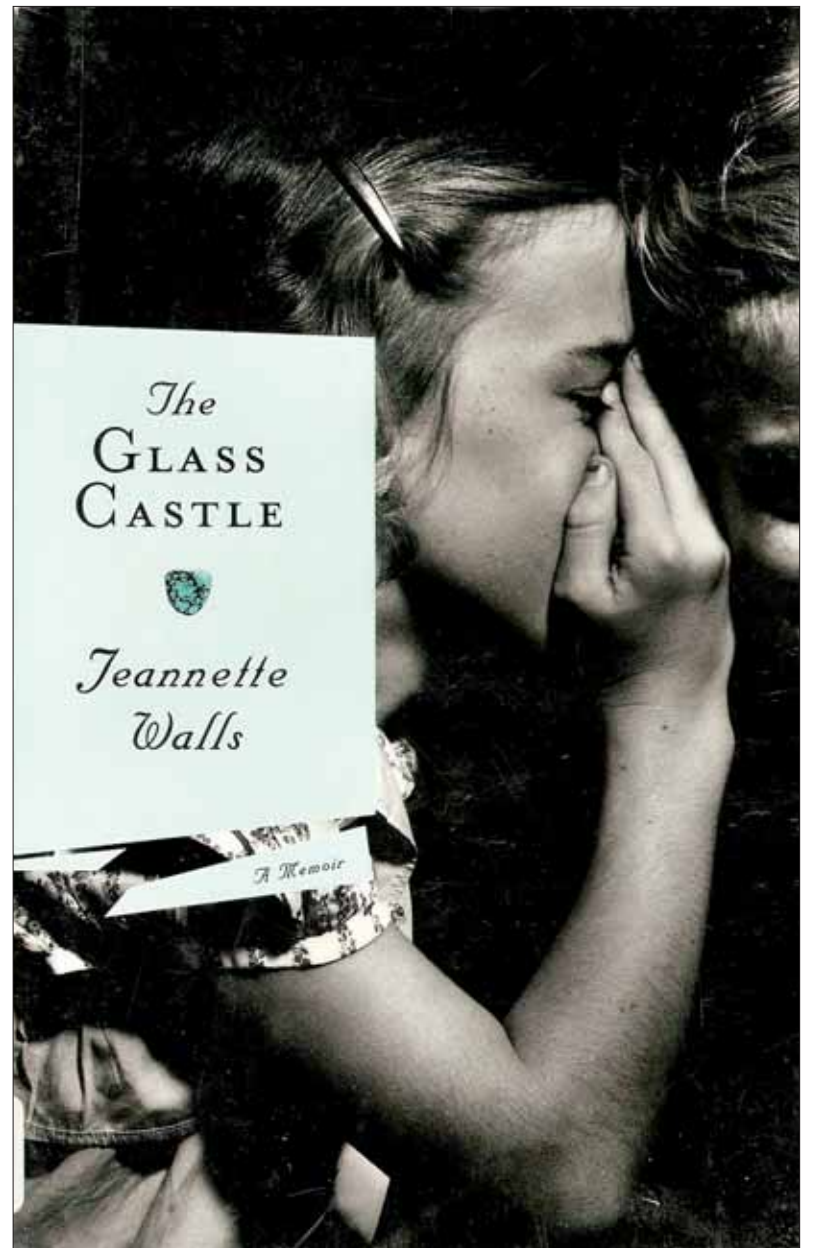
"Mom could be wise as a philosopher, but her moods were getting on my nerves," Walls writes. "At times she'd be happy for days on end, announcing that she had decided to think only positive thoughts . . . But the positive

thoughts would give way to negative thoughts, and the negative thoughts seemed to swoop into her mind the way a big flock of black crows takes over the landscape, sitting thick in the trees and on the fence rails and lawns, staring at you in ominous silence. When that happened, Mom would refuse to get out of bed."

Lori, the eldest, vows to escape to New York City after high school graduation. She and her siblings save up money in a piggy bank which the father breaks, of course, and spends on drink. But Lori does escape, along with Jeanette, and then Daniel and Maureen. Later, their parents follow them to New York and become homeless people.

Much of this tale is simply unbelievable. But even if true, the characters remain puppet figures. The parents show none of the nuance, color, humor and contradictory shades of Karr's parents. And the writing is vastly inferior. You can have a tougher life than Karr did, but this does not make for a better memoir.

Predictably enough, *The Glass Castle* went on to be a big best seller, with glowing reviews in women's magazines like *Vogue* and *Glamour*. The minutiae of poverty is well described: the ramshackle rooms, the improvised furnishing, the threadbare clothes and the constant scavenging for food, but the heart isn't moved as in the memoirs of Karr and Wolfe. This is a memoir by the numbers.



POOR GIRL: Poverty is well described by Walls, but at the expense of emotion.

Film

Journey 2: The Mysterious Island

Director: Brad Peyton
Actors: Josh Hutcherson, Dwayne Johnson and Michael Caine
Genre: Sci Fi / Action
Phuket release: February 2

THIS latest cinematic adaptation of Jules Verne's 1874 novel is brought to 3-D screens also by the producers of the 2008 version of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

Directed by Brad Peyton, *Journey 2* stars Josh Hutcherson, Dwayne Johnson (more commonly known as "The Rock") and Michael Caine. Also among its star cast lineup are Venessa Hudgens, Kristin Davis, Luis Guzman, Anna Colwell and Michael Beasley.

Not offering a whole lot in terms of story dynamics, the film's anticipated success will have to bank on its appeal to younger generations and those who are easily charmed by convincing depictions of surreal settings and prehistoric-like creatures.

Fueled by intricate CGI-powered effects, *The Mysterious Island* offers all the action you would expect from a modern 3-D-dedicated film, making the theater surcharge worthwhile.

Its simple, yet entertaining, plot line begins with teenager Sean Anderson (Hutcherson) convincing his stepfather, Hank Parsons (The Rock) to embark on a journey half

way around the world as he believes he has intercepted radio signals from his grandfather (Caine) who has gone missing while in search for the supposedly mythical, literary creation of Jules Verne.

With touches of humor, G-rated romance and lots of "awe" scenes, it is guaranteed to keep you from napping, and of course the kids will love it.



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Finn dining in Chalong



FLATMATES: Apart from great food Skiffer also has a great atmosphere.

By Marc Mulloy

IF ANYONE ever said to you “Fancy a Flatty at Skiffers?” you would be forgiven for not knowing what they meant but after one visit to the trendy Skiffer restaurant in Chalong Bay you would likely answer in the affirmative as flatties are delicious.

Having lived in Chalong for years I must have passed near this place hundreds of times without even knowing of its existence as it is literally off the beaten track, being situated in a very narrow soi that leads to a dead end.

Although the restaurant has only been open a year, the Scandi-(ly dressed) community would already be familiar with that track because of the Ao Chalong Thai herbal sauna situated just behind the restaurant.

Originally the eatery was designed to provide food for hungry divers and sailors who used the services of the Raya Group, who are long established in the area. From its humble beginnings as a convenient nearby kitchen it has grown to combine dining, great drinks and ultimate comfort and has become the third Skiffer in the world the other two being in Finland. A “Skiffer” is a Swedish word for a large flat rock and the Fennoscandia links and flat references don’t stop there. The four owners have combined typical Scandinavian modern design with traditional maritime elements and a house specialty which they call a “Flatty”.

A Flatty is a large gourmet pizza with a distinctive oblong shape and luxurious toppings. All the organic ingredients are “carefully chosen from local vendors, fresh from the garden and straight from the fisherman’s daily catch”. Another difference from its pizza cousin is the lighter thin and crispy dough which was perfected after intensive training from a Finnish Skiffer’s chef who flew over to teach the local team how it is done back home.

As for the gourmet toppings

they include goat’s cheese, strawberries, rocket salad and cashew nuts on our first flatty named the Flatty Soignon (360 baht). Although an unusual combination of ingredients it was absolutely delicious. Next up was a “Flatty Seafood” garnished with smoked salmon, vendace (a freshwater whitefish imported from Finland) and green asparagus (360 baht) and for meat lovers there is the “Flatty Meat Lover” with cooked ham, Parma ham, onion and mature Emmental or the “Flatty Mama’s Meatballs with giant meat balls, mature Emmental and pickled cucumber.(340 baht each)

Luckily for us we had arrived on a Thursday which, during the high season, is the day the chef makes one surprise Scandinavian specialty voted for on Facebook. This week it was *Lohikeitto* (a creamy salmon, potato and leek soup at 200 baht) – sublime.

In addition to delectable Flatties there are also delicious salads as main courses (190 baht), as well as a comprehensive Thai menu which we did not try, but looked reasonably priced – as were the drinks.

As in most Chalong area restaurants, the atmosphere at Skiffer was very laid-back with soft reggae music and many friendly Scandinavians drifting in after the herbal sauna located conveniently just next door. We are told this is a common indulgence before sitting down to an appetizing dinner and we’ll try it next time. There will be a next time.

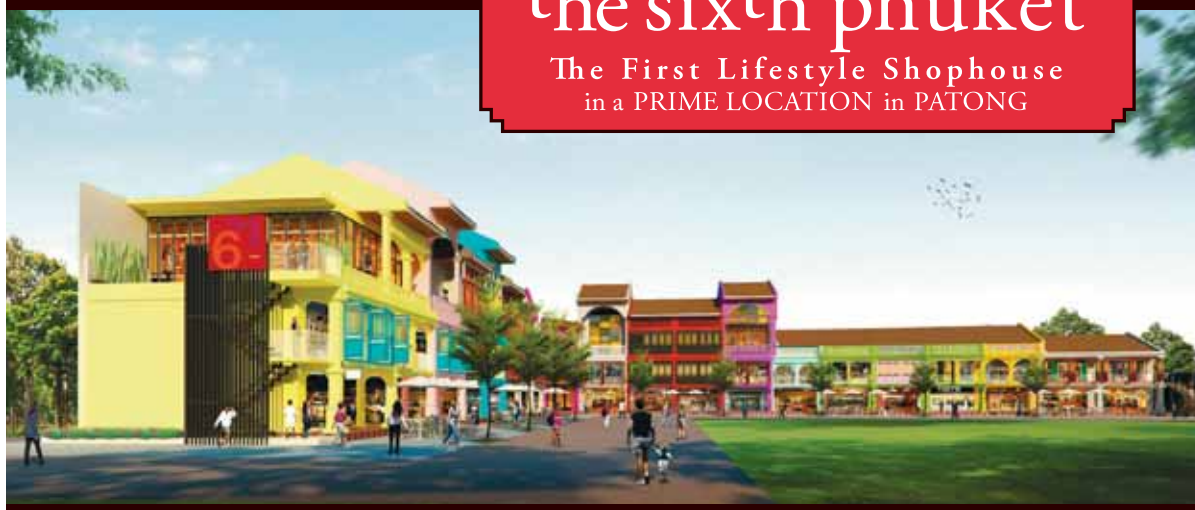
Skiffer, a thoroughly enjoyable experience from starters to Finnish.

To get to Skiffer, take the road from Chalong circle going towards the pier. After 200 meters you will see the Skiffer sign on the right. Turn into a little soi and approximately 100 meters later you are there. Car parking is available along the road and at the cul de sac next to the sauna. They are closed on Mondays. More information is available on the website www.skiffer.fi/chalong



FLAT OUT: The “Flatty Mama’s Meatballs” is the perfect combination of fusion food and is generous in its proportions.

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Lights, camera, action: Online teaching, its rewards and risks

Live video chats are revolutionizing teaching and helping to bring education to a more global audience.

In the Classroom

By Eric Haeg

BEFORE the internet, teachers were limited to face-to-face learning and eventually correspondence courses. But with innovation comes progress and now many web-based agents are helping connect teachers with students from around the globe.

Matthew Nobel was a former expat in Thailand before moving back to the States to complete his master's in education. Upon his return, Nobel turned to Skype to continue teaching.

"I'm just starting out. The idea is

to see how much business it allows me to drum up. At the same time, I'm spending time on trying to market directly, targeting mostly Thai students for Skype classes."

Nobel says that despite the distance, classes can still be productive.

"Schedules are flexible and you can really do a lot with the sights and sounds. It might seem

counter-intuitive, but being on the computer with a headset and camera is comfortable for a lot of people these days."

