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Night people appeal to Gov



Nightlife industry workers wait to meet Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura. The placard reads, 'We are not asking for anything unusual.'

By Dhirarat Boonkongsan

PHUKET TOWN: About 1,000 workers and business owners from the entertainment industry gathered outside the Phuket Provincial Meeting Hall on February 16 to stage a peaceful protest against tighter restrictions on opening hours.

The protesters carried banners and placards criticizing the 1 am closing time that is scheduled to be imposed on the island from March 1 as part of the government's early-closing push around the country.

About 200 people traveled from Patong in a convoy of tuk-tuks to join the large crowd in asking Phuket Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura, as Bangkok's representative, to have the decision reconsidered.

One of the banners read, "If your face itches and you scratch your backside, will you feel better?" – an apparent reference to the fact that Patong's entertainment industry believes that young Thai people, whom the government is trying to protect through the crackdown, do not frequent the resort town.

The leaders of the protest pointed out that the island – and especially Patong – was a popular destination for foreign tourists who would find the new closing time restrictive.

The governor was invited to join representatives of the industry on an official committee to examine the needs of Phuket and its strategies for tourism.

He was also urged to push for the closing time to remain at

2 am until the committee delivers its report.

Gov Udomsak said that the attitude of the people in the entertainment industry had frequently been conveyed to Deputy Prime Minister Purachai Piemsomboon – who as Interior Minister was previously responsible for implementing the Better Social Order policy – by his predecessor as Governor, Pongpayome Vasaputi.

"We have never ignored the issue, then or now," Gov Udomsak told the crowd.

The entertainment group decided to go ahead and set up its own investigating committee, with eight representatives from Patong and eight from Phuket Town, and attempt to compile a report before the March 1 deadline.

Provincial election: the weirdness gets weirder

By Gategao Phetsawang

PHUKET TOWN: Friday February 13 was certainly unlucky for one local politician with aspirations of being elected as President of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*Or-BorJor*).

The day had more twists and turns than an Olympic slalom course as Samroeng Chai-sorn, anointed as the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party's candidate just over three weeks earlier, announced he had decided not to pursue elected office.

The surprising last-minute substitute chosen by the TRT was no-nonsense Pol Col Apirak Hongtong, former Deputy Commander of the Phuket Provincial Police.

The topsy-turvy day climaxed a week in which speculation mounted over TRT strategy, and over the whereabouts of K. Samroeng.

He had been expected to register the previous Monday. That was when his chief rivals, Democrat party candidate Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr and independent Wisut Santikul, signed on the dotted line.

But he failed to appear, and could not be reached for the following three days.

He resurfaced on February 13 at a media conference at The Metropole hotel to announce his withdrawal, just 30 minutes before Col Apirak registered as the TRT candidate in his place.

At the media conference, K. Samroeng read a prepared speech that only deepened the mystery over the reasons behind his decision not to stand.

He recalled how he had worked with the man the other

Continued on page 3



Phuket & Samui Singapore 2004
PROPERTY EXHIBITION

Don't miss this opportunity. Limited Space Available.

See Page 13 for details



ON TARGET: From left, Rosie Walker, Amy Stops and Tamarin Du Preez in *Two Affairs and a Bottle of Vodka*. Photo by Patrick Barnham

May the farce be with you

KOH KAEW: The staging of *Two Affairs and a Bottle of Vodka* by students of Dulwich International College on February 12 should have come with a disclaimer: that any similarity between the “posh hotel” of the play’s setting and any of Phuket’s hotels was entirely coincidental.

The setting for this tale of dangerous liaisons and booze was somewhere in England in the just-fictional L’Hôtel le Cinq Saisons where, to quote Ms Lily, the receptionist and harridan from this Hotel Hell, “... the season ... is always *luxury*”.

The farce, specially written for British curriculum GCSE students and produced by Head of Drama Teresa Swirski, was per-

formed with gusto by the all-female Year 11 cast.

They fleshed out their larger-than-life characters with a charm beyond their slender years, a charm that would have impressed Ayckbourn fans.

Although it is difficult – and probably unfair – to pick out individual performances from such an ensemble piece, mention must be made of Daniela Cordoba’s Lillian – a Sybil Fawltly with Dame Edna specs – and Rosie Walker’s Head Porter, a mélange of the resourcefulness of Jeeves and the furtiveness of Skullion.

But in the end it was the entire cast of *Vodka* that left the audience stirred, though happily not shaken. – *Andy Johnstone*



Suwalai Pinpradab: ‘Wear white during the Vegetarian Festival.’

New TAT boss outlines her plans

PHUKET TOWN: The uniqueness of Phuket’s culture and events such as the Vegetarian Festival will prove to be new attractions for tourists, according to the new Director of the local office of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Suwalai Pinpradab.

“We will campaign for residents and tourists alike to wear white clothes during the festival to make it unique and more holy,” she said.

The festival, which usually takes place before the November 1 official start of the tourism high season, has the potential to attract more visitors from Singapore and Malaysia, she added.

K. Suwalai also told an introductory media dinner on February 13, ahead of starting her new job on the following Monday, that Phuket’s “green” low season has more potential.

She said the tourism outlook for the island was good. “Returning customers are mostly Europeans, Taiwanese, Koreans or Japanese. We aim to attract more travelers from Scandinavia, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand.”

She also expects an increase in the “Mice” (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) market, she said, especially when combined with activities such as diving and golf.

While there is continuing concern about the sustainability of Phuket’s environment, lower-cost air fares are also attracting more tourists, she noted.

– *Nonthawat Disayabutra*

B300m budget for road safety boost

By Staff Reporters

PHUKET: Almost 300 million baht is to be spent improving the island’s roads as part of a campaign by the Phuket Provincial Highway Office to reduce road deaths and injuries.

One of the biggest projects will be the enlargement of the eight-kilometer bypass road to four lanes, or possibly even six. This will cost 112 million baht and take about 510 days, giving a completion date around the end of 2005.

In addition, the 297-million-baht budget will also cover the redesigning or signposting of danger areas, and the improvement of rough road surfaces.

Days before the new roadwork was revealed, the release of the latest statistics showed that 195 people died on Phuket’s roads in 2003 and more than 12,000

were injured – most of them in crashes involving motorcycles.

Phuket’s road fatality figure for 2003 was up 7.7% on the 181 deaths in 2002.

The Provincial Health Office reported that another 12,435 people were injured in 2003 on the island’s roads, with the worst month being December, when 1,363 people were hurt.

May was the worst month for fatalities, with 26 deaths.

The statistics were compiled from figures provided by the island’s three government hospitals – Wachira, Thalang and Patong, and do not include road victims taken to private hospitals.

Some positive results were achieved, with Phuket receiving an award on February 12 for being the third most successful province in Thailand in terms of reducing road accident figures over the New Year holiday period.



Beachgoers admire the creations of competitors in the 3rd Chula Phuket Sand Sculpture Festival on Karon Beach on February 15.



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Computer glitch causes hiccups for Cupid

PHUKET: A total of 138 couples chose to marry on the island on Valentine's Day – though a computer glitch meant that some of them had a long time to think about whether they really wanted to go through with it.

The introduction of new computers at the Kathu District Office led to problems that meant couples had to prove their devotion by going to Phuket Town to make their vows stick.

There, Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura began proceedings at 9 am by presenting the first couple through the Registrar's door, Dulyarit Wipamas and Tissanee Treesab, with a voucher for a free night at Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort.

At the Phuket Town District Office, 25 vouchers for romantic dinners for two were given away and all couples married there received a memento a pair of chopsticks inscribed "Forever Love" in Thai. The other District Offices also gave away dinner vouchers.

Not one single divorce was registered in Phuket all day. This was not surprising, since, speaking before the event, Karnjana Hongboonyanurak, the Registration Officer at the Phuket Town District Office, told the *Gazette*, "We will not accept applications from couples wanting to divorce because we will be very busy. We will ask them to come back later."

The same applied at the Thalang District Office. Divorces were possible at the Kathu District Office – until the computers crashed.

– Nonthawat Disayabutra

Strange days in OrBorJor election run-up

From page 1

candidates are seeking to replace, former President Dr Prasit Koeysiripong, in setting up a TRT center in 1998 and getting involved in the *OrBorJor*.

He said he would continue to work for the TRT but added cryptically, "I don't want Phuket to be separated into two: Phuketian and non-Phuketian."

"Phuket in the future will be more developed so we need unity. I urge people to vote; if they really don't like any of the candidates, [then they should] just vote for no one."

He then left the podium, ignoring journalists' questions.

At Col Apirak's registration, Pichate Satirachaval, who oversees TRT politics in the Andaman region, shed some sinister light on events in this turbulent week for the TRT.

He said that he had tried to meet with K. Samroeng after the candidate's reluctance to stand became obvious. But, K. Pichate said, relatives at K. Samroeng's

'Waters fee' is back with a vengeance

By Supaporn Sriprom

CHALONG: After insisting that the reintroduction of the "waters fee" applied only to boats mooring in Ao Chalong, officials of the Chalong Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) now admit that the infamous fee actually applies to all boats mooring anywhere off Phuket.

The fee was reintroduced on January 1 after a hiatus of about a year, and has raised hackles throughout the island's yachting community. Sailors complain that there is no equivalent fee anywhere else in Thailand and cannot understand why a single *tambon* (there are 13 in Phuket) should be able to levy fees on people staying in other parts of the island.

Documents obtained by the *Gazette* show that the resumption of the fee – ranging from 1,000 baht to 1,600 baht a month, depending on the size of the boat – was authorized by Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura on December 15.

When asked about the fee on February 13, Gov Udomsak appeared not to recall anything about it, but told the *Gazette* that he would look into the matter.

Chompon Penrat, legal specialist of *OrBorTor* Chalong, told the *Gazette* on February 17 that "one of the reasons" the fee had been suspended was because the "one-stop service" for yacht crews was being moved to new premises. He said he did not know the other reasons.

Professing surprise that

there had been complaints from yachstpeople, he said that the Provincial Government, rather than the *OrBorTor*, had been the driving force behind the resurrection of the fee, and that *OrBorTor* officials were "just doing their job".

Asked how the money was used, he said it went toward maintenance of "the whole area" and for checking yachts for illegal drugs and smuggled goods.

He added that a signboard in English would be hung in the one-stop shop soon, with details of fees payable.

The documents obtained by the *Gazette* specify that 85% of the money collected goes into the *OrBorTor*'s coffers, with the remainder going to the Phuket Port

Control Center, which manages the one-stop service.

Wichai Kalldum, the *OrBorTor* official whose job it is to collect the money from sailors, said it was a fee for "entering Thai territory".

He said that he had received complaints about the fee and in a few cases, sailors had refused to pay it and had promptly left Phuket. He admitted that, to his knowledge, no similar fee is charged elsewhere in Thailand.

A marine industry source said that the matter had been taken up at provincial level and that the Provincial Government had held an informal meeting to canvass opinions from the industry.

Goodbye Phuket Town and hello Phuket City

PHUKET TOWN: Unlucky for some, but lucky for sign-makers and big-thinkers: on Friday, February 13, the Interior Ministry officially upgraded Phuket Town Municipality to Phuket City Municipality.

The Chief Administrative Officer of the new Phuket City Municipality (and formerly Chief Admin Officer of Phuket Town), Veerun Hangsawat, told the *Gazette*, "The structure and responsibilities of Phuket Town Municipality qualified it for an upgrade."

"We have more than 70,000 people living within the official

boundary. We also have the required income. Phuket Town's development has happened continuously and in an orderly fashion."

Changes to signage and municipal paperwork are expected to follow quickly.

Following the upgrade, the Phuket Election Commission (PEC) was able to announce April 4 as the date for elections for the Phuket City Municipality.

As a city, Phuket City will have a mayor and 24 elected representatives from four voting districts, as opposed to the 18 representatives from three districts it had as a town.

PEC President Prapa Kayee said, "We will have to publicize the municipal election on April 4 so people do not confuse it with the *OrBorJor* (Provincial Administration Organization) election on March 14."

The Central Election Commission has yet to choose a deadline for candidates to register for the city's first election.

– Gategao Phetsawang

Mail thief caught, but only on video

By Nonthawat Disayabutra

PATONG: A manager at the Patong Post Office was caught recently stealing items from mail after five hidden cameras were installed in the building.

However, after being carpeted by his boss, the manager was allowed to walk out of the Post Office and has not been seen since. Police are looking for him, but admit they have no idea where he is.

Wirat Bunpetchkaew, the Patong Post Office chief, told the *Gazette* that before the cameras were put in place, there had been many complaints about mail going missing.

Once installed, the cameras recorded Prawit Prateep Na Thalang, the Distribution Manager, sitting at his desk after work hours on February 3 and removing the contents from envelopes.

The next day, when K. Wirat confronted him, Prawit denied stealing from the mail. Eventually, however, after being shown the video tapes, he confessed.

Oddly, the police were not called immediately and Prawit simply walked out of the building, never to return.

"I don't think he has gone too far," K. Wirat said. "He may be staying with relatives in Phuket." He added that police, after being informed of the matter, had reported the case to the National Counter Corruption Commission.

The footage of Prawit stealing from the mail also found its way to a number of national TV stations, which gave it wide play.

"I can still guarantee that registered mail will not be lost," K. Wirat stressed.

"But please don't put cash or valuables in the mail because we don't know who are the good guys and who are the bad guys."

Pol Maj Komdet Porthong, Inspector of Kathu Police Station, said, "Now [Prawit] has escaped, and we have no idea where to find him."

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Queer News

Falling out of love

BANGKOK: Friday the 13th is, so they say, unlucky for some.

Prasarn Johari, an 18-year-old student at the American School of Bangkok, may have agreed as he plummeted toward the ground in what appears to have been a plea for love that went sadly wrong.

Prasarn apparently got into an argument with his 15-year-old British girlfriend and fellow student – known only as “J” – when she visited his family’s 11th-story apartment on Soi Sukhumvit 18.

She, it seems, wanted to dump him, so he went out onto the balcony, climbed onto the bal-

ustrade and threatened to jump if she did not agree to maintain the relationship.

Before Miss J had the chance to answer, however, a combination of strong winds and a poor sense of balance caused Prasarn to topple over the edge.

Pol Lt Chinachart Wongwanichsin, duty officer of Wang Thong Lang Police Station, said that the death was “under investigation” and that Prasarn’s remains had been sent to the Central Forensic Science Police Office for autopsy.

A broken heart is not expected to feature in the coroner’s report. *Source: Thai Rath*

Power threw the people

CHIANG MAI: People often protest about injustice or a lack of power. Rare is the occasion when the masses rise up and protest at having too much power.

But this happened in the Prao district of Chiang Mai on February 8, following a power surge through the electricity grid the day before.

Chiang Mai Provincial Electricity Authority advised the village of the blackout – for essential maintenance work – but as the power was switched back on, residents found domestic electrical items exploding left, right and center, with only a flashing screen or an increase in volume as a warning.

Insult was added to injury when, according to Pol Maj Jamnong Khanti, duty officer of Prao Police Station, up to 1,000 angry residents went to register their grievances at the local police station.

However, when the vexed villagers arrived to let off steam, they found that the same power surge had wrought equal devastation on the officers’ computer system, rendering them unable to record the complaints except by manual typewriter. *Source: Daily News*

Fashion hits the streets

BANGKOK: The Bangkok Fashion City 2004 Extravaganza, with five kilometers of mobile catwalks throughout the streets of the City of Angels, was not billed as a “once-in-a-lifetime” event.

Sadly, for fashion lover Chanathip Kerdmongkol, 45, from Bangkok, it proved to be just that.

On February 15, as the caravan of couture meandered from Siam Square to the Empo-

rium Department Store, K. Chanathip paid the ultimate price for trying to get a closer look.

Perched three stories up on the edge of the Emporium car park safety wall, K. Chanathip fell, possibly – according to Pol Capt Athichai Wangtaweephan, duty officer of Pathumwan Police Station – pushed by an equally keen spectator.