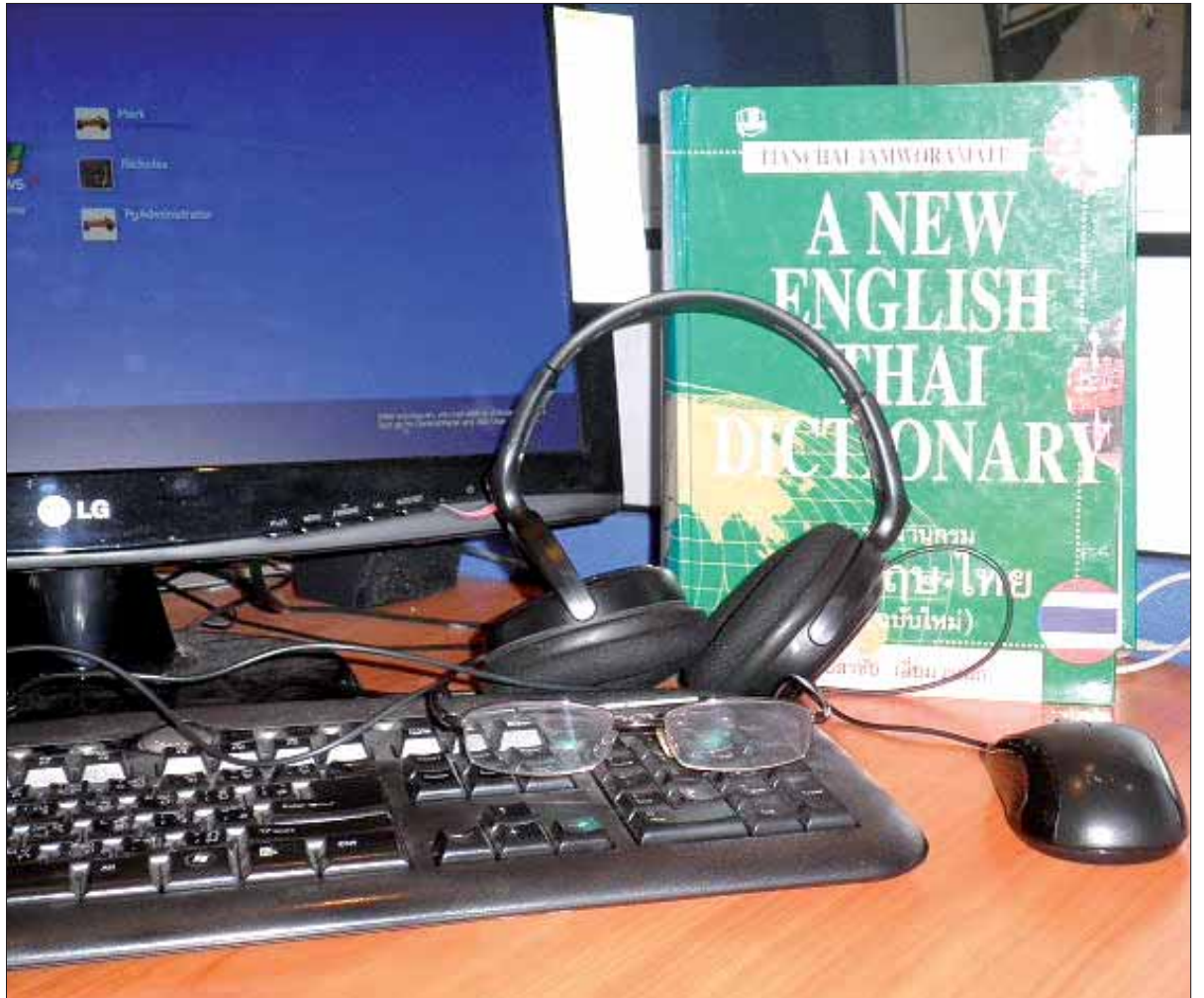
Teachers interested in working online will typically complete an informal application and wait for a reply. Once approved, the teacher submits a short biography and on some sites they're able to record a short video as part of a sales pitch for prospective students.

Payment is almost always done via PayPal so an account is necessary.

First lessons are typically offered for free and even after setting a rate, it seems popular for students to negotiate fees and discounts.

The *Gazette* recently conducted a survey of the most popular providers and came up with some mixed results:

VerbalPlanet.com is sponsored by the famous Collins brand of academic texts and seems to be the best option. The site allows teachers to choose how much they want to charge for their lessons, with top teachers charging more than US\$20



MONITORED TUITION: Teachers can charge up to US\$20 per hour which is more than what many language schools are paying in Phuket. However, without a work permit this activity is illegal.

per hour. Students can pick their teacher according to price, experience or by satisfaction ratings. This site also offers classes and teaching opportunities for nearly every major language.

TeachOnlineEnglish.com suggests teachers can "gain financial freedom". The site pays teachers US\$12.50 (about 390 baht) per lesson, per hour, which is almost 25% better than what most language schools in Phuket are paying. This site provides some basic training as well as some structured lesson plans and suggests it has thousands of students waiting to learn with its teachers.

LanguageSpirit.com encourages teachers to "chat for cash" and allows teachers to set their own prices for classes in English or Chinese. The site looks nice, but a quick read over its Facebook page indicates the management is slow to respond to teachers' comments and has many complaints regarding a lack of students.

OnlineEnglishTeacher.com is a terribly busy site with more bells and whistles than a Thai game show. It would be a minor miracle that anyone stays on the site for more than 30 seconds. After viewing the snippets of teacher introductions, one gets the impression this site is only there

for a good laugh.

One Phuket based teacher warns of a lack of students despite the websites' claims to the contrary.

"I've wasted a lot of time filling out applications and the introductory videos can take a lot of time to complete. I've done a few and waited for the students to come but got nothing in return."

More concerning than a lack of students is that any foreigner teaching in Thailand should know that this job is technically illegal without a related work permit.

The chances of getting caught are low, but the ramifications can be very serious. Depending on one's propensity for risk, this could be a

make-or-break factor.

Despite the drawbacks, most indicators suggest this is a growth industry and one to watch. Whether in Thailand or back in the teachers' country of origin, teaching online represents a great avenue for earning income and connecting with a global community.



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Keeping your dog fit



Dog Whisperer

By Russell D Russell

EXERCISING your dog on a daily basis is essential. The best exercise channels the activity of both mind and body and for that, you need to take your dog out for a walk. Lack of proper exercise can lead to obesity, poor muscle tone, heart ailments and a host of emotional and behavioral problems.

Take your dog to different places for them to explore and also play different games to help exercise them mentally as well as physically. Simply taking them around the same block, or just letting them run around the garden will frustrate them.

EXERCISES

Phuket may not have a wealth of bespoke "dog parks", and taking them to certain beaches can be an issue at times – but there are still a number of places you can go with your dogs, and lots of things you can still do to jazz up the exercise routine.

Walking your dog up and down a beach, down a new road, or if you can find a track in the fast reducing woodland areas of Phuket then make the most of it. New places means new sights, smells and information for your dog to learn about his surroundings. Most dogs who do the same walk each day know it by heart. They stop in the same places, smell the same things and it gets boring. Go somewhere new and you'll see a different dog, probably more alert, more focused and absorbing as much information from his surroundings as he possibly can. He'll probably also be more tired after the walk too!

Taking your dog for a run is also a great way to burn energy, especially with the higher drive dogs like shepherds, or labs. However, you need to ease them into it, as well as yourself. Start with short runs and build up slowly from there.

Retrieving sticks, tennis balls or frisbees is great exercise for your dog although be sure they are not jumping too high in the air

and landing on their hind legs as this can cause serious injuries to the knees and spine. Simply getting your dog to jump over, or balance on a fallen tree log, or scamper over a large rock are also fun things for our dogs to do.

Make a tunnel or a maze with some old cardboard boxes and encourage them to explore and go through it. Or place some treats under an overturned bowl and let them work out how to get the them.

Remember, getting out and about with your dog, allowing them to have off-leash time to properly run, be free and explore is really important for a well balanced dog.

So many people tell me that they have huge gardens and that "the dog seems happy to just run around it till he's tired".

This is not only not enough, but detrimental to your dogs mental health. How would you feel being kept in the same house and never let out?

KEEPING COOL

Phuket, in case you haven't noticed, can be hot and keeping your dog cool is vitally important. Make sure they have constant access to fresh, clean water at all times. Also, a lot of people here make the mistake of shaving their dogs coats thinking that will help keep them cool, when in truth, it can have the reverse effect. A dog's fur coat is designed to both keep them warm, and keep them cool – they will shed what they don't need, but shaving them is not the answer.

Plus, dogs don't sweat like we do, and if they



FRISBEE FUN: Dogs enjoy playing catch and retrieve while some breeds such as the labrador(left) love swimming which, apart from being great exercise also cools them down.

are hot, placing cool towels, or a cool tiled floor, on their bellies is far more effective than cool water on their backs.

AND RELAX...

So you've been for a new walk, gone for a run, or taken Fido for a swim. Rather than just letting him come home and collapse, why not help him out a bit with a stretch, and a nice rub down? There are various stretching exercises you can do (carefully) with your dog, but there's also some obedience commands you can teach which themselves act as a stretch. Getting your dog to offer a play "bow on cue" is not only really cool, but also stretches their fore limbs and their back, as does a simple circle spin.

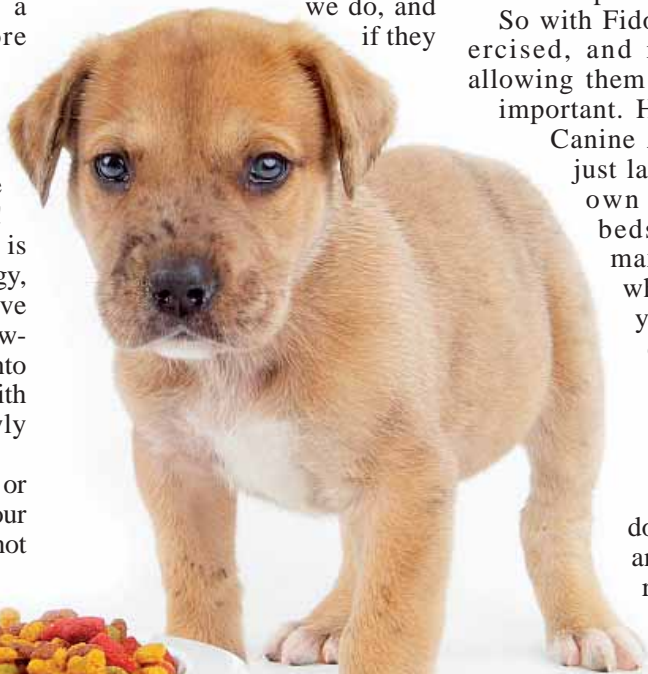
So with Fido thoroughly exercised, and rubbed down - allowing them to relax is also important. Here at Thailand Canine Academy we've just launched our very own brand of dog beds, designed for maximum comfort, whilst also helping your dog keep cool at the same time.

Remember, a mentally and physically well exercised dog is a calmer dog and will sleep and rest better at home.

For more information on dogs in general, or to inquire about training classes contact the Thailand Canine Academy on 089 588 4050, email canineworld@me.com or check the website www.tk9a.com.



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See also the tool bar on our home page (as below) and compare the online numbers with other, similar sites.

WHAT'S ON in Phuket

February 4. Gourmet Dinner by Chateau Cos d'Estournel

A Gourmet Dinner featuring five wines from Chateau Cos d'Estournel. From 6:30 to 11pm. At the fine dining restaurant "Into The Sea", connoisseurs can enjoy a specially created menu from the resort's Executive Chef, Kevin John Fawkes, paired with wines by Chateau Cos d'Estournel from the St. Estephe region in Bordeaux. Contact Phissamai Promwong at 076-381010, paeamfb-phuket@evasonresorts.com or visit sixsenses.com/evason-Phuket.

February 10, 17 and 24. Special Indian Feast Promotion

Royal Phuket Marina is pleased to introduce you to our new Special Friday Indian Feast. We are delighted to offer a 25 per cent discount on the Indian Buffet and 10 per cent off the listed menu on Friday nights. This authentic homemade Indian Buffet will be prepared and served by our very own in-house Indian Chef, Padum Kahtri. Only 495++ baht per person. From 7 to 10pm at Les Anges restaurant, Royal Phuket Marina. Contact Murat at 081-7973364, muratc@royalphuketmarina.com or visit the website royalphuketmarina.com.

February 10, 17 and 24. Navrang Mahal Curry Fridays

We present Curry Fridays at Navrang Mahal India Restaurant from 7 to 11pm in Karon Sea Sands Resort & Spa. Here is your chance to enjoy an authen-



February 11, Champagne Dinner at The Pavilions, Phuket

Who says you have to wait for Valentine's Day to get romantic? At The Pavilions, we believe in romance every day, but we highly recommend you mark this date if you really want to make love sparkle. A Degustation Menu at The Plantation Club will be impeccably paired with Champagnes from Billecart Salmon. We invite you to join us from 7pm for a Champagne cocktail. Dinner is priced at 2,900 baht++. Seats are booking fast so please reserve yours now! To book, contact us by phone or mail, as at left. Contact Francois. T: 076-317600. E: fb.phuket@thepavilionsresorts.com W: thepavilionsresorts.com

tic and lavish Indian Curry Buffet on Friday only 449 baht nett! Draught Beer by the glass: just 50 baht nett. Special discount on beverages. Reservations can be made by calling 076-286464 ext 4, email to sm@karonseasand.com or by visiting the website karonseasand.com.