The appropriately-named Wallop Thongja, an Emporium security guard, was first on the scene and summoned medical aid for the unfortunate fashion victim.

K. Chanathip achieved the ultimate irony of joining the parade albeit in an ambulance.

He died en route to hospital. *Source: Kom Chad Leuk*

One of the traditional venues for the discussion of politics in southern Thailand is the coffee shop.

Phuket-born Anusorn Sri-lak, 43, a regular at a coffee shop in Phuket Town, is adamant that local politics require people with an appreciation of local problems – and ideas for solving them.

“I was born here 43 years ago and have lived here all my life, and I think Phuket has plenty of problems that need to be solved urgently. All of these candidates will find that the solutions are difficult to come up with,” K. Anusorn told the Gazette.

He is not keen on the arrival of the big parties on the local political scene. Of the two front-runners in the *OrBorJor* presidency elections – Democrat-backed Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr and independent Wisut Santikun, he had this to say, “It depends on the qualifications of the individual candidates. They must know what the people of Phuket want.

“K. Wisut is more likely to win this election. K. Anchalee is good, but I think an independent candidate is better.”

“Of course, the big parties can line up lots of people to vote for them, but the *OrBorJor* is about local politics. I think the big parties’ systems are too complex to meet local people’s needs. You don’t know what their first priority is – the good of the party or the good of the local community.”

On the other hand, although independent candidates were closer to the people in terms of their ideas, if they are not already well known, they had little chance of winning, he said.

“The policies of all the candidates sound good but we will have to wait and see whether they can fulfill their promises or not.”

K. Anusorn’s opinions should be music to the ears of Wisut Santikun, leader of the independent *OrBorJor Gao Mai Khonbaanrao* (“New Step Our People”) party.

Thanks to his work in the *OrBorJor* over the past four years and in the Phuket Chamber of Commerce for six years, he is a well-known local figure, and he professes not to be at all awed by the arrival of the big parties.

“I decided to contest the election because I believed that Phuket had chosen the wrong members of parliament for 12 years, MPs who never improved Phuket as it should be improved.

“Are we going to choose the wrong people again for another four years? No way. It doesn’t matter how rich their parents are or how long they have been MPs.

“We have watched and worked in the background for a long time. Now it is time for us to step to the front.”

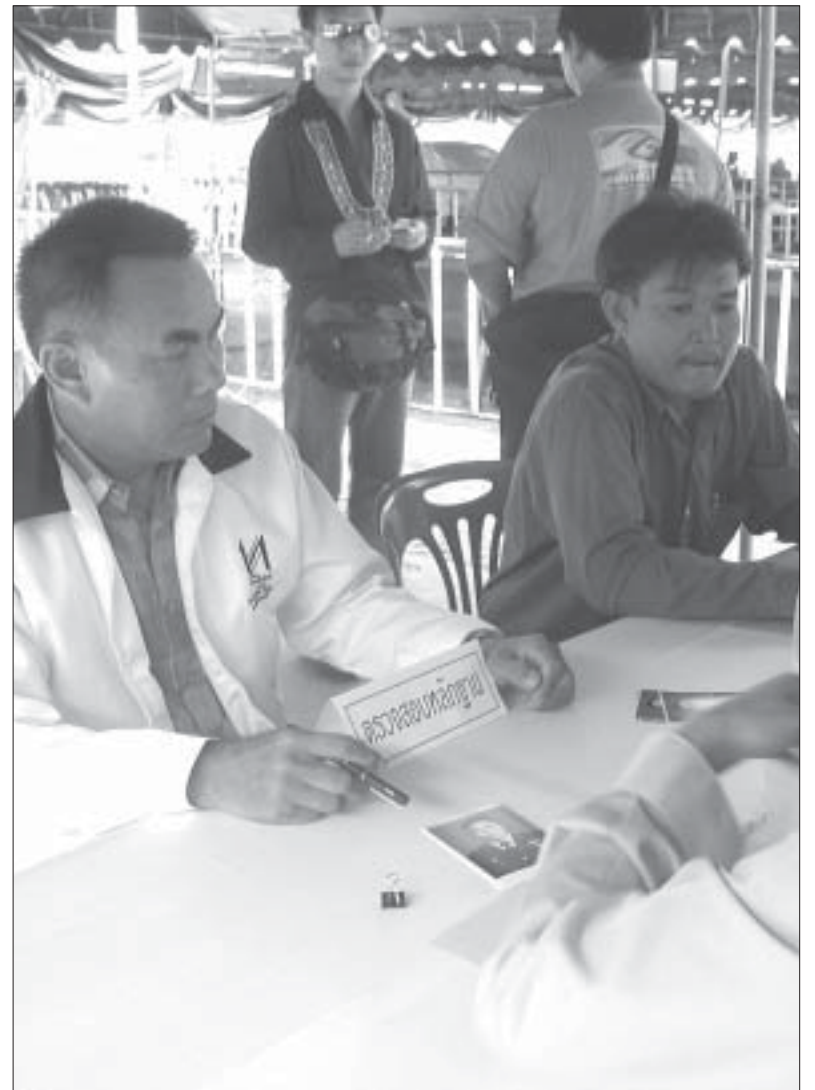
K. Wisut acknowledged that there was no law against the major parties getting involved in grassroots elections; they had the right to do so. But he said he also felt that candidates, however powerful their backing, would be

POLL

The past few weeks in the political life of Phuket have bordered on the bizarre, with candidates for Parliament and the Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) announcing their plans to run for election and then abruptly deciding not to, with mysterious explanations of the reasons – including dark allegations of death threats – and surprise candidates replacing the drop-outs.

But the most significant development has been the arrival on the local political scene of the two most powerful national parties, the governing Thai Rak Thai (TRT) and the opposition Democrats, both of whom are fielding candidates in the election for the *OrBorJor* presidency.

Nonthawat Disayabutra and Gategao Phetsawang examine the significance of these developments, and canvass local reaction.



COUNT ME IN: Pol Col Apirak Hongtong (left) stepped in on the last day of registration, replacing Samroeng Chaisorn as TRT candidate.

wise not to underestimate the voters’ intelligence.

“Villagers are not fools. They know the candidates and no one can control their minds. Ask them what kind of leaders they want; you will see,” he said.

The Democrats, who have long espoused devolution of power from Bangkok to the provinces, seem to have managed to reconcile that policy with their entry into the *OrBorJor* race.

Chamni Sakdiseth, the Deputy Secretary of the party, said that he felt there was nothing wrong with national parties getting involved.

Local organizations would be more important than regional

ones in the development of cities, he said.

The decision by Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr to resign her seat in Parliament to run for election in a local administrative body was consistent with the Democrats’ policy of dispersing power to local organizations such as municipalities and *OrBorJor*.

“Now it’s up to the people to decide whether they will choose us to be a part of those organizations or not,” he said.

The *Gazette* asked local Democrat MPs Suwit Sa’ Ngiamakul and Chalermklak Ketsup for their opinions on the “nationalization” of local politics but

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FRONT-RUNNERS: Democrat candidate Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr (left) and independent Wisut Santikun, with supporters on the first day of registration for the *OrBorJor* Presidency election.

both declined to comment. K. Suwit added that he did not feel "comfortable" addressing the issue.

Repeated attempts to reach K. Anchalee were unsuccessful, but the man chosen at the last moment to run for the TRT, Pol Col Apirak Hongtong, was happy to give his view.

While admitting that he had had no time to prepare for the election, he was firmly in favor of the ruling party being involved

in local politics – for purely pragmatic reasons.

"The [*OrBorJor*] President should be knowledgeable about local matters. Experience as a national politician is not enough. K. Anchalee has worked for Phuket many years, and she is a member of the Democrats, who have been supported by people in the South for a long time.

"But Thailand is changing. Local organizations must commu-

nicate with and be connected to other organizations to support and plan the administration of the province using funds from the central government.

"If the central government

is disbursing the funds, what will happen if the *OrBorJor* President is from the opposition party?

"If I am elected *OrBorJor* President, the benefits to Phuket will accrue more smoothly. All

projects will be done easily and quickly.

"But if the *OrBorJor* President is independent, or is from the opposition, he or she ... will not be able to deliver as effectively as someone supported by the government."

Pichetwut Nilla-or, Lecturer in Public Administration at Rajabhat University Phuket, agreed that the choice of President will have considerable significance in the relationship between the *OrBorJor* and Bangkok.

"For example, the national administration may approve a project proposed by a local organization if it is in line with government policy objectives," he pointed out.

Ajarn Pichetwut believes developments following the election will be fascinating to watch, especially if an independent candidate is elected.

"The *OrBorJor* President is the local equivalent of the Governor," he said. "It's a way of balancing power. The idea is not to have both people working for the national government.

"If the *OrBorJor* President can work independently, it will be interesting to follow how things in the province will improve."

With the TRT plainly interested in controlling politics all the way to the grass roots (and the Democrats being forced to compete), such independence may be a fragile thing.

Indeed, if current trends are anything to go by, it may very swiftly become extinct.

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- Formula 1 Ticket (Hill stand C2-2Days)

SELF DRIVE PACKAGE

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Resort Hotel	7,800	10,600
Kuala Lumpur		
Impiana	10,990	15,150
Swiss Garden	12,990	19,550

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- Formula 1 Ticket
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Signs of times past

By Gategao Phetsawang

Most of the Chinese calligraphy at Phuket Town's Jui Tui Shrine has been drawn by one man, a man who is a living link with the island's Chinese past.

Sixty-three-year-old Diroj Lert'eakkul, or Kokkieow Sae'lay, is Phuket-born, but from a Chinese family. "My grandfather moved from Kwangtung in China to live in Phuket and my father followed him later," K. Diroj says. "He met my mother in an arranged marriage and I was born here.

"There were many Chinese people in Phuket when I was young. When you went out walking, you would always meet Chinese merchants at the markets."

He studied Chinese at the Phuket Thai Hua School, and it was there that his love of calligraphy began. "I enjoyed using a brush to write.

At the time, I was only seven years old, but I was still interested

in calligraphy when I grew up."

Having a Chinese background in Phuket was not always easy, he says.

The right-wing government at that time was concerned about the rise of communism in China and its spread throughout Asia, so students were not allowed to study Chinese at school for more than an hour a day.

"My friends and I studied, but secretly," K. Diroj says.

"When the education officers came to check, we had to hide our Chinese textbooks.

"They had a narrow outlook and their thinking in those days was wrong - because education should not be conditional in that way."

As it was, the question of government education policy soon became irrelevant. "I passed my exams in the fourth year of primary school but I had no

chance to study to a higher level because my father died and our



When he was seven years old, Phuket-born Diroj Lert'eakkul studied Chinese in secret. Today, 56 years later, he has drawn most of the Chinese calligraphy at Phuket Town's Jui Tui Shrine.

family was plunged into poverty and suffering."

His drive to learn did not stop, however. "I continued to learn Chinese from older relatives," he recalls.

K. Diroj has two older sisters and four younger brothers. His mother reminded them frequently not to forget Chinese, and to read Chinese newspapers, because China was their homeland.

"I am Thai because I was born here but I never forget that my roots are in China," he says.

His interest in calligraphy, too, continued. He has four ink stones, which calligraphers use as palettes, which he won in competitions as a student. "I've had them for about 50 years now."

In 1950, during the Vegetarian Festival, a relative asked K.

Diroj to do some calligraphy for the Jui Tui Shrine. He agreed and has been a public calligrapher ever since.

"At that time I just helped to write lists of people who made donations to the shrine," he says. "I was working as a clerk so I decided to do calligraphy for free.

"I wrote whatever they would ask me to write, including poems and blessings. Sometimes, schools and hotels here also asked me to do calligraphy to present to their students or guests."

Nowadays, K. Diroj owns a small grocery across from the Thai Hua School. He still helps to create Chinese calligraphy for many Chinese shrines and associations in Phuket, particularly the Jui Tui Shrine in Ranong Rd and the Chinese shrine at Saphan Hin.

Other Chinese shrines have their own calligraphers, but sometimes K. Diroj is asked to help with detailed work. Shop owners also ask him to do calligraphy for them.

K. Diroj also knows the Chinese philosophers, whose works he studied when he was young. One ancient saying he finds particularly relevant is, "Ten years we must toil beside the window. Many people walk past us without noticing."

It means, he says, that people often have a long, hard time reaching their goals. People are excited by success but they rarely consider how much hard work is necessary to achieve it.

K. Diroj can be contacted at Tel: 076-215218.



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SINGHA NEW LOOK

ICT moves to save kids from Web porn

The government is creating a national database of pornographic web sites to prevent children from accessing online pornography.

As many as 8,000 volunteers across the country will report the presence of pornographic content in any form to the Culture Ministry, which will collate the information into a database.

Meanwhile, a million copies of the *Plawan* ("Whale") Internet browser, developed by star IT programmer Poramate Minsiri as an alternative to Microsoft's Internet Explorer, will be distributed free this year, said the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

ICT Minister Surapong Suebwonglee explained that the 15-megabyte browser will help parents protect their children as they go online and surf the Net.

Plawan blocks access to "black" websites such as gambling, pornography and other illegal sites.

Look on the bright side: While many night-spot owners will suffer financially as a result of the earlier closing times ordered by the government, the operators of businesses offering alternative forms of entertainment – including VCD rental stores, movie theaters, bowling alleys and Internet cafés – are likely to receive a boost from the new regulations.

Sophat Sithisomwong, Executive Vice-President of Marketing at EGV Entertainment, said cinema and bowling complexes might now be considered appropriate places for teenagers to hang out and enjoy themselves.

Easy come, easy go: A Samut Sakhon school discovered that one of its third graders had stumbled on – and kept – a bag containing more than 100,000 baht in cash. The boy's windfall was betrayed by his generosity to other students, who surprised locals by suddenly buying snacks and food with 1,000-baht notes.

Police discovered that a

CRADLE OF LOVE? A soldier cradles a machine gun as he stands guard at an army public security briefing for villagers in Yala province.

Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan has urged the government to change its attitude of "Bangkok knows best" and drop its CEO approach to the predominantly Muslim South, which has been rocked by violence since early this year.

The government plans to shower the three troubled southern border provinces with development projects worth billions of baht in a bid to "free the region from all its deep-rooted problems." The development projects are aimed at creating new jobs, building more public utilities, and improving exports.

The Interior Minister, Wan Muhamad Noor Matha, said, however, that the projects should last no longer than five years.



worker in a brass-casting factory had dropped the cash while on a mission to buy materials. Police said they had not brought legal action against the generous boy because the factory had yet to lodge a complaint.

Child smugglers nabbed: Police cracked a gang specializing in smuggling Cambodian children into Thailand to beg on the streets of Bangkok.

Three women and several children were detained at Talat Rong Klua in Sa Kaew province along with forged border passes and money they had earned.

Police were told that prices

ranged from 2,000 baht for a baby to 1,000 for a child aged between one and 10 years old.

Young jump at sex: Teenagers say they seldom have sex but half of Thailand's young men would jump at the chance to do so, according to pollsters.

A survey of 1,657 students in Bangkok secondary schools and universities found that only 24% of respondents said they were not virgins and half of those said their first sexual experience was "a long time ago".

But when pollsters for Assumption University's Abac Poll asked young males in the sample

group what they would do if their girlfriends offered them sex on Valentine's Day, 48% said they would take up the offer.

Another 22% said they would decline and 30% were undecided. Only 25% said they always used a condom, half said they used one "sometimes", the rest "never".

New deal: A drug dealer serving a 10-year jail term received a 10,000-baht grant from Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra after writing an essay expressing his wish to graduate from an open university. Jaral Ruangsaeng, 26, an inmate at Kanchanaburi

Prison, will complete his sentence in 2009.

It's a healthy picture: Japanese camera maker Nikon plans to boost its Thai workforce by about 2,000 to some 7,000 employees.