February 11, Dominus Estate Wine Dinner at The Boathouse

Dominus, or, Lord of the Estate, a name chosen for excellence and long standing commitment to stewardship of the land, grants you the privilege to taste some of the world's finest wines from the Napa Valley. Renowned in the '40s and '50s, legendary in present times, the myth becomes a reality at the Boathouse Wine and Grill. From 7pm-11pm. 3,500++ baht per person.

you won't leave hungry or thirsty. All this for only 395 baht, and if you add an extra 300 baht you can choose to drink what you want from our free flow alternatives. Reservation at 076-330065, katacenter@twochefs.com or visit twochefs.com.

February 14. Valentine's Day at Two Chefs restaurants

Bring your loved one and come to Two Chefs and enjoy our special Valentines set menu which in-

cludes a welcome drink, a small amusement, and, for starters, a crayfish soup with cheese gratinated ciabatta breads. For the main course, you choose between a grilled rib-eye steak served with a pink-pepper sauce, chantarell mushroom and a bacon & cheese potato or frutti di mare à la Two Chefs: grilled lobster tail and scampi served with a white wine sauce flavored with tomato and an asparagus risotto. For dessert there will be a chocolate and raspberry cake. All this for only 995 baht. From 5pm to 1am at twochefs. Reservation at 076-330065, 076-284155 and 076-286479 info@twochefs.com or visit twochefs.com.

February 16. Monthly Lunch with PIWC Club in February

The Phuket International Women's Club (PIWC) lunch will be held on February 16 starting from 11:30am to 2pm at "The Cudos" restaurant, Surin Beach. All are welcome and prior booking is essential. Price: 500 baht for members and 650 baht for non-members. Contact Carole Dux at 085-7821332, info@phuketiwc.com or visit phuketiwc.com.

February 18-19. Basketball Skills Camp at BIS

To be held on the first weekend of the February mid-term break. This is a great way to spend the first weekend of your break after the end of a hard-working school term! The Camp will be run by former LA Lakers star Ike Nwankwo and his Top Flight Basketball Academy. Train and learn from the best in Thailand and play with top current professional players from the Thai National Team! This is the first of its kind in Phuket and one not to be missed. Open to all schools. From 9am-4pm. Price: 3500 baht for 2 days. Spaces are selling out fast so if you are interested, please email info@bisphuket.ac.th

Phuket Afternoon Computer Clinic

Is Windows driving you NUTS? Looking for a good internet connection? Need to know how and where to get your PC repaired, or your confounding questions answered? Drop by the new Afternoon Computer Clinics, hosted by Woody Leonhard and Seth Bareiss. Bring your computer. Bring your questions. Bring your sense of humor and let's see if we can solve your PC problems. Second and fourth Wednesday of every month. Sponsored by Woody's Sandwich Shoppes and the *Phuket Gazette*.

**February 8 and 22.
Sandwich Shoppe Chalong
Starts at 1 to 3pm**

Contact at 076-282403,
Woody@KhunWoody.com or visit KhunWoody.com.

February 11 and 25. Saturday Brunch

Saturday brunch from noon to 3pm at Two Chefs Kata Center! Every Saturday we are setting up our brunch buffet, filled to the limits with home made delights. In our smoke house, we smoke all of our fish and meats by ourselves, and in the bakery we bake all our bread. With very well trained chefs and a Swedish head chef, we can promise you that

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BA BA STYLE: Phuket MP, Anchalee Vanich Tephabuttra (second left), presents a bouquet to Professor Pranee Sakulpipat, Vice President of the Peranakan Association (third left) for organizing the Phuket "Baba Yaya Ladies' Costumes Fashion Show" together with Ms Kwanjai Jirayus of the Phuket Business and Occupation Association (left) and fashion designer of handmade products from Nicha's Creations, Ms Natnicha Boonyanit (third from right).



Old Phuket Town Festival



GET IT ON: Lion dances, fireworks and Chinese fashion were some of the colorful highlights of the 13th Old Phuket Town Festival held last week. Photo: Christian Mouchet

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A CLASS ACT: Mom Luang Usni Pramoj and his ensemble gave a free classical concert to Phuket's youth at the Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus on February 31. Photo: Tony Pope



EVERYDAY HEROES: The Rotary Club of Patong Beach and its board, represented here by Able Wannamakok, gave the owner of Prestige Divers, Micha Hildner, and his crew this year's Community and Service Award, for their efforts in rescuing stranded tourists from another boat near Koh Yao Yai on January 5.



GIVING BACK: Amari Coral Beach Phuket representatives led by Deputy General Manager, Ms Tipaporn Koonphol and Director of Human Resources Ms Nattamon Chooyoung, visited Baan Kalim School, Patong to provide educational assistance to underprivileged children.



THAT'LL TEACH THEM: Anantara Phuket Villas presented 50 Roy E. Heinecke Foundation scholarships on January 27. The Minor International scholarships are given every year to needy students.



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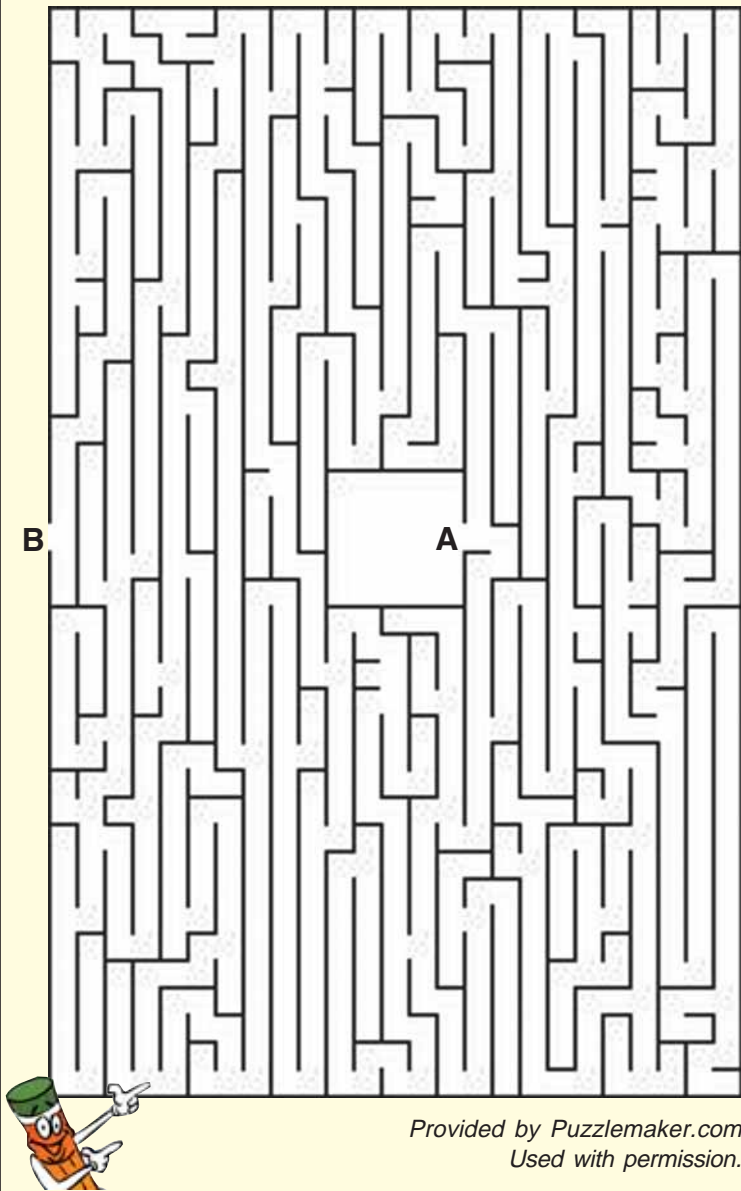


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A *Gazette* staff member completed this maze in 20 seconds. Can you beat their time? Make your way out of the maze.



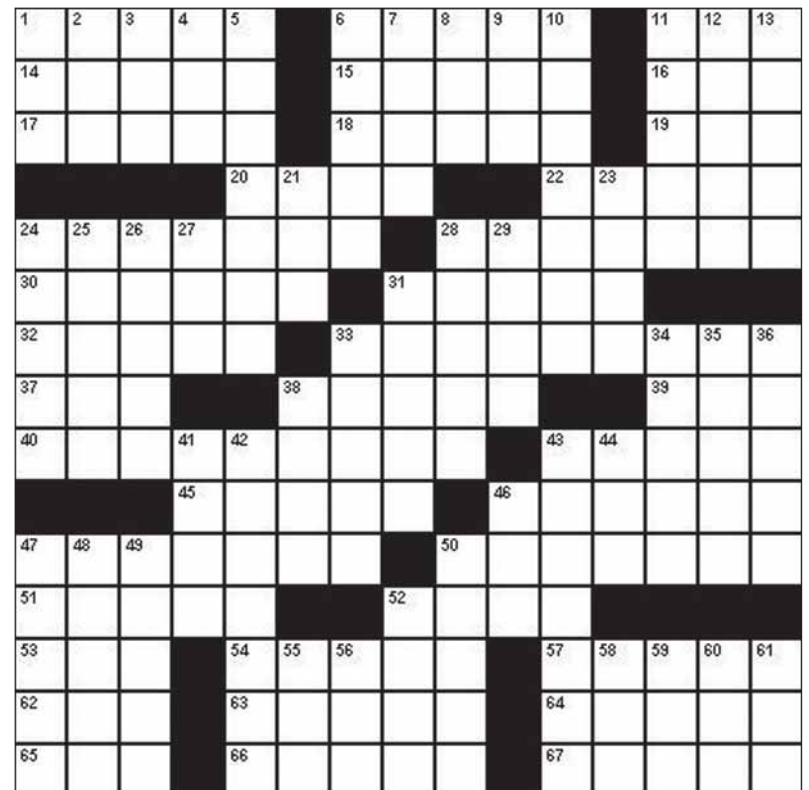
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Across

1. Arabian republic
6. Falls short
11. Family man
14. Hersey's bell town
15. Capital of Jordan
16. Afore
17. Senate attendants
18. Cheers waitress
19. Adult males
20. Blunted blade
22. Healing plants
24. Exacted retribution
28. Pleasing
30. Inhabitant of Tripoli
31. Hebrew prophet
32. Agent
33. Wife of Akhenaton
37. Attila, e.g.
38. Rich cake
39. ___ de mer
40. Skewness
43. Jewish scholar
45. Brooklyn's ___ Island
46. Flat roofing tile
47. Lease holders
50. Engage in textual misprision
51. Single things
52. Pith helmet
53. Actress Ruby
54. Group of eight
57. Chancy
62. Tolkien ogre
63. Midway alternative
64. Bert's buddy
65. Fish eggs
66. Sherpa's home
67. Chairs

Down

1. Mouth (slang)
2. Writer LeShan
3. Periodical, briefly
4. Chemical ending
5. Posy
6. Washed out
7. French friend
8. ___ little teapot...
9. PC linkup
10. Athletic shoe
11. Brit's discharge



12. Staggering
13. Compact
21. Compose
23. Endure
24. A, as in Athens
25. Infectious agent
26. Black-wooded tree
27. Greek goddess of night
28. Towering
29. Aha!
31. Joyous
33. Short letters
34. Permeate
35. Small hand drum
36. Greek epic poem

38. Canvas shelter used on camping trips
41. Future doc's exam
42. Rainy season
43. Dwells
44. Cabinet dept
46. Apex
47. English royal house
48. Dicembre follower
49. Bridget Fonda, to Jane
50. Standard for comparison
52. Skater Lipinski
55. Friend of Fidel
56. Faucet
58. Metal-bearing mineral
59. Kind of fingerprint
60. Obtain (slang)
61. Affirmative answer

Provided by BestCrosswords.com
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Crossword answers on page 42

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): An unusually introspective mood could get in the way of communication this week. Try to spend quality time alone so you can get your thoughts and emotions in order. The answer to a pressing personal problem should become clear when you have more facts at your fingertips. Those with a birthday in the week ahead will have better luck with money in the coming year. Wear sunflower for a brighter outlook.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Pisceans who have been waiting for someone with influence in the world of work to make up their mind should be satisfied this week. The stars suggest that good news will allow you to move forward and leave indecision behind. You may not get everything you want, but there will be chance to compensate later on. Your romantic outlook is rosy – an earth sign wants to become more involved.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): Teamwork is well starred for those born under the sign of Aries this week. The stars indicate that differences can be left behind and there is much to be learned from

collaborating with others who have more experience. As February progresses, you will be more balanced. Trust your intuition. A dream you have this weekend gives food for thought about romance with another fire sign.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Your way with words is highlighted to be advantageous this week. Taureans are predicted to be able to convince others of their talents and those hoping to climb the career ladder have opportunity to impress. In the realm of romance, an air sign also appreciates hearing how you feel. Where a possible relationship with a water sign is concerned, too many differences of opinion are forecast to dampen your interest.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): After a shaky start to February, Geminis will soon make up for lost time. The stars suggest that another air sign is now ready to work with you and at least one important project should be finalized by the middle of the month. In the realm of romance, your partner's reluctance to venture far afield becomes an issue in a relationship. Compromise will be the only solution in this situation.