The increase stems from Nikon moving its digital-camera production operations here, said Industry Minister Pinij Charusombat.

In 2003, Nikon or Niks (Thailand) Co Ltd exported about 500,000 cameras. This year, exports should increase to 1.2 million units.

Cholera alert: Health officials across the country have been warned to be on high alert for cholera amid signs the deadly disease might be on the rise this year.

Dr Kumnuan Ungchusak, Director of the Disease Control Department's Bureau of Epidemiology, said there had been signs of a higher prevalence of the disease since December, when the number of affected patients began to rise.

Affordable homes: Habitat for Humanity (Thailand), a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating poor housing, unveiled its "1500 House Campaign" which aims to build 1,500 affordable homes by 2006 in Udon Thani, Chiang Mai, Lampang and Nakhon Ratchasima.

Beneficiaries are chosen based on their need as well as their ability and willingness to pay the monthly inflation-adjusted no-interest mortgages.

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

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Second airport in a holding pattern

A meeting was held on February 10 to assess the site proposed for Samui's controversial new airport. The somewhat optimistic intention was to assess the impact that construction of the airstrip would have on the local environment and people.

Unfortunately, those in attendance realized that the government hadn't yet decided which bit of land they are going to use, so consternation ensued.

It transpired that representatives from the Air Transport and Communications Departments in Bangkok simply hadn't had time to pop down and chalk out the area.

More frustrating still, especially for those who own land near the site, is that a budget has yet to be decided for the leasing of the land. After all the initial fanfare, it appears that the orchestra still needs time to tune up.

Water worries: Development continues to speed ahead on Samui, but the demand for water is, once again, beginning to cause concern.

The island can supply only 8,000 cubic meters of water a day to its population, and the demand has already reached 7,000 cubic meters, with the dry season just around the corner.

Meanwhile, two much-publicized plans – one to build a new dam and another for a reservoir – have run into trouble because of land disputes. To provide interim relief, the Samui Water Department has invested in a mobile water-cleaning plant, which, once assembled, will be used to extract a supplementary supply from lakes on the island.

Chaweng Lake is the largest and will be first on the list – even though local residents claim it is unsuitable because of sea water contamination. People in the vicinity are advised not to waste



GATHER AROUND: Local teachers take time out during the recent workshop, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Koh Samui, to improve the teaching skills of English-language teachers.

their expensive bath products, which may react with the salt, and to refrain from singing in the shower in case they accidentally swallow.

Calling in sick: The Samui Public Hospital has been given a budget of 100,000 baht to upgrade its communications center. Despite a good reputation for medical care, the hospital has been slow to respond to emergency calls in the past, because no one wanted to answer the phone.

Now a new radio set will be installed, allowing speedboats, yachts, and marine services to

contact the hospital quickly when accidents occur.

One resident suggested that motorcyclists could fit short-wave radios into their helmets, allowing them to contact the hospital directly in case of a crash. It was pointed out, however, that such a plan could never work because no one on Samui wears a helmet.

Southern tourism push: Panu Woramit, from the Samui office of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), helped organize a stand at a domestic tourism exhibition in Chiang Mai recently.

The installation was de-

signed to promote southern Thailand to northern cousins and included items from the "One Village, One Product" campaign as well as hotel packages and tours.

There are fears that domestic tourists have been deterred by recent unrest in the Deep South and presumably the TAT felt it would be a good idea to remind people that there is a lot more to the beautiful South than curfews and car bombs.

Still plastering the plaza: The opening of the Chaweng Night Plaza on February 30 may take place amid allegations that the construction company has stopped work, leaving tenants facing bankruptcy.

Although some shops are open, the development is clearly not finished to the extent that the original plans suggested. Some tenants even claim that they have been threatened with eviction, and no deposits refunded.


Meanwhile, some are worried because the project is in the busiest part of the island. Leaving an unfinished pile of concrete will do little to add to the beauty and appeal of the island's most popular tourist spot.

Cdr Swan is a writer with Koh Samui's community magazine.


FROM THE GULF OF THAILAND



By Commander Sammy Swan



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This week



STEEL BAND: Tata Steel recently enjoyed its annual meeting at the Phuket Arcadia Beach Resort. Senior Tata Steel representatives Managing Director Mr B Muthuraman (3rd from right), Vice-President Mr A D Baijal (2nd from left), Deputy MD Dr T Mukherji (3rd from left) are seen here with the resort's Sales Director, Laddawan Somniyam (left), General Manager Peter Hourigan (2nd from right), and Public Relations Manager Kymberley Sproule (right).



FINE FRENCH ART: France's Ambassador to Thailand, Laurent Aublin (right), opens a display of works by the artist Gerard Coste (left) at Mom Tri's Boathouse and Villa Royale. They are joined by Madame Naomi Coste and Louis Bronner, General Manager of Mom Tri's Boathouse.



FANTASTIC AT 50: Da Hebler – famed for her burgers and her friendly welcome when she and husband Will ran the Friendship Beach resort – celebrated her 50th birthday on February 5 at the couple's home in Soi Mitraphap, Rawai.



CHILDCARE CHUMS: Pranee Singhol (front row, 2nd from right), Headmistress of the Laguna Phuket Resort Childcare Centre, welcomes a group of community leaders from the village of Tamod in Phatthalung province during a recent visit to the resort. Also at the knowledge-sharing visit were committee members and teachers from the Tamod Childcare Centre.



BAY WASH AND BRUSH-UP: Diving professionals and enthusiasts combined their resources off Koh Wae in Bang Tao Bay for a recent underwater trash-clearing exercise organized by Eurodivers Thailand and Laguna Beach Resort. From left: Mic O'Keeffe, the resort's Sports and Recreation Manager; Melissa Maas; Alike Schroeder, Eurodivers Assistant Manager; Bunlert Nilporn from Eurodivers; Emily Whitehead and Arthit Runangkaew, Sports and Recreation Co-ordinators from Laguna; and Jerome Mansord.



HAPPY HÄFELE: Sibylle Thierer, President of the HÄfele Group celebrates the 1st anniversary of the HÄfele Phuket Showroom. Together with Mrs Thierer is Showroom Manager Varunchai Rungruang (2nd from right) and guests.

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INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE MAN

By Supaporn Sriprom

The Vampire of Siam was actually born on Phuket. But don't let that stop you going out after dark – unless, of course, you need to be accompanied by a parent or a government official.

Fortunately, the vampire's neck-biting and nocturnal blood-drinking activities – which certainly wouldn't meet with government approval – exist only in the mind of writer Jim Newport, who is quick to offer assurances that the vampire is strictly a fictional creation and that he himself has never sipped blood.

Most people come to Phuket to unwind over coconut juice and sunsets, but for Mr Newport the island became the muse that sparked his second career.

It was here that *The Vampire of Siam*, his first published book, was written.

Originally from New York, Mr Newport has worked in Hollywood for about 20 years, using Phuket as a refuge off and on for about 15 of them.

Phuket's beauty and endless sea vistas provided the antidote to a more hectic lifestyle in LA where, as a production designer, his role was to create the "look" of a film or a television show.

"I would be responsible for the location, the set and almost everything apart from finding the actors," he says at his cottage hideaway in Kamala.

"Ultimately, if the director had a different vision from mine,

then that's the direction we would go in.

"I felt that I could write, and I enjoyed it when I tried my hand at it. About 15 years ago, I decided that I was going to write a screenplay."

He tried his luck and one script was optioned as a film. Hollywood being what it is, this didn't mean that the film necessarily got made – only that he got paid for it.

"One has to understand that in Hollywood there are many writers who have huge homes and 10-figure bank accounts and seem very successful – yet have never had a screenplay actually get onto the screen," he explains.



More writing attempts followed, and he finally saw some of his work on screen in a couple of episodes of the popular TV series *China Beach*, set in a military hospital in Vietnam during the war there.

But the Hollywood process involves rewrites, and rewrites of rewrites – a tedious process. "Finally I decided that I had better try my hand at writing a book because – I thought – a book is a book is a book.