CANCER (June 22-July 23): Better luck with finances is forecast for the first half of February. The stars suggest that you should finally see how someone has been taking advantage of your generosity. Sunday is auspicious for tactfully explaining why this cannot continue. Those who have been seeking a new leisure time pursuit are inspired by an earth sign friend this weekend. Lucky days for love are Wednesday and Thursday.

LEO (July 24-August 22): Lack of motivation is highlighted to hold Leos up this week. Some minor setbacks last month are still affecting your mood, but there are signs that the astral atmosphere will clear around the middle of February. Empty promises made by a water sign last month could cause you to give up on this friendship. Romance is better starred after the middle of the month – interest shown by an earth sign this weekend is for the wrong reasons.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): This is an auspicious week for Virgoans to ask overdue questions at work. Some answers may be hard to swallow, but the stars suggest you will feel better when you know where you stand. As February progresses, opportunities for change should come your way. A fire sign has some useful advice. Love with an earth sign is tested when you realize they are trying to provoke your jealousy.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Losing your cool could cause setbacks in the world of work this week. Librans who have been frustrated by a fire sign's lack of commitment are advised to find a tactful way to communicate with this person. The astral atmosphere will be calmer after Wednesday and you should delay discussions until then. Where affairs of the heart are concerned, the stars indicate that your head and heart are in better balance during February.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Finances remain affected by uncertain astral conditions for Scorpions this week. Temptation to spend will be strong, particularly for those who have been suffering

from post holiday blues. The stars suggest taking time out to put personal affairs in order as a clean slate will boost your spirits. There are hints that an air sign will appreciate your advice regarding relationships. Your lucky color is charcoal.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): What goes around comes around this week for some Sagittarians. If this relates to good deeds done, expect to receive rewards. Those who stepped out of line at work last month could have some explaining to do. In the realm of romance, a message received from a water sign this weekend is exactly what you have been waiting to hear. Lucky days for finances are Tuesday and Wednesday.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Over complicating issues could cloud your week. The stars suggest that you have been thinking too much and a wake-up call is needed. An air sign could help you see more clearly. A wild goose chase is in store for those keen on wooing another earth sign as it appears that you have been misinterpreting signals. Wear a piece of amber to encourage a return to reality.

PROPERTY Gazette

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

Samui hideaway secret unveiled

READY to lift the veil on Koh Samui's "best-kept secret", the boutique Akaryn Samui is set to welcome its first guests next month.

As the fourth and latest venture by Thailand hospitality pioneer Anchali Kijkanakorn, the Akaryn Samui looks to redefine the boutique resort experience.

The largely undiscovered, Hanuman Bay is a pristine crescent cove with a 500-meter powder sand beach, flanked by dramatic granite outcrops at each end. Nestled between the golden bays of Cheong Mon to its north, and the bright lights of Chaweng to its south, the cove and resort are only a short drive from the airport.

"It really is Samui's best-kept secret. I fell in love with it at first sight, and that's when my vision for Akaryn was born. There's no other beach like it on the island. It feels so removed and private. We are the first resort to be built at Hanuman Bay. That's why it was vital to design every detail to complement the bay's natural beauty and integrate it into the guest experience in many subtle ways, said Ms Kijkanakorn.

"My team and I have taken everything we've learned about

boutique resorts to create a genuinely new experience. That's how the idea of 'intuitive luxury' was born. It's not just a slogan, it's a concept we absolutely believe in and our guests will appreciate. I'd define it as luxury that doesn't need to shout 'wow factor' and knowing what your guests want almost before they do.

"There is a huge old sea almond tree right on the bay almost at the

high tide line. We made that the heart and soul of the resort, and designed the pool and chill-out deck around it, so it's a place where people can really connect, given that the rest of the experience is so private.

"The main pool is rather special too. It's done in black lava rock. We've also found a way to simulate the shimmering effect of phosphorescence in the ocean."

The new property features 34

stand-alone pool suites (five of them beach front) each an expansive 80 square meters (sqm). It also features 18 gracious 100 sqm villas with 8m private pools. Akaryn Samui's design offers a radiant take on tropical-modern, Asian-influence decor and a selection of genuine antiques. Standard features include large LCD TV, iPod and iDock with a large movie and music library, naturally sourced amenities from AHMS's exclusive Egyptian cotton sheets.

Apart from The Wet Bar, Akaryn Samui's food and beverage options include: The Edge, with chic international all day dining on the waterfront; tapas with a twist at Ochos; Royal Thai cuisine complemented by the freshest seafood at The Legend; and an elegant selection of genteel brews at The Tea Salon. Other facilities and amenities include 24-hour room service, free Wi-Fi throughout the resort, yoga classes, an extensive book, film and music library, and Galleria, a stylish boutique.

So little known and hidden away is Hanuman Bay that it barely reg-

isters on most maps and didn't have an official name. But some locals believe the bay's crescent shape and jagged rocks resemble the gaping mouth of the monkey god Hanuman from the Ramayana story.

Ms Kijkanakorn is well-acquainted with the epic, as it is a constant source of inspiration for bedtime stories for her two children, after whom her two Samui properties are named.

"I love the idea of Hanuman watching over this magical place. It suggests mythical romance, long strolls, deep conversations and contemplation, and perhaps the odd bit of mischief. I can't wait to welcome our first guests, and let the story unfold."

Akaryn Samui is the fourth property in Ms Kijkanakorn's Akaryn Hospitality Management Services (AHMS) portfolio, following the recent launch of the 62-room, 4-star Akyra Chura Samui resort at Chaweng Beach. She is also the founder and owner of the Aleenta Hua Hin-Pranburi and Aleenta Phuket-Phang Nga resorts, and the driving force behind the Pure Blue Foundation, a marine conservation charity.

- Phuket Gazette



INTUITIVE LUXURY: The new property features 34 stand-alone pool suites.

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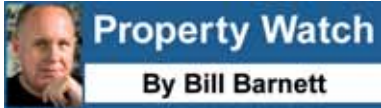
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The art of changing places



Property Watch By Bill Barnett

SOMETIMES more is more. At the other end of the universe less can also be more. Sounds confusing? It's not really. Take the recent repositioning of the upscale hotel Indigo Pearl into an all villa and suite property as a prime example.

Working with legendary designer Bill Bensley, an estimated 1.2 billion baht has been invested in the extreme make-over. Size does matter, but it comes at a cost.

For those who remember the rich history of the property, it was one of the island's first international hotels operating as the Pearl Village. Moving with the times, the new incarnation of the Indigo Pearl came about in 2007.

With a stunning creative relationship between Bensley and local metal artist John Underwood, version two of the hotel drew rave reviews. Creative input came from brand man David Keen and well known hotelier Bill Black was also heavily involved behind the scenes.

For Phuket based owner Wichit Na-Ranong the property continues to be a legacy, but he came to realize over the past few years that a commodities approach to tourism might not be the best way into the future. Especially when viewing a competitive landscape with a surge of internationally managed hotels and growth in nearby competitors, like the sprouting up of the North Phuket Mai Khao

grouping. Add to this the new 262 room Pullman Arcadia set to open later this year down in Nai Thon and an InterContinental Hotels Group Indigo (no association) which will break ground this year and the competition looks fierce.

Throw into the mix a free flow of mid-market, same-same hotels coming up in every nook and cranny of the island and there is a realization that ultimately if you played a numbers game, once visitor arrivals flatten, it comes down to pricing.

Any observer of the stock market, currencies or any other business can tell you the gravy train has its limits and once you run out of rails, it's hard traveling on rocky terrain.

Director of sales and marketing Anna Olsson said on the decision to downsize "Management has spent a lot of time over last couple of years studying market trends and listening to guests' and partners' feedback in the region and overseas.

We are confident in Phuket's future and believe that this investment and change in positioning of the hotel will bring in new demographics of visitors to Indigo Pearl and enhance the experience of our existing guests. We are currently seeing an increased recognition and demand for our product, enjoying increased forward bookings, high TripAdvisor ratings, positive guest feedback and a firm base of returning customers."

As to how important the process partner's feedback has been in the process she added "We are



REFLECTING ON THE FUTURE: Indigo Pearl has re-invented itself again into an all villa and suite property.

moving in the direction of what our guests would like to experience in a hotel and a holiday, hence the transition and the repositioning is a natural progression to excel and deliver a distinctive and innovative experience."

Needless to say after a recent visit to the property the outcome of the change could unabashedly be called – sensational.

Commenting on the process and inspiration Bill Bensley has said "When we were engaged with yet another assignment to improve my favorite hotel, Indigo

Pearl, our goal was to create Phuket's most exclusive high end private garden and pool residences. We have designed each of these seven residences differently. I love black and white. The simplicity of the interior colors allows us to explore in a greater way textures and keeps us on the tin mining track."

Taking a step back and viewing the current state of hotel development on the island, I think the decision to reevaluate, create a forward looking strategy and not simply take the road most

traveled is laudable.

More hotel owners need to be leaders rather than followers and commodity based thinking when viewing a tropical destination island can be dangerous.

Less can often be more and at the end of the day, the best judge will ultimately be the financial bottom line of the property – which resonates from solid decision making.

Bill Barnett is Managing Director of C9 Hotelworks and can be contacted through W: c9hotelworks.com

In brief...

New Phuket land tax increase hoopla

IN A process which is undertaken on a cyclical basis every four years, the fees on land transactions are set to be reviewed by Thailand's Treasury Department.

The actual increase is on Minimum Assessed Value (MAV) and not land tax.

The MAV forms the basis of computing the transfer fee of two per cent when land or property is transacted.

Unlike many other countries capital gains is not paid on land transactions but is essentially a transaction tax which includes the two per cent, specific business tax 3.3 per cent of the declared value and one per cent withholding of the sales price which can be credited back as a tax credit.

Minimum assessed values for land in Thailand are notoriously low and tax exposure on sale comes down to single digits which by international standards is extremely low.

Another practical side is the often practiced under-declaration of the declared value of the land which is illegal, but often occurs when the two parties wish to minimized tax. This can come back to bite the purchaser though if they wish to list the full asset in their company books and are unable to do so if a wrong declared value is made.

So in a nutshell this is mostly a case of much ado about nothing, and not such big news after all.

More foreign bank branches in Phuket?

THE island is anxiously awaiting the reforms by the Finance Ministry and Bank of Thailand allowing foreign



At present United Overseas Bank (UOB) is the only overseas bank on the island.

banks to open new branches in the first quarter of this year.

According to the Central Bank the move, subject to Cabinet approval, would give a green light to foreign banks to have up to 20 branches and off site ATMS throughout Thailand in a move which looks to be instigated by the upcoming Asean Economic Community (AEC) initiative in 2015.

For Phuket businesses and expats the limited offering of only one overseas bank – UOB – has been considered to be a negative factor.

Certainly one bank which often comes up in conversation is HSBC and perhaps it may not be too long before we see other financial institutions with a local branch.

Recently HSBC announced they are selling their Thailand retail and wealth management units to Bank of Ayudhya, but would continue with wholesale banking.

– Bill Barnett

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Bangkok developers expand upcountry

HIT hard by high waters and high competition, many developers in the property market of Bangkok and its suburbs are now expanding their portfolios to include more upcountry projects.

Real estate markets that stand to gain the most from such a trend include Phuket, Pattaya, Chon Buri, Hua Hin, Khao Yai and Chiang Mai.

Leading property firms investing in these provinces include Pruksa Real Estate, Sansiri, LPN Development, Property Perfect, Land & Houses, Quality Houses, SC Asset Corporation, Sena Development, Charn Issarra Development, Supalai and NC Housing.

While the latest trend will mean increased competition for local developers, it will also mean that home-buyers upcountry will have more choices of quality residences at competitive prices.

According to a survey by *The Nation*, popular locations for expansion by leading firms are still the major tourist destinations. However, there is also growing interest in Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Haad Yai, Ayutthaya, Nakhon Pathom and Nakhon

Ratchasima, where top developers are likely to make inroads this year since such locations have sufficient population bases and lifestyle offerings similar to Bangkok.

After its successful launch of the dCondo project in Phuket, Sansiri is looking to launch a second project (condo in Kathu) this year. Phuket is the second upcountry location for Sansiri after Hua Hin.

Sansiri President Srettha Thavisin said, "Our dCondo Phuket targets local buyers rather than foreigners because many Thais from other provinces move to work in Phuket. They need to buy homes at reasonable prices."

Land & Houses Senior Executive Vice President Naporn Soonthornchitcha-roen said Land & House had operated upcountry for more than 10 years but mostly in tourist destinations such as Phuket, Hua Hin and Chiang Mai.

Now the company is interested in expanding into populous provinces with urban lifestyles. Namely, it is looking into developing a residential project in Udon Thani province following the success of its projects in

Khon Kaen.