"It took me a couple of years and I did it right here in this house," he says.

The first book he wrote, *Yankee Dragon*, was written in Kamala over a period of three years. The 500-page epic, set in Japan, has yet to be published ... though it may still happen, Mr Newport says.

Late last year, he had the pleasure of seeing *The Vampire of Siam* published by Asia Books. "I really enjoyed doing that, it was great to accomplish. The reaction to that was very, very satisfying."

Mr Newport picks out a bite-sized chunk:

Ramonne put down the glass and looked into Martin's eyes. Martin again felt the hypnosis, and tried to turn away. He couldn't.

"What do I want?" Ramonne hissed. "You insignificant worm. You expose me after 150 years of anonymity, and you have the gall to ask what I want ...?" The words were like steam from a kettle. "I truly don't want anything from you, Martin. Nothing, that is, but your mortal life."

Oh Jesus. Oh God. Help me.

"I warned you about using His name in vain, Martin. Believe me, neither He nor His

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Jim Newport: Bitten by the writing bug, and inspired by Phuket.

Son can help you now." Ramonne leaned back in his seat and finished his glass.

The novel sprang from a visit to Bangkok. Looking down from his hotel room, Mr Newport saw a dark tunnel and thought how perfect it would be as a setting for a vampire novel.

From that simple observation, his book sprang. But writing it was far from simple. "It is hard to describe something that is so complicated," he explains.

To bring out certain characteristics of the vampire, he found that a few drinks did the trick – and helped to trigger the ideas he needed.

More importantly, he says, "It let me know that I wanted to write more books."

His second book, a follow-up, is currently being edited by Asia Books, and he is just finishing the writing of part III.

The Vampire of Siam, which is on sale at most good book stores in Thailand, is scheduled for release in Europe later this year. Versions in Thai and German are also planned.

So if you happen to catch Mr Newport in an island bar or restaurant, don't hesitate to ask him about vampires.

Especially if you happen to bump into him after midnight.

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In The Stars

by Isla Star

What the future has in store for you...

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Someone is intent on raking over the ashes of a matter that you thought had burned itself out. Pisceans who are on the ball will see this coming and be ready to deal with it. The chances are that an honest heart-to-heart chat will be enough to clear the air. Work-wise, this week will bring a series of minor challenges that will stretch you in a positive direction.



ARIES (March 21-April 20): Arians are susceptible to broodiness this week. This doesn't necessarily mean that you want to hear the patter of little feet, but feathering your nest will probably be high on the agenda. If you're lost for ideas to improve the interior of your home, someone is waiting in the wings to be asked for advice. To give your motivation a boost during the coming months, consider shades of blue and gold.



TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Someone may be offended by your refusal to do their dirty work this weekend, but don't fall into the guilt trap. It's high time you made it clear just how much you are prepared to do in the name of friendship. As February draws to an end, many



Taureans will find a way to say good riddance to the stale banana chip on their shoulder.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Those born under the sign of Gemini should not be above learning a lesson this week. It may be hard to accept that someone knows better than you, but the only answer is to put a certain mistake behind you and use the experience to better your prospects. Minor problems in a personal relationship can be solved by letting your loved one know how important he or she is to you.



CANCER (June 22-July 23): Your tendency to sidestep important issues is a definite drawback this week. There is one quite important matter that you need to face, and the sooner you can bring yourself to do this, the



better. The quest for true love appears to be almost over as a relationship begun in the heat of the moment starts to deepen. Aquarius makes an inviting offer mid-week, and you will be sorely tempted.

LEO (July 24-August 22): Projects initiated after the weekend have a better chance of success than those cooked up on Saturday or Sunday. There is a lot of hot air blowing around those born under the sign of Leo at the moment and it will be a challenge to stay on the cool road of reason. Someone else's downfall could be to your advantage before the end of this month. You are in a good position to bargain.



VIRGO (August 23-September 23): If you don't have absolute faith in your plan, you



shouldn't expect anyone else to support it. Virgoans who have been sitting on the fence must decide on which side they are going to jump down. This week sees you facing a make-or-break situation, but the gods of fortune are ready to push you in the right direction. The number eight has significance on Thursday.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): As your social circle widens, you can look forward to receiving inside information that will help expand the range of possibilities open to you. By the beginning of next month, you will be ready to set off in a new career direction. A dream on Wednesday has meaning for those with unresolved romantic issues. The color aquamarine will give you fresh energy.



SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): You need to get out more. Search out like-minded company to get the understanding and stimulation that has been missing from your life lately. Scorpios who are involved in a relationship based on attraction of the opposites have probably been suffering from lack of communication. If your loved one raises objections to your ab-



sences from the homestead, try suggesting that they take up a hobby.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Going with the flow will yield more than sailing your own course this week; Sagittarians who battle against the current could be in for a nasty surprise. There are valid reasons why others are heading in a certain direction, and yours is not to question why. This weekend should be a hive of family activity, with unexpected visits on the agenda. Your power days are Tuesday and Wednesday.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): All the dreaming and scheming that has dominated your life recently is about to turn into some sort of reality. What seemed nearly impossible this time last month is now within your grasp. Mid-week, the emphasis shifts toward intimate relationships and you may find yourself on the receiving end of an emotional outburst. Someone close has been bottling up their feelings and you should be prepared to listen carefully.



AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): A twist of fate this week should remind you that there's always more going on than is at first apparent. A situation that has been developing in the shadows is about to become visible and no matter how dark your sunshades are, it will be impossible to ignore. Aquarians who are resistant to change will be the only ones unhappy with the new circumstances.







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The Gazette Guide 2004 is available at:

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A-One Market Place (opposite Police Station)	3/5 Moo 9, Chaofa Rd, Chalong. Tel: 076-381526
A La Carte	75/12 Moo 3, Kamala Main Rd. Tel: 076-278019
Albatross Leisure	Canal Village, Laguna Phuket, Cherngtalay. Tel: 076-270958
Bangkok Phuket Hospital	in the cafeteria. Tel: 076-254421
Bay Mini Mart	94/13 Moo 3, Kamala Beach. Tel: 076-271062
Bookazine Patong	18 Bangla Rd, Patong Beach. Tel: 076-345833/4
Bookstore at Robinsons	Phuket Town. No direct telephone.
Choice Foods Thailand Ltd	19/3 Moo 8, Chaofa Rd, Chalong. Tel: 076-283158/9
Deli Supermarket	17/30 Rat-U-Thit Rd, Patong Beach. Tel: 076-342275
Dok Ya Bookstore	43/1 Phang Nga Rd, Phuket Town. Tel: 076-258040
Dok Ya Bookstore	399/24 Yaowarat Rd. Tel: 076-218214
Don's Caffe & Mart	53/5 Soi Saiyuan, Moo 7, Rawai. Tel: 076-288229
Dorn's Place	67/3 Wichitsongkram Rd, Muang. Tel: 076-222210
Flintstone Bakery – Dulwich International College	59 Moo 2, Thepkrasattri Rd, Koh Kaew. Tel: 01-8922392
Gift Shop - Andaman Beach Suites	60/12 Rat-Utit Song Roi Pee Rd, Patong. Tel: 076-341879
Gift Shop – Kata Beach Resort	5/2 Patak Rd, Muang. Tel: 076-330530
Gift Shop – Merlin Beach Resort	Tri Trang Beach, Patong. Tel: 076-294300
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Kanda Bakery	33 Rasada Rd, Phuket Town. Tel: 076-223410
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Koh Kaew Supermarket	22/1 Moo 2, Thepkrasattri Rd (in Boat Lagoon). Tel: 076-238950
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Phuket International Hospital	Opposite information counter. Tel: 076-249400
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For a full list of guide retailers, see www.phuketgazette.net/guide/vendors2004

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters

As the crow flies, it's just 60 kilometers from Saigon – still stubbornly referred to by *apparatchiks* as Ho Chi Minh City – to Vung Tau. By road, it's a bumpy 120 kilometers, and a good three hours from start to finish.

But skim down the Saigon river aboard a hydrofoil, past the cargo-laden freighters and fishermen casting nets, and you can be sunning yourself on the sand at south Vietnam's premier beach resort in just over 60 minutes.

"Premier" should by no means be taken to indicate that Vung Tau is the best venue south of the DMZ for sun, sand and similar stuff; the city's clutch of beaches fall short of a pristine grading.

But Vung Tau does have character and history in abundance, and it's the most convenient alternative to the relentless, scooter-buzzing ebb and flow of Saigon's highways and byways.

French colonists took Vung Tau to their hearts early on, calling it Cap Saint Jacques and building villas and hotels in an Oriental imitation of the French Riviera.

The US forces used it for R&R, and the last combat troops scuttled off its beaches in 1973. With the end of the Vietnam War, the new elite – the party cadres – moved in so they could loll about and hobnob with one other.

Russian advisers, on leave from the offshore oilfields, were kept in their own compound and fast gained a reputation among the battalions of beach vendors for being grouchy and tight-fisted.

As a result, Vung Tau's legacy is cosmopolitan to say the least – and it's reasonably well-

Where the cadres go to relax



off thanks to the oil money and high-ups who've hung out here. At the same time it's vaguely ramshackle, and gives off a strong sense of former glories.

One thing that has to be said for Vung Tau is that the Vietnamese love it, and they stream out

of Saigon on holidays and at the weekends to throng its beaches. The two main strands are dubbed Back – the main bathing area with some fairly gauche commercial development – and Front, which is closer to the center of town.

The Front is at its most picturesque in the early morning, when the fishermen land their catches on the beach, rowing ashore from their boats in quaint hand-made coracles.

There are a couple of other

beaches, Bai Dau and Bai Dua. Both are rocky and, as a result, more secluded.

All the beaches, however, are good places to pick up a cheap seafood meal. Fresh crab and shrimp, washed down with mineral water, should work out at about 200 baht a person.

Lovers of kitsch should drop in on Thich Ca Phat Dai park, where religious statuary stands along shaded paths.

Vung Tau reserves its

wackiest side for last – a 30-meter-high statue of Christ looking down on the sea from the southern end of Small Mountain.

Built in 1974 by a group of fervent Christians in the last months before the communists seized power, the statue is hollow so you can climb inside to viewing platforms at the end of the Messiah's outstretched arms.

It's a great place to take in quirky, off-beat Vung Tau. But Rio de Janeiro this ain't.

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KIDS

THE FUN PAGE FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Spot the Difference



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



Get your brain in gear with the Monster Quiz



- Who founded the Women's Social & Political Union?
- By what nickname was Apolinario Mabini known?
- Which country is known as the Cockpit of Europe?
- Where is the Sugar Bowl of the World?
- James Delancy, the manager of the Dunster House book shop, was arrested for selling which book?
- Which is the second most densely-populated province of Thailand?
- And which has the lowest population density?
- From which British county did Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh come?
- Who ruled Russia from 1672 to 1725?
- What did George Bernard Shaw describe, in his play *Major Barbara*, as "the greatest of evils and the worst of crimes"?
- Who wrote *Le Contrat Social*?
- Who was described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as being "so harsh and cruel ... that none withstood his will"?
- Who married Mary Todd in 1842?
- Who defined a cynic as "a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing"?
- Who composed *Maple Leaf Rag*?
- Which city's name means "Brotherly Love"?
- Which constellation is found between Eridanus and Grus?
- Which American arctic explorer died in 1962?
- In four-color printing, the colors used are black, yellow, magenta and what?
- In Greek mythology, who was the muse of tragedy?

Answers next week

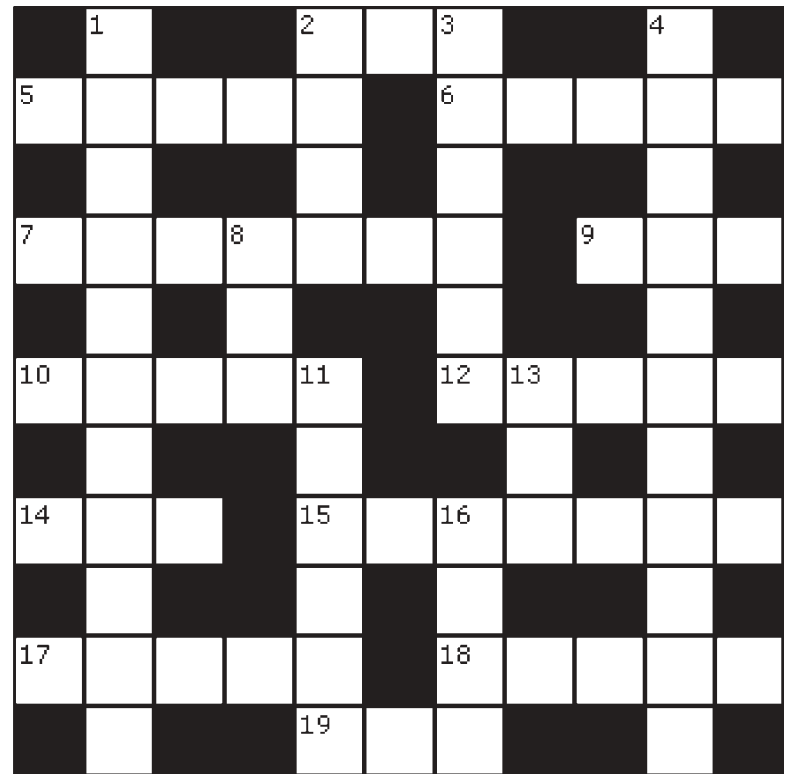
Never a Cross Word!

Across

- Nuts.
- Funeral song.
- Capital of Ghana.
- Alcatraz and Wormwood Scrubs, for example.
- Smallest prime number.
- Lending money with excessive interest.
- Soup-serving implement.
- Mommy's boy?
- Fail to look after.
- Supermarket alley.
- French wine valley.
- Jamaican liquor.

Down

- Very tiny.
- Note from the boss?
- She's usually in distress.
- Not quite see-through.
- Knight's address.
- Over there.
- Boring tool.
- Bacterium.



Brain Buster!!

Q. How many times can you subtract 2 from 32?

A. Once. After you subtract 2 from 32, you are left with 30.

Answers to last week's Monster Quiz

- Cor Anglais; 2. Kina; 3. Scylla and Charybdis; 4. Shark; 5. Alexander the Great; 6. Playing the violin; 7. Sir Thomas Young; 8. Loriner (or lorimer); 9. Cuckoos; 10. Goods that have sunk; 11. John Dalton; 12. Bach and Handel; 13. Anteatr; 14. Atropos, Clotho and Lachesis; 15. Tamerlane; 16. Lake Superior; 17. Gluteus maximus; 18. Polar bear; 19. It grows upside-down; 20. They have lungs.

Solution to last week's Crossword

S	O	N	S		S	O	C	C	E	R	
T		E		U					L	U	
O	C	E	A	N	S		L	I	M	P	
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		I	N	I	M	I	T	A	B	L	E
		N		R					L	I	
L	A	U	D	E	R	D	A	L	E		
A		P		O		S		G	O		
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PATONG LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Why plastic is not quite so fantastic

Dear Momma Duck,

Thank you for your column in the *Gazette*. I have enjoyed reading it for about six years.

In Britain, when we bake or roast a chicken, we use a stuffing mix that we put inside the bird to give it flavor. Sometimes, we add sausage meat as well. The ingredients of the mix are usually sage, onion and breadcrumbs.

In Britain, we buy the mix ready-made in packets but as I was not able to find any in Phuk-

ket, I decided to make my own. I found all the ingredients are available here, except sage.

I feel sure that someone here must cultivate it. Is there a Thai name for it? Perhaps I would have more success if I knew what it was.

Tony Peter

Dear Tony,

As the Northern part of Thailand has colder weather than the South, many cold-climate herbs such as oregano, rosemary, thyme, bay leaves and sage are cultivated there.

In the North they also grow fruit and vegetables from temperate climates including lettuces, apples, peaches and strawberries.