Sena Development Director Kessara Thanyalakpark said that after last year's flood disaster, demand for a second home on the Eastern Seaboard was growing strongly. As a result, the company decided to acquire land in Pattaya for a mixed-use project that combines housing, retail, a hotel, and serviced apartments.

Supalai Managing director Atip Bichanond said his company aims to increase the proportion of upcountry sales to 10 per cent by 2015. It is interested in developing residential projects in new destinations in both the South and the Northeast.

At present, Supalai is developing projects in Phuket, Bangkok, Khon Kaen and Chiang Mai.

Meanwhile, a source at a property agency in Phuket said the expansion of leading Bangkok-based developers would directly affect provincial developers since "top firms" can develop with greater cost efficiency through supply and material sourcing, and thus allow them to offer lower prices than local companies.

For example, Pruksa Real Es-



COMING SOON: Developers are building more affordable homes in Phuket.

tate launched townhouses in Phuket last year priced under two million baht per unit. The project sold out within three months. Sansiri's dCondo project offered prices below 3mn baht per unit in the fourth quarter of last year. That project sold out within one month.

The success of these two projects shows there is a strong demand in Phuket for homes costing less than 3mn baht.

This revelation has forced property developers to diversify their offerings, beyond the high-end market and into the realm of cheaper first homes.

—*The Nation & Phuket Gazette*

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Construction commences Q2 2010 and Completion during Q2 2012

Totally tropical Phuket pineapple

Patrick Campbell discusses the abundance and beauty of bromeliads.



Gardening

By Patrick Campbell

MY LOCAL plant nursery has hundreds of colorful bromeliads hanging in small pots, the profusion of which is unusual since they are not that common in Phuket gardens.

One bromeliad that is exceedingly plentiful on the island is the pineapple. Normally grown solely for eating, its broad, spiky rosette of waxy, strap-like leaves set atop the characteristic oval fruit, are often visible beneath the shade provided by rubber tree plantations. And if you haven't seen them in situ, you will have noted the trucks stacked with pineapples that speed down the island's roads on a daily basis or the lorry-loads of fibrous leaves and stalks destined for elephant camps around Phuket.

The fruits are known as coalesced berries or berries that have fused into one fruit and are produced above a stout stem, three or four feet tall. Supposedly discovered by Christopher Columbus in Guadeloupe, the explorer pronounced it "delicious and freshing" to the taste. Named after its resemblance to a pine cone, the pineapple was the first bromeliad to leave the New World and nowadays is considered one of the world's favorite fruits. From its Caribbean origins it has spread to every region of the tropics while Thailand has become the world's second largest producer of pineapples.

Ananas comosus, to give it its botanical moniker, is terrestrial rather than epiphytic. While most bromeliads grow precariously on trees, fallen branches or even rocks, and without the need for soil, the pineapple is normally planted in earth, and derives its

nutrients from that medium.

However, it is shallow-rooting, so if you decide to cultivate it, try not to disturb the roots once the plant has taken. And remember that the mature plant is broad (two to three feet wide) as well as tall, so it needs plenty of space.

The normal method of propagation is from crown cuttings (the inedible top), or from side shoots in the leaf axils or suckers. Pineapples left longer in the ground will produce side shoots and eventually form new fruits.

Commercially, the pineapple is grown in a three-year cycle. A herbaceous perennial, it flowers after about twenty months, and bears fruit the following year. Farmers often use a black plastic sheet as a mulch, with holes cut for the young plants, in order to retard weeds, and retain heat and moisture.

As befits such a popular plant,



YOUNG ONES: *Ananas comosus* (pineapple) in its youthful stage. Photo: Mattes



Pineapples are a fruity favorite.



Like a pine cone – hence the name.

there are now a host of cultivars, mainly aimed at the creation of sweeter and less acidic varieties. Hilo and Natal Queen are especially common, the latter adapting well to Phuket's climate. While the fruit is deservedly popular on account of its sumptuous flavor, it is a rich source of both manganese and vitamin C. It also is a rich source of fiber, and also contains an enzyme, bromelain, which can be used to tenderize meat.

Pineapples make an attractive, as well as useful addition, to your patch. But if you do not want to grow the common or garden edible variety, there are also ornamental ones which can be obtained. Of these, the best known is *variegata*, which has

handsome-striped leaves with deep pink or red spines along the margins. It can usually be found in good garden centers, often in a plastic pot. Like most bromeliads, it will grow quite happily in such conditions, and can be suspended from a structure such as a trellis or tree if you so desire. However, it will not grow as vigorously as the edible variety.

As for the other decorative bromeliads in my local garden center, they will have to wait till next week.

If you have a question or a garden that you would like featured, you can email me anytime at: drpaccampbell@gmail.com



DISCOVER LUXURY IN A RARE LOCATION

Flanked by five stunning beaches and overlooking glittering Patong Bay and the Andaman Sea. Bluepoint offers a touch of serenity in one of the last available sea view plots on Phuket's desirable west coast. Bluepoint is comprised of 20 freehold and leasehold condos all sophisticated in style with environmental preservation in mind. Choose Bluepoint and invest in an unrivalled lifestyle choice in a truly magical location.

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Terms & Conditions: *Offer expires 31 March 2012. The developer reserves the right at any time to make changes to the project at its own discretion. Images are computer generated and for visual reference only.



Tip of the week

Wildlife in your garden



Gardens can be butterfly havens.

MAKING your garden attractive to wildlife – including small birds such as sunbirds and bulbuls as well as butterflies, toads, lizards, frogs and skinks is primarily a matter – as for humans – of providing shelter, water and food.

It's also important to avoid using chemical pesticides. Emphasise native plants in your garden, as they are familiar to the wildlife and adapted to your climate.

Specifically, you might consider planting dense foliage trees

for nesting, installing a birdbath, a pond, nesting boxes, a bird table or feeders, growing hedges and of course flower borders.

Butterflies and bees love *buddleias*, *abutilons*, *lantanas*, *hibiscus*, *caesalpinias* and yellow bells (*tecoma stans*) to mention but a few. All these have nectar producing flowers, and are thus equally attractive to nectar feeding birds.

All the more important to provide such an environment as green spaces continue to disappear.

White Sand / Blue Sky Air Show

Don't miss it!
Birdman will jump out of an airplane
and land on Surin Beach.



When? Saturday, 25 February 2012

Birdman? Phuket resident Jari Kuosma, age 42, from Finland [bird-man.com]

Birdman often flies for miles in nothing but his bird suit.
And on this occasion he has a very good reason for doing so.

- Spectacular Stunts in classic, high powered aircraft @ 4pm
- Birdman Jump @ about 5:30 for sunset landing on the beach

Sponsorships Invited. Contact Pat@aeropromgr.com or 085-258 0006.

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Properties For Sale

JINDARIN BEACH CLUB&RESORT



- 1.5 million baht for one plot
- 3.2 million baht for cottage + plot

Tel: 080-467 7770 (Thai), 083-520 0020 (English). Email: eam1008@me.com
Website: www.jindarin.com

REDUCED PRICE VILLA 7.5 MILLION BAHT



3 beds, 3 baths, swimming pool with jacuzzi and lake view. Superb location at Anuphas Golf Ville in Kathu. Fully furnished and ready to move into. View now. Tel: 081-273 3975 (English), 084-293 7923 (Thai).

PRIME KATA LAND

8.5 rai of land in a prime location for a condo project or hotel in central Kata. Full chanote. No agents. 85 million baht per rai. Tel: 080-124 1245 (English). Email: kay@phuketandamanrealestate.com For further details, please see our website at www.phuketandamanrealestate.com

CHALONG 2-BEDROOM HOUSE

New detached house for sale. 2 bedrooms, en suites. Large walled garden. Price: 2.2 million baht. Contact Jai. Tel: 089-817 4864. Contact Jai.

5.75 RAI - BANG PAE

Nice, flat land. 22 million baht for all, or 4 million baht per rai. Tel: 081-693 4075.

DISTRESSED PROPERTIES

I have clients waiting to buy and clients looking to sell distressed properties, land etc. If you urgently have or want property/land please contact me? Tel: 080-124 1245 (English). Email: kay@phuketandamanrealestate.com For further details, please see our website at www.phuketandamanrealestate.com

5-BED THAI STYLE POOL VILLA

On 1 rai of land. Luxury finishing, all with en-suite bathrooms. Tel: 087-893 4636. Email: annericphuket@hotmail.com

VILLAS IN RAWAI

2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, furnished. Sale/rent. Price: 4 million baht. Pool villas: 5 million baht. 80% finance, 0% interest, 20% deposit. Tel: 083-641 9327. Email: rawaipoolvillas@hotmail.com

FOREIGN COMPANY WITH LAND

Thai company with magnificent sea views land plot. Foreign Director. 180° views across Phang Nga Bay. 2 rai, reduced to 8 million baht. Tel: 076-279280, 087-381 1485, 123-030790. Email: jaekayjosh@gmail.com

LUXURY VILLA IN CHALONG



Baan Pranghtong Park. An exclusive residential gated community. House 660sqm on 3 levels. Land 1,600sqm, 5 bedrooms, 7 bathrooms, swimming pool 12.5 x 6m with spa, large sala, double garage. Freehold: 5 Chanote titles of 82sq wah (350sqm) each. Excellent investment potential on 2 plots with Chanote title, to build 2 other separate villas, fully independent with own entrance. Tel: 086-271 3260 (English). Email: crishausb@hotmail.com
Website: www.tamata-phuket.com

MODERN POOL VILLA



Stunning 3-bedroom pool villa, 5 mins from Laguna. 600sqm plot in peaceful location. Finished to a very high specification. Must see. Selling price: 12.9 million baht. Tel: 084-994 9303. Email: phuketpoolvilla.info@gmail.com

PATONG; 2BEDS CONDO



2 bathrooms, pool, fully furnished. Freehold. Price: 5.5 million baht. Tel: 081-612 4187. Email: nicolaas5@yahoo.com

24 RAI CHEAP CHALONG

24 rai close to Phuket Zoo. 3.8 million baht per rai. Direct from owner, with chanote title. Email: landchalong@gmail.com

SEAVIEW LAND IN KATA 2.45M

Seaview land, sunset views. Close to beach and Kata Center. Only 2.45 million baht. Tel: 089-908 1642 (English), 081-797 1040 (Thai). Email: ajq@hotmail.co.uk See website: http://bit.ly/zixPid for details.

BANGTHONG, KATHU LAND

for sale. 83sq wah, Chanote. Close to Tesco (5 minutes). Price: 2.3 million baht. Tel: 081-956 6457, 089-646 4786.

LAND NEAR MISSION HILLS



Pa Khlok. 2 rai 32sq wah, 60m wide. Chanote. Located on Tha Ruea-Pa Khlok-Muang Mai Rd. 11 km from Heroines' Monument. Price: 7.8 million baht. Tel: 089-472 9118. Email: honda.1437@hotmail.com

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Please contact us:
Mobile: Alain 081-970 3136 (English, German, Thai)
Email: agogniat@loxinfo.co.th
www.phuket-golfresidences.ch

PATONG TOWER CONDO

Modern, fully furnished, 65sqm, 1 bedroom, freehold, great rental returns. 6.5 million baht. Tel: 081-088 8099. Email: finobkk@yahoo.com

30 RAI IN TOWN

Flat land near Dowroong School in Phuket Town. Tel: 081-691 2526.

LAGUNA GOLF LOTS



Waterfront Golf lots. Photos, floor plans and prices. Tel: 084-839 3285. Email: golfplots@hotmail.com

HOUSE WITH POOL - NAI HARN



Land plot of 900sqm with beautiful 280sqm house. 3 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms. Western kitchen. Fully air conditioned, WiFi and cable TV. Large pool, sala and large tropical garden. 2 carpark garage. Electric gate. Well established, quiet neighborhood. Chanote title. Sale by owner. 10.7 million baht. Tel: 087-267 1282 (English). Email: david_rosamond@yahoo.com

NAI HARN LUXURY CONDO



2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 111sqm. From 4.5 million baht. Must see. For further details, please see our website at www.amphaiseabreeze.com
Tel: 084-993 7308.

LAND FOR SALE

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

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.

6.1 RAI LAND FOR SALE

15.6 million baht. 5 mins to Nai Thon Beach. 10 mins to airport, Chanote title. Tel: 085-793 2718.

MAI KHAO BIRD'S EYE VIEW

1/2 rai Mai Khao great view. 3 million baht. Only with road and electricity, next to Luxury villas. Tel: 086-267 1063 (English & Thai). Fax: 076-335212. Email: thureewan@gmail.com

VILLA FOR SALE



Nai Harn, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, swimming pool, 1 rai. Price: 14.5 million baht. Soi Nanachat 49/90. Tel: 088-443 8704.

KAMALA HOUSE FOR SALE



Near Phuket FantaSea. Price: 3.2 million baht. Negotiable. Tel: 081-719 1041. Email: teddykong0222@hotmail.com

HOUSE FOR SALE IN BAAN PROMPHAN

2.5 floors, 5 mins to town, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, Good for stay! 2.85 million baht. Tel: 083-506 9155. Email: sumitra.saetan@gmail.com

HOUSE & FURNITURE

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

PANORAMIC SEAVIEW VILLA

Exclusive, 3 bedroom, overlooking Makham bay and 200m to Ao Yon Bay. 19.15 million baht. Tel: 076-610232, 081-970 0743 (English & Thai). Email: ready@twovillas.com

BEST LUXURY VILLA



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PATONG POOLSIDE APARTMENT

52sqm, Furnished Western kitchen, 42" TV with Cable, WiFi & maid. Minimum 6 months. Rent: 22,000 baht per month. Tel: 080-052 8082 (English). Email: phvcondo@aol.com

LUXURY VILLAS FOR RENT

3-4 bedroom villas at Phuket Private Lagoon project. 500m from Chalong Temple, Luang Pu Supa Temple and Phunaka Golf Course. Save up to 40% with one year contracts. Short term rentals available. Tel: 085-575 3300. Email: A@kulbit.com For further details, please see our website at <http://phuket9.com>

THAI VILLA AND POOL

Nai Harn, long term, mid-March. 40,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-270 5126. Email: mervyn.crocker@yahoo.com

POOL VILLA RENT IN RAWAI

Available Jan-Feb 2012. Tel: 089-472 9870. Email: d_chai but@yahoo.com

CONDO AT ROYAL PLACE PROJECT



Bypass Road, opposite Tesco Lotus. 47sqm at corner, 3fl, 1 bedroom, 1 bathroom, kitchen, swimming pool view, fully furnished (2 aircons, washing machine, refrigerator, TV, microwave, etc). Pls contact for more details. Tel: 089-469 1813.

HOUSE FOR RENT

2 aircon bedrooms, 1 bathroom, living room, furnished house, kitchen, near Phuket Zoo. Tel: 081-537 9878 (English & Thai), 089-729 8472. Email: tiwus@hotmail.co.th

B.L. APARTMENT

New in Kathu. Big rooms, 1 bedroom, 1 living room, aircon, cable TV, ADSL, hot shower, garden, and car park. Rent: 7,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-692 3163.

POOL VILLA RAWAI

2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, furnished, internet, cable TV. Available now. Tel: 083-641 9327. Email: rawaipoolvillas@hotmail.com

RAWAI HOUSE RENT/SALE

3-bed/bathroom trad. villa, terrace, fully furnished, phone. Located on a hill, with gardener/housekeeper. Rawai/Nai Harn area. 35,000 baht per month or 300,000 baht per year. Email: rawaihome@yahoo.de

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Surface: 45sq wah (180sqm).

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VILLA FOR RENT AT MAI KHAO

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HOUSE IN PATONG



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3 BEDROOM APT LAYAN BEACH

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STUDIO FOR RENT PHUKET TOWN

Furnished, aircon, garage. 6,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-719 7015. Email: jyfieviet@gmail.com

KATA SEAVIEW WESTERN APART



1 bedroom, great sea view, penthouse, 100sqm, with huge terrace. 2 bedrooms, 2 baths, ground floor 115sqm with 60sqm covered terrace. Sat TV, Internet, fully furnished, fitted kitchen, parking. Tel: 084-840 1262. Email: north8east98@yahoo.com

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1 bed, fully furnished apartment available February 15. Swimming pool, gym, parking, WiFi, cable TV, 800m to Patong Beach. Tel: 085-069 0938. Email: nnorthwo@hotmail.com

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Secure, great location. Long-term rental. 10,500 baht/month. Tel: 086-664 5575. Email: taoc79@gmail.com

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3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, fully furnished, 2 aircon, kitchen, small garden, cable TV, internet. Rent: 25,000 baht per month. Tel: 086-739 3220.

RENT 2,500 BAHT PER MONTH

Single house with big garden. Rent 2,500 baht/month. Long term: 3 years. 5 mins to airport. Tel: 083-649 1218.

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New townhouse for rent. Near BIS and Boat Lagoon.
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(THAI ONLY)**

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For boat in Chalong. English speaking. Salary 10,000 baht + 200 baht each day. Need immediately. Contact Delphine. Tel: 087-277 7395.

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(THAI ONLY)**

Work 6 days a week, good salary. Tel: 081-968 5963. Email: cc@bayshoreprojects.com

**KINDERGARTEN
SECRETARY**

Must have a good English and computer skills. Mon-Fri 7:30-4:30. Chalong. Tel: 080-624 7060.

OFFICE SECRETARY

Needed by property management company. Must have good knowledge of Quick Books and be able to multitask. Thai applicants only, please. Tel: 076-384691, 081-978 7489 (English & Thai). Email: enrico@easyhomephuket.com

**LOOKING FOR
BABYSITTER**

Age 25-35, must have experience with 3-month-old baby, knowledge of English language is a must. Starting salary: 15,000 baht. Tel: 086-270 7506.

**ASSISTANT/
SECRETARY**

Available for foreigners only. Office and field assistant, background and knowledge with construction administration is an advantage. Tel: 081-968 5963. Email: cc@bayshoreprojects.com

**NEW ANDAMAN COVE
MANAGER**

Andaman Cove Juristic Person is looking for a new Manager (Thai national) for 29 luxury condos/private residences inside Evason, Rawai. Knowledge of accounting and maintenance needed. For more information call Khun Gim at 085-918 2238 or email waruneehangan@hotmail.com

**COOK REQUIRED
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Human Resources & Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Manager • CSR Coordinator 	Room & Guest Service Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Service Agent
Food & Beverage Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bartender (contract) • Waiters / Waitress (contract) • Assistant Restaurant Managers • Hostess (contract) 	Sales & Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Villa Sales Manager
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If you are interested to apply for the above roles to join our team, please submit a letter of application, list the position you are applying for, attach your resume and a recent photo with your expected salary to:

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Human Resources Department

390 Srisoonthorn Road, Chermatalay, Thalang, Phuket 83110, THAILAND
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is looking for long-term staff, no older than 30 years. English fluency and excellent communication skills are a must. Tel: 082-329 3207.

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We are a newly established company. We have the following positions available: Sales rep, Cleaners, Customer service, Accountant, General labor, Secret shoppers, Marketers, Drivers, Writing and editing. If you are interested in any of the listed positions, email: dunlapps@gmail.com for more details concerning the Job and interview.

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Phuket Fish Boat Co, Ltd, Owner of Luxury Sport Fishing Yachts, requires a Full Time Operations Manager. Expat Ok, Work Permit Provided. Responsible for operations of boats, booking schedules, maintenance schedules, crew supervision and reporting. Normal working hours: Mon-Sat, 8am to 5pm. However, must carry phone all the time to react to emergency. Starting pay is 30,000 baht a month. Apply at martin@phuketfishboat.com

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SECRETARY**

Position available for: Foreigners may apply. We are looking for highly motivated, self driven people who are a combination of both the positive kind of attitude in dealing situations and are willing to go an extra mile to take responsibilities and show interest in learning new things related to the job. Good communication skills. Hotel experience is an advantage. Salary negotiable. Tel: 081-270 1370. Email: mike@bayshoreprojects.com



The Baan Yuree Resort & Spa in Patong is a foreign operated property with customers mainly from Australia and New Zealand. We are looking for key members of staff to join our fully occupied hotel who are interested in speaking and learning more English, providing quality service and enjoying the benefits of a good service charge and good working environment. We look forward to meeting you!

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- Must be fluent in spoken Thai & English - Thai or Foreigner OK
- Strong Computer Skills - Knowledge of Comanche a plus!
- Have strong leadership skills to lead, train and motivate a team
- Quality Service Oriented
- Previous Hotel Management Experience in Phuket a plus

Additional Open Positions for Thai Nationals

- | | | |
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| • HR Manager | • F&B Manager | • HK Clerk |
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| • Store & Receiving | • Driver (2) | • Commis I,II |
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A/R Accountant**Qualifications**

- Thai national, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting or Finance
- Good/strong Command of written and spoken English Computer literate
- At least 1 year experience in accounting
- Customer relation skills and service mind are essential
- Knowledge in AccPac operate would be an advantage

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- Thai national
- Bachelor Degree in related field
- Excellent English, Computer literacy and good people skills
- Able to coordinate with other department in academic function

Teacher's Assistant**Qualifications**

- Thai National, Bachelor Degree in related field
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Requirements:

- ~ Previous export experience / shipping procedure knowledge is a must
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- ~ 28 years +, Thai nationality,

Sales Representative (Travelling sales person – male or female)

Requirements:

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- ~ Foreigner with Car Driving License + Own car

For details please check: www.divesupply.com / Jobs. Interested candidates are invited to send their CV in English with photo, present and expected salaries and date of availability to:
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PhuketAttention: Director Sales & Marketing
Email: stefan@divesupply.com

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- ▶ Service-minded with an outgoing personality
- ▶ Able to work well with large numbers of advertisers, both foreign and Thai

and should have:

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- ▶ A good sense of organization and respect for details
- ▶ Knowledge of basic office software

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The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd

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Owner Wichai Pettongkam loves this airplane and wants to get it back in the air. If you like flying and might want to be a partner in the plane, please come to the TFC to have a look, or contact **Khun Tom** (email tom@thaiflyingclub, Tel: 089-092 2711). Or talk to **Khun Wichai** directly on 081-633 7082.

Khun Wichai does not want to sell the plane, but would welcome a partner who can help to get it flying again. This could be a very good opportunity for someone to get a share in a nice airplane for a very good price. All negotiable.

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SOLUTIONS TO THIS WEEK'S PUZZLES

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1	Y	E	M	E	N	6	F	A	I	L	S	11	D	A	D
14	A	D	A	N	O	15	A	M	M	A	N	16	E	R	E
17	P	A	G	E	S	18	D	I	A	N	E	19	M	E	N
20	E	P	E	E	21		22	A	L	O	E	S			
24	A	V	E	N	G	E	D	28	L	I	K	A	B	L	E
30	L	I	B	Y	A	N	31	M	O	S	E	S			
32	P	R	O	X	Y	33	N	E	F	E	R	T	I	T	I
37	H	U	N			38	T	O	R	T	E	39	M	A	L
40	A	S	Y	M	M	E	T	R	Y	43	R	A	B	B	I
45							C	O	N	E	Y	46	T	E	G
47	T	E	N	A	N	T	S	50	M	I	S	R	E	A	D
51	U	N	I	T	S	52	T	O	P	I					
53	D	E	E			54	O	C	T	A	D	57	D	O	D
62	O	R	C			63	O	H	A	R	E	64	E	R	N
65	R	O	E			66	N	E	P	A	L	67	S	E	A

COFFEE
break

Epic final in Aussie Open

By Dean Noble

WORLD number one Novak Djokovic retained the Australian Open title in an exhilarating victory over second seed Rafael Nadal.

Not only was the encounter the longest ever Grand Slam final to date, at five hours and 53 minutes, it also gave tennis archivists numerous other records to rewrite.

Nadal is the first man to lose three consecutive Grand Slam finals in the Open era. Djokovic, while consigning the Spaniard to this most unwanted of statistics, gained his hat-trick of titles allowing him to join the hallowed ranks along with Andre Agassi, Roger Federer and Mats Wilander.

The Serbian has the chance to emulate Australian Rod Laver by holding all four Grand Slam titles simultaneously in the Open era, when he vies for the French Open in May. If successful, he will also be the first since 1937-38, when Donald Budge won all the titles in a non-calendar-year clean sweep.

This was the 29th encounter between the two titans of tennis, but the first match requiring a fifth set.

It was Nadal who looked to have the great-

est reserves and focus to take the crown breaking Djokovic's serve to lead 4-2.

However the exertions began to tell and the Serbian rallied, broke Nadal's serve twice to eventually fall to the floor of the Rod Laver Arena as champion, 5-7 6-4 6-2 6-7 (7-5) 7-5.

Djokovic paid tribute to Nadal for his part in the battle after collecting the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup and prize money of US\$2.3mn, "I had lots of chances to finish the match in the fourth set, but he came up with some incredible serves and incredible points. He deserved to prolong the match in the fifth set, and then really both of us could have won the match."

Rafael Nadal remained upbeat despite failing to secure his second Australian Open title, acknowledging the match as one of the toughest he had ever participated in.

Nadal added, "We played a nice tennis match, it was a very good show and I enjoyed being a part of it. I wanted to win, but I am happy with how I did."

Amazingly Nadal found some energy to joke when asked would he watch the match saying, "No, it's too long. Just the highlights."



WHAT A RIPPER: Novak Djokovic celebrates victory over Rafael Nadal in a record final lasting 5 hours 53 minutes at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Photo: AFP/Ryan Pierse

Liverpool double down



DOUBLE DUTCH: Dirk Kuyt gets his second goal of the season scoring Liverpool's FA Cup fourth round winner at Anfield. Photo: AFP/Andrew Yates

LIVERPOOL FC progressed to the last sixteen of the FA Cup thanks to a late winner from Dirk Kuyt.

In four days the Reds sent both Manchester outfits out of English domestic cup competitions.

Kuyt, left unattended by an absent and constantly jeered Patrice Evra, drove home from inside the United box after Andy Carroll flicked on Jose Reina's clearance.

Manchester United's keeper, David de Gea had a torrid afternoon despite making a fine save early in the match diving low to his right to deny Maxi Rodriguez.

The young United keeper, replacing Anders Lindegaard, never looked comfortable in a game that failed to live up to expectations. De Gea's confidence took a nosedive when he failed to collect Steven Gerrard's inswinging corner in the 20th minute, allowing Daniel Agger a simple headed goal.

Ji-Sung Park well struck shot gave Pepe Reina in the Liverpool goal no chance in the move of the match, after excellent work by Rafael Da Silva on the wing to level the score before the break.

The second half was a dull affair and a replay looked certain until Kuyt's 88th minute winner.

Newcastle United were the biggest faller of the fourth round losing 1-0 away to Brighton due to an own goal, in a pitiful performance. One Toon fan in Phuket questioned whether they were looking for a win, or just a draw to gain box office receipts back at St James.

Arsenal staged the biggest comeback of the round, winning 3-2 after Aston Villa had taken a two-goal advantage into the break.

Robin van Persie scored twice from the spot with Theo Walcott adding a third in a seven minute spell to send the Gunners through.

– *Phuket Gazette*

PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES		
	Arsenal vs Blackburn	
SATURDAY, 4 FEB, 2012 20:00		
SATURDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2012 22:00		
Norwich	VS	Bolton
QPR	VS	Wolves
Stoke	VS	Sunderland
West Brom	VS	Swansea
Wigan	VS	Everton
	Man City vs Fulham	
SATURDAY, 4 FEB, 2012 00:30		
SUNDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2012 20:30		
Newcastle	VS	Aston Villa
Chelsea	VS	Man Utd
SUNDAY, 5 FEB, 2012 23:00		
	Liverpool vs Tottenham	
MONDAY, 6 FEB, 2012 03:00		
THE FA CUP FIXTURES R4R		
TUESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2012 02:45		
Sheffield Wed	VS	Blackpool
Southampton	VS	Millwall
WEDNESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2012 02:45		
Middlesbrough	VS	Sunderland

SPORTS briefs...

F1: Pirelli, the tyre supplier to Formula 1 hopes to make races even closer by introducing softer compounds for the 2012 season.

The company will also reduce the differences between the four dry-weather tyres being made available to the teams, in the belief it will provide increased opportunity for overtaking and a better show.

Ferrari, if reports are true, may have got themselves an advantage by shortening the sidepods and separating the crash structure, hoping this will reduce airflow blockages coming off the front of the vehicle.

TENNIS: Victoria Azarenka won 12 of the last 13 games in the match to beat Maria Sharapova 6-3 6-0 at the Australian Open in Melbourne.

The Belarusian looked like she may freeze in her first Grand Slam final with Sharapova breaking her serve at the start to lead 2-0. This was quickly overturned by Azarenka who went on to dominate.

Azarenka gained her maiden Grand Slam title in 88 minutes and secured the World No. 1 ranking.

Azarenka received a replica of the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup and prize money of US\$2.3mn.

PLS: Robbie 'God' Fowler is returning to premier league action later this month, with the likes of Fabio Cannavaro, Hernan Crespo and ex-Arsenal playmaker Robert Pires.

Tony Adams will be looking on from the touchline as he takes his managerial hot seat along with Peter Reid and John Barnes.

The inaugural Premier League Soccer in India will kick-off on February 25 after its successful auction of players, coaches and franchises, and will follow the lines of USA's Major League Soccer.

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Phuket cricket ground is

Dignitaries and officials from the highest ranks of sport pay tribute to the efforts

By Neil Quail

SPORT enjoys more than its fair share of ceremony from presentations to event openings and their eventual finales.

Every one of these occasions first heralds, then celebrates the victorious and then commiserates with those that will have to try again, in order to achieve that title, trophy or winning time.

One sporting occasion that inspires hope and limitless possibilities, undemanding of competitive exertion, is the cutting of a ribbon, announcing a

new ground is ready for play. As the tape falls to the ground and applause resonates among the gathered dignitaries and spectators, it's easy to imagine your child striding onto that ground with team-mates, as similar applause sounds encouragement for their sporting dreams.

With the simple cutting of a ribbon last Sunday, a new sports ground opened on Phuket, and with that ceremonial gesture came a world of possibilities for local youngsters, a "field of dreams", to borrow a popular film title.

Since the announcement last year that Alan Cooke MBE, former British Honorary Consul to Phuket,

had donated a plot of land to be used as a cricket facility, the tireless efforts of a dedicated few have seen a piece of barren wasteland transformed so dramatically that even Constable would be forgiven for thinking it was an English landscape, if it weren't for the surrounding banana plants and coconut trees.

The Alan Cooke Ground, or as its benefactor is adamant to impress, the ACG, is not as new as the official opening date last weekend suggests. To many within the Phuket Cricket Group (PCG), the grounds are very familiar, having now hosted nine Island Furniture League matches, four touring teams and several friendly games.

Blood and beer have been spilled as well as many a catch, while other drop-pings were collected. Sixes and fours are accumulating as are half-centuries, but none has reached a ton. International players and teams from abroad have graced the wicket watched by the games' enthusiasts from the ever-developing clubhouse and its magnificent upper viewing area, which also

commands a beautiful vista across the lakes of Baan Liphon in Thalung.

Preparations for the opening were complex, but managed beautifully by Siriporn, Alan's partner. Government officials and VIPs from Asian cricket attended while four teams were organized to compete over Saturday and Sunday in exhibition cricket matches as entertainment for the crowds. Phuket's youth development rugby and cricket teams, the Lomas and the Leopards respectively, gave outstanding displays of tenacity, mobility, coordination and skill as the adults waited for the guests of honor.

Speeches written and with an attractive translator in waiting,



OPEN FOR BUSINESS: Vice Governor Dr Sommai Prijasilpa cuts the ribbon with Dr Seksan Narkwong while Alan Cooke and Siriporn (2nd from right) look on. Photo: Dean Noble

practicing pronunciation of unusual names, the proceedings began once the dignitaries had been welcomed and seated.

First to the Laguna lectern was the collected Mr Cooke. Immediately he struck to the heart of the ground's importance, which he said will aid development of Thai youth cricket in association with the Cricket Authority of Thailand (CAT) and the PCG.

"I am confident that our facility [ACG] will encourage more local youngsters to participate in sports through which they can establish lifelong friendships with people from around the world who



The Lomas wai the ACG crowd.

share the same passion for their sport," said Mr Cooke.

He further acknowledged the contributions of David Roberts and Keith Brooks followed by the announcement that Property Care Services have agreed to provide floodlights for the ACG which will allow for later training hours.

After offering thanks to all in attendance, Mr Cooke suggested there was much more work ahead, but that the goal was achievable.

"I believe that with such support from our friends that we may continue to grow from strength to strength, putting Phuket firmly on the map as an international sporting destination," he concluded.

Chairman of the PCG, Pat Cotter, next remarked on Alan and Siriporn's contribution to Phuket rugby and cricket over the years and that these sports can now grow further with the establishment of the ACG.

"With this great facility generously provided by Alan and Siriporn, and the continued support of our local Thai coaching staff and the CAT, we are confident more people within the Phuket community will be able to develop their skills, which in turn will open up a world of opportunities to them," said Mr Cotter.

Mr Mohideen Kader, Chief Executive of the CAT, presented highlights of his organization's achievements from membership into the International Cricket Council in 2005 to Thailand's women's team achieving third place at the Asian Cricket Council (ACC)'s Women's T20 championship in 2011 and how the ACG will help further the sport's development.

"We are sure that with great facilities such as this, cricket in Thailand will continue to achieve great things and we will continue to support the development of cricket throughout Thailand.

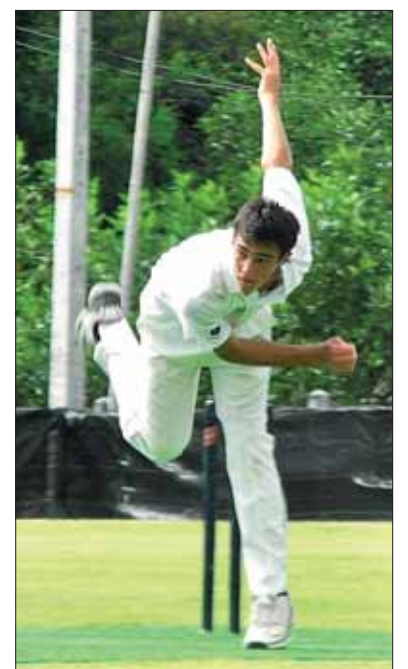
"Congratulations to Alan and everyone involved in cricket here

in Phuket for their wonderful efforts in promoting and developing the game here," said Mr Kader.

CEO of the ACC, Syed Ashrafur Huq, stated that a major objective of the Asian cricket's governing body is to see the continued development of the sport throughout the region. With 22 nations as part of the ACC, the popularity of new forms of cricket and the intense media coverage, Syed expects increased participation in the game throughout Asia, including Thailand.

"By establishing such great facilities such as the one Alan and his team have put together here, we are confident that our great sport of cricket will become one of the most popular here in Asia by helping us to develop at the grassroots level," Syed said.

"This is the foundation and the platform for growing and devel-



Val Guiraud in action for the ACC.



Leopard attack bowler.



Stump camera. Photo: D Noble



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bowled over by plaudits

of Alan Cooke MBE and organizers of the ACG in giving Phuket cricket a home.



TESTING: Former Bangladesh test captain Aminul Islam on his way to a half-century for the ACC in the exhibition match against a Cricket Authority of Thailand select XI. Photo: Neil Quail

oping our game. Congratulations to Alan for his vision and remarkable achievement in bringing to Phuket its first custom-built cricket ground. Finally a big thank you to all here in Phuket who are making our [A C C] dream become a reality," he added.

Phuket Vice Governor Dr Sommai Prijasilpa, detailed Phuket's growing popularity

as a sports destination, with particular reference to the Laguna Phuket Triathlon and marathon, and having world-class facilities to host such prestigious competitions.

"By attracting such sporting events, the people of Phuket benefit via increased economic activity, but also equally importantly by being able to

showcase their wonderful island and all it has to offer.

"By also participating in international sports, our people have an opportunity to act as ambassadors for Thailand as well as make friends from other countries," she said.

"Congratulations to Alan and Siriporn on their generosity in providing such a wonderful facility and to the PCG, CAT and the ACC in promoting cricket here in Phuket, and through this, Phuket to the world.

Thailand's Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Dr Seksan Narkwong, recalled his department's first dealings with Alan back in 2003 when their combined efforts reduced marine import tax from 47 per cent down to zero, which he said "provided the catalyst for the development for marine tourism" in Thailand. Remarking that tourism was Phuket's most important industry, Dr Seksan underscored the influence of the ACG to future tourism prospects.

"With tourism being the number one industry in Phuket, this facility will go a long way to further developing sports tourism for Phuket. It will also serve to benefit the youth in the province, by living a healthy lifestyle and fostering relationships with the Phuket and international community through their participation in sports," he said.

"I strongly believe that with the continued support of the PCG, CAT, the ACC and the local Phuket community, this facility will go on to hold many successful events and assist Phuket in developing a reputation for sports tourism," Dr Seksan added.

ter relationships with the Phuket and international community through their participation in sports," he said.

"I strongly believe that with the continued support of the PCG, CAT, the ACC and the local Phuket community, this facility will go on to hold many successful events and assist Phuket in developing a reputation for sports tourism," Dr Seksan added.

The ACG is a community project and ultimately made possible with most of the crucial services provided "free of charge". Legal, architectural, project management, secretarial, quantity surveyors, structural and electric engineering experts have all given of their time and resources to bring this project to fruition. "Without this input the ACG would not have been possible," said Mr Cooke.

Following the all important ribbon cutting, a CAT selection consisting of Thailand's finest youth players took to the field for their encounter against an ACC selection that included former Bangladesh captain Aminul Islam Bulbul, who was the first to score a test century for his country and several local Phuket players. (See page 48 for a full report on the match.)

Organizers, officials, guests and players basked in the idyllic setting and enjoyed wonderful fare provided by Outrigger to the sound of leather on willow and watched a very entertaining game of cricket.

This writer has played at a cricket ground that the legendary WG Grace called "magnificent" for its aesthetics. But I'm sure the good doctor would have stroked his beard and yielded that



THE SMILES HAVE IT: Siriporn and friend enjoy the fruits of their labor.



BELLA: The event's MC and Thai-English translator.



Pat Cotter and Anthony Van Blerk enjoy the view from the clubhouse.

Phuket's new home of cricket, the ACG. Shortly after in June, the ground will host the Thailand National Youth Games cricket competition with hopes of a gold medal for the Phuket team.

The Phuket Gazette is the official local media partner for the ACG.



Alan Cooke explains how to bowl a googly to Dr Seksan Narkwong.



CEO of the ACC Syed Ashraf Hui

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Sport

King's Cup bolsters Thai sailing interest

By Neil Quail

THE Phuket King's Cup Regatta (PKCR) attracts more and more Thai sailors each year and the 2011 event saw Thai sailors taking podium places throughout the series.

There were 74 Thai sailors who took part in the competition, making Thailand the fourth most highly represented nation in the whole regatta.

The Royal Thai Navy entered two boats into the competitive IRC2 racing class, skippered by Chief Petty Officer First Class Wiwat Poonpat (*Royal Thai Navy 1*) and CDR Pornprom Sakultem (*Royal Thai Navy 4*). The Royal Thai Navy teams have sailed consistently well at recent regattas in Thailand, and true to Thailand's history as a successful sports sailing nation, *Royal Thai Navy 1* swept to victory in IRC 2 Class again this year.

Suwan Poopoksakul skippered *Lawana*, an X-512, battled in the highly-competitive Premier Class with entries from China, UK, Hong Kong, Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

"The PKCR is the largest sailing event in Thailand," explained Suwan.

Our *Lawana* team has joined the race for 10 years, and we've also consistently seen the best international standard race management. Its success has been proven as we see more boats from around the world heading to Phuket every year."

Biranubongse Bhanubandh, has sailed since 1987 and began on dinghies. "Twenty years ago, sailing was regarded as an upper-class and costly sport, so its prevalence was limited to specific groups of people and the development was delayed. But then there were supportive factors to raise the popularity of sailing, especially the duty reduction which was a considerable turning point for sailing development in Thailand. It made sailing more affordable and led to the development of Thai sailors' skills, and now we have world champion Thai sailors."

"As a sailor, I appreciate how the organising committee properly arrange everything. With a seriously high standard of operations, the Regatta can facilitate both Thai and foreign sailors; better than other international sailing events in this region that I've joined before."

Saksit "Khet" Mangkalaseranee,

a Phuket-based business owner and crew member on *Windstar*, raced in the Modern Classic Class, finishing second overall. He said, "We have eight crew members in total, and three of the guys are Thai sailors. The PKCR is a special event in its own right, and it's also great for encouraging more Thais into sailing, for giving them a competitive step-up as their sailing skills grow. The Regatta features the increasingly popular International Dinghy Class which is the perfect way for young Thais to get into the sport. We do everything we can to encourage more Thais to take up sailing; it's always been our plan to do that. To have an international standard race entry, you often need to have an international crew; this blends sailors of differing levels of experience. That said, we are always on the lookout for talented Thai sailors to possibly join our team in the future."

In 2010, sailing prodigy and eventual winner in the Optimist Class, Anapat Ngarmdee, aged 11, attracted a lot of attention as he ran away with the class title. This past event saw Phuket native,



WINDSTAR: Saksit "Khet" Mangkalaseranee enjoying the 2011 PKCR.



LAWANA: Suwan Poopoksakul skipper of the X-512.



FUTURE FORCE: Anapat Ngarmdee Optimist champ. Photos: PKCR

Akapoj Kankaew, earn a powerful overall victory in the six-race series which has become a popular part of the PKCR programme.

A majority of sailors competing in the International Dinghy Class racing series were Thai, thanks to strong efforts by the PKCR organizing committee who worked to encourage more Thai youngsters to take up the sport. Thailand can be particularly proud of its perfor-

mance in Optimist Class; Noppakao Poonpat is the World Champion, and the Thai team is the Team Optimist World Champion also; not coincidentally, Noppakao is the niece of Wiwat Poonpat, skipper of the winning *Royal Thai Navy 1*.

The Phuket Gazette and PGTV are sponsors of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta. For information visit KingsCup.com

Karst away bay

THE 2012 Bay Regatta is underway and at the time of this paper going to print the skippers briefing will have ended and the opening party at the Village Coconut Island in full swing.

With over 40 vessels confirmed to participate in this year's event, the Bay Regatta consolidates Phuket as a top destination for big sailing events.

Day one of racing will also have taken place on Thursday with another party and prize giving presentation having been hosted at Paradise Koh Yao, Koh Yao Noi.

As this *Phuket Gazette* is being delivered to our distribution outlets around the island, Bay Regatta participants will be en route to Krabi, where sailors will enjoy a free night to prepare for day three of racing.

On Saturday, boats and crews will battle for line honors before dampening their competitive spirits with drinks and fare at the Sheraton, Krabi hosted party.

Race day four returns the regatta to Phuket for the final presentations party at Ao Chalong Yacht Club.



THE FUN REGATTA: Sailors enjoy terrific Phang Nga Bay scenery.

Next week's *Gazette* will have a full report on the regatta including results, comments and photos from the races and presentation parties.

The *Phuket Gazette* is a sponsor of the 2012 Bay Regatta.

Portrait hit six



TUG-O-WAR: TSLC and Chevrolet in action recently. Photo: TSLC

ROUND two of the Adult Futsal League season nine presented by Thanachart Bank played out under the floodlights of Thanyapura Sports and Leisure Club's (TSLC) full-sized synthetic pitch on January 26.

First on the Premier Division pitch were Jitjongrut opening their campaign against Portrait FC. Fast, flowing and attacking football from Portrait resulted in a commanding 5-1 lead going into half-time. Despite a strong come back from Jitjongrut after the break and outscoring their opposition, Portrait eventually took the win and the points with a 6-3 scoreline.

Honda and Thanachart Bank took to the pitch next. Honda started well, and took a 2-0 lead into the second-half, but couldn't continue their goalscoring form and also conceded three goals without reply which saw Thanachart win 3-2.

On the first division pitch, SGS got their season off to a poor start going down 2-0 to an as yet undefeated Ultraman side. With both goals coming late in the first half, SGS pressed to get back into the game, but a well organized Ultraman defence held firm for a 2-0 victory.

The final match of the evening saw Island Boys up against TSLC. The home team got off to a flying start scoring in the second minute. Island Boys regrouped and played good football, but were unable to find the net. In the final two minutes of the half, TSLC capitalized on some lapse defending and scored twice for a 3-0 lead. TSLC then scored from their first attack of the second half and the game was all but over as a contest. Two more goals later in the period gave TSLC the points with a 6-0 win.

- *Phuket Gazette*



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Sport

Diving on a single breath



Freediver Sarah Whitcher rising from the depths. Photo: We Freedive

By Isaac Stone Simonelli

FREEDIVING. It's different than scuba diving. There is a quietness underwater. Not a silence, but a quietness. There is the sound of shifting sand and parrot fish chewing on coral. These are the sounds of life that don't exist for scuba divers bubbling away on their regulators. It is one of the beauties of diving on a single breath.

Freediving is about calmness, not lung capacity. Slow your heart rate down, stay streamlined, take one breath and never let it go. You hold it in, despite rising carbon-dioxide levels setting off alarms in your head. There is still plenty of oxygen in your lungs to keep you from blacking out.

"People, mostly scuba divers, think that freediving is risky, but it's not. What is risky is the breathing – and since we don't do that, we don't have those problems. There is one basic rule: always freedive with a buddy," says Richard Wonka from We Freedive.

"It would be hard work to get yourself into a situation that you could black out, and if you have a buddy, not even that would be a big problem," he adds.

Richard runs We Freedive, an AIDEA certifying freediving school, along with Sarah Whitcher.

Freediving is a multifaceted discipline, composed of eight different fields (see bottom panel).

On one of the lesser-known beaches of Phuket, Sarah talks me and my freedive buddy through some light stretches. Then, with nothing but fins, snorkel and a mask, we kick into the water.

The lack of equipment is another draw for the sport. There is no clunking around a dive boat in a BCD and flippers. The sport is beautiful in its simplicity. It's what Richard calls "Snorkeling 2.0".

"People learn to freedive during the three-day course – and that's when they surprise themselves," Sarah says.

At the end of the course, most people are very comfortable and can make a two or three-minute dive.

"The numbers aren't that important. The courses are about learning how to dive well, about being relaxed and streamlined underwater... Once you learn those things, the times and numbers just happen. They're a byproduct of good diving," says Sarah.

Laying face down on the surface of the water, I calmly breathe, trying to slow my heart rate.

A deep breath in and I duck dive, following the rope Sarah set up. Halfway down, equalizing constantly, I realize that I am looking



Free at last. Photo: We Freedive

at the bottom, which is a no-no.

"It takes twice as long to get there if you're watching," says Richard. I correct my head position, suddenly I am at the bottom.

Floating just above the reef, there is a moment of meditative calmness. I watch a pair of butterfly fish flutter past, totally unfazed by my silent presence.

Calmly I put one hand on the rope and slowly start to let myself rise. Calmly down, calmly up – easy does it seems to be the name of the game.

"Once you've done freedives and been underwater for an extended amount of time, and come up fine – that experience will never leave you. You won't get nervous underwater with only a breath," says Richard.

Andaman Freediving Competition

THE Andaman Freediving Competition, starting on February 9, is designed to encourage new freedivers to join the competitive ranks and experienced freedivers to hone their competitive skills in six of the eight freediving disciplines:

1. Constant Weight
2. Constant Weight no Fins
3. Free Immersion
4. Dynamic
5. Dynamic no Fins
6. Breath hold

The two competitive AIDEA disciplines that aren't part of the Andaman Freediving Competition are "no limit" and "variable weight".

The competition will be held over four days, with Richard

Wonka and Sarah Whitcher from We Freedive judging.

Event Schedule:

- February 9 - Practice Day and Intro to Sea Competition (at Koh Bida)
- February 10 - Sea Competition (at Koh Haa) max Depth 50m
- February 11 - Practice Day and Intro to Pool Competition (Royal Lanta Resort & Spa)
- February 12 - Pool Competition (Royal Lanta Resort & Spa)

The competition is sponsored by Aquamaster and Royal Lanta Resort & Spa, which will provide the competition prizes.

Entry cost is 5,000 baht, which includes a competition t-shirt and possibly other prizes contributed by the sponsors.

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Cream of Thai cricket

By Neil Quail

IN CELEBRATION of the ACG opening, a Cricket Authority of Thailand (CAT) Select XI took on a mixed selection organized by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) in a 40 over exhibition match.

Having won the toss, CAT decided to bat and sent in local boys Martin Foster of the Village CC and Val Guiraud of Laguna CC to open the innings. Both began warily and in the fifth over, before Foster offered his wicket, he was fortunately dropped at square leg.

Guiraud (6) lasted until the score reached 31 before being bowled by Kitanu. Only five more runs were added to the score when Foster (15) got underneath a Kitanu delivery and this time the catch was held by Saurab.

With the experienced Bill Stahmer (Laguna CC) and former Bangladesh captain Aminul Islam at the crease, the game became a lesson in batting technique for the young CAT cricketers. The ACC pair brought the score to 104 when Stahmer (18) was just beaten for pace and deemed lbw by umpire Raju. Aminul looked comfortable from the start of his innings, scoring 14 in his first over, which included three consecutive boundaries using a stylish and powerful off-drive. He reached his 50 in 68 balls and graciously retired to applause from the admiring gallery.

Matthew Stahmer took over Aminul's scoring role and blasted his way to 41 from 52 balls with quality ground strokes, although dropped twice – on 16 and 21 – before Singh eventually plucked a catch off Pearwat's bowling with the score on 179. Sehgal, Sameer Khan and Neill Culpan helped push the score to 196 for the allotted 40 overs and an Outrigger lunch was called.

After lunch, ACC sent Saurab and Thanait to begin the run chase. Thanait raced to 38



THROUGH THE GATE: ACC's Neill Culpan skittles the leg stump of CAT's Saurab during the ACG exhibition match on Sunday. Photo: Neil Quail

off just 43 balls, but will consider himself lucky having been dropped when on 10. He was eventually dismissed by a wonderful catch by Jayasuriya off Guiraud's pace bowling. Saurab hit a methodical 15 before being bowled by Culpan. Kitanu replaced Saurab and seemed intent on getting his eye in, but took too long and after 18 deliveries faced, had failed to get off the mark before being bowled by Patong's Manesh Sadarangani.

Wanchana (65 not out) was next to face

the ACC attack. He too was fortunate to reach his total when he was dropped on lucky 13. Yotsakorn partnered Wanchana until he was caught by Jayasuriya off Sadarangani's accurate spin bowling.

Nopphon came in as replacement with the score on 98 and left with the score unchanged thanks to a brilliant Jonty Rhodes style catch at cover point by Guiraud.

The CAT team had their tails up and when Singh (6) was dismissed by another stun-

ning catch by Guiraud, almost back-flipping to take it, an unlikely draw was sensed.

It was not to be, however, as Wanchana knocked the winning runs with three balls remaining even while carrying an injury that required a runner for the previous seven overs.

A deserving victory for the CAT boys proving Thailand's cricket is certainly on the way up.

See pages 44-45 for a full report on the ACG opening.

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