The lucky expatriates who live in the north are well supplied. Indeed, I would not be surprised if they grow lo-



Momma DUCK

By Wanida Hongyok

cal herbs in their own back yards.

In the Chiang Mai area, there is a Royal project called Doi Kham, which cultivates cold-climate vegetables and herbs.

The project has sales offices all over Thailand. In Phuket, the office is in the Jatujak market, also known as Talat Tairot, near the Honda car dealership on Phang Nga Rd, Phuket Town. It is open from 9:30 am to 5 pm every day except Monday.

K. Satien (Tel: 01-6134046), who is the Doi

Kham representative in Phuket, says that fresh supplies arrive in Phuket every Thursday. He has oregano, rosemary, thyme, majoram and fresh sage.

Many hotels order large quantities of herbs through K. Satien. Most of their chefs apparently prefer fresh sage to the dried form, presumably because it gives a better aroma.

You won't find fresh sage on sale in the big supermarkets because there is little demand for it; if you do want to buy it locally you can expect to pay rather more than in Britain.

(When I lived abroad I had to pay rather high prices for Thai herbs. For example, in Phuket a small bag of chillies costs five baht, whereas in North America, it cost me the equivalent of 60 baht.)

As for the name of sage, Thais use the English word. Ask for *bai sage*.

Dear Momma Duck,

I was talking recently with a Thai friend about the number of plastic bags that litter the island. Many people simply throw them away with seemingly little regard for the mess or the impact on the environment.

My friend suggested that, for many Thais, this habit may have developed from when produce sold at local markets was wrapped in banana leaves. Once home, people would simply throw away the leaves. This was no problem as they were biodegradable.

However, I am still not sure whether this explanation is plausible. Surely that was a long time ago and people have become more responsible about rubbish disposal. Does this explanation sound plausible to you?

James Fergus
Phuket Town

Dear James,

The explanation about the banana leaves is correct and was very common as little as 20 years ago. Even today, Thai sweets (kanom) are often wrapped this way.

There are many ways of wrapping food with banana leaves and it can be very impressive and eye-catching.

I feel nostalgic about the "good old days" and wish that stores would go back to using banana leaves instead of plastic and styrofoam.

In my childhood, my friend and I

used to make paper bags (from scrap paper and simple glue) to sell as a way to earn a few extra satang.

Unfortunately, many people still have the habit of casually discarding packaging (which didn't matter when it was made from bio-degradable leaves or paper) and it seems the younger generation have picked up the habits of their elders.

Whenever I go to Bangwad Dam for my morning exercise, I see the place littered with plastic containers, bags and drinking straws.

The rubbish is a terrible eyesore and it really irritates me. If I have time,

I pick it up and put it in a nearby garbage container.

I'm afraid the level of environmental awareness is still very low in Thailand. Although there is some mass media education, the topic doesn't seem to be very high on the list of priorities of the various government agencies.

Some agencies, such as the Phuket Town Municipality, have been trying to address the problem. However, it's very difficult if it's not part of a serious coordinated national program, which should include school curricula.

When I am shopping I often refuse to take plastic bags from vendors and always re-use those I have at home. I think environmental awareness is gradually growing but it's going to take a long time.

I feel nostalgic about the "good old days" and wish that stores would go back to using banana leaves instead of plastic and styrofoam.

Telephonic scourge of Vivaldi and the toilet

Phones. Where would we be without them? Where are we going to be *with* them? Some of us may be able to remember a time (it seems like millennia ago) when phones were used as communication devices, performing the astonishing feat of transmitting messages quickly in a method best described in today's world as "not via email or chat".

They were something you used in the privacy of your own home, office or, in desperation, in a battered and graffiti-defaced public booth.

Alas, those days are long over. Now it is impossible to take more than a few steps anywhere without hearing Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* rendered as a series of beeps, as someone's *meu teu* rings or, worse, without hearing people yapping into their phones.

Phones are no longer simple devices of communication. Indeed, phones are no longer simple.

The confusion caused by their complexity is made worse by the fact that they often don't

work properly. Take my phone – in a split second the strength of the signal can change. One

moment it's so powerful that I can feel the radiation burning the palm of my hand. The next it's so weak that the only use I can think of for this pathetic piece of plastic is as a miniature bludgeon for clobbering the guy next to me, whose full-strength-signal phone beeps out *The Four Seasons* as he gets a call and then starts to yap-yap.

Vivaldi – and Tchaikovsky and Bach – were great musical geniuses. What on earth did they do to deserve this defilement-beyond-recognition of their work?

They must be turning in

There he hunkers on the bowl, feet on tippytoe so that his knees and elbows meet, head buried in his chest, pimples for once invisible, whispering earnestly.



Youth 'n ASIA

By Eric Lacey

their graves every time a phone rings. You can imagine their tortured cries: "What's happening? I seem to be suffering from some kind of technological decomposition!"

Even worse, horrendously bad pop songs are also now beeping out of mobile phones. The originals are bad enough but the beep-beep-beep versions carry these dreadful ditties to new and quite horrendous nadirs.

So much for the ring tones. Now look at what the mobile phone does to the average person. Look at the bizarre poses and

attitudes people take on when they're yapping.

Here's one guy, face upturned, mouth agape as he shouts to the signal-challenged person at the other end of the ether. You can see all the fillings in his teeth, along with the remnants of his lunch and as he walks into a patch of sun, the light glitters off the cascade of spit droplets as he goes on barking and barking. Do not stand anywhere in front of him; the halitosis will knock you off your feet.

At the other end of the scale is the bog boy, who heads for the toilet whenever his girlfriend calls. There he hunkers on the bowl, feet on tippytoe so that his knees and elbows meet, head buried in his chest, pimples for once invisible, whispering earnestly.

Such is his attitude that you might be forgiven for thinking that he's sitting there actually straining, were it not for the occasional high-pitched giggle or the stream of oaths when the signal strength drops to zero and his girlfriend disappears into ethereal oblivion.

I could go on and on about mobile phones. I could write a book. But right now you'll have to excuse me. My phone's ringing. Must go.

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Thai law requires that motorcycle drivers and passengers wear a safety helmet with the chin strap fastened at all times – 24 hours a day.



PHUKET PROVINCIAL
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

Now it's freaking chicken 'flu. It's as if the world is trying to conjure up reasons not to travel to Thailand. It truly seems absurd that every year something or other pops up to put the fear of God into the tourists.

In the past three years, we've had 9-11, Afghanistan, the Bali bomb, Sars, the war in Iraq, alleged Muslim uprisings in the South and now this ... CHICKEN 'FLU.

Just when you thought it was safe to go outside and travel to Asia, CNN is proud to present Avian Influenza, or Chicken 'Flu.

I was on Koh Samui and, as you well know, there is too much "ohm-ing" and "Zen-ing" going on over there for 'flu to ever have the nerve to show up.

Anyway, I'm sitting in my favorite colonic cleansing establishment, about to release the safety catch on my fully cocked enema, when I find myself sitting next to a bunch of young yogafied "I can feel your energy" types.

My God, the place is becoming pretentious. What use to be a chilled-out spot for the budget traveler is now becoming a place of pilgrimage for whackos.

A bunch of self-proclaimed swamis sit around professing to have insight into what turns out to be a complete load of crap and more crap comes later when we address this chicken 'flu issue.

They are all followers of "Bagwan Rabbish". Samui seems to have acquired a holier-than-thou attitude toward Phuket – the older brother, the football star, dad's favorite – but gone completely astray.

Anyway, the swami beside me turned and asked where I was from. I must admit that I did look rather like a car dealer attending a peace concert.

Everything he wore had to be held up or closed with a draw string. With me, you actually have to button up my pants. After telling him I lived on Phuket, he raised his eyebrows as if I had cursed the ground between us.

"I know a lot of people who've been to Phuket. They really hated it there," the swami said.

"Is that so?" I replied. "Why was that?"

"They said that the place was really expensive, the people were rude and the place was dirty."

"Really? Tell me, how long have you been in Thailand?"

"For about two months now. But I feel that I have lived here in a past life so, really, I have been here for many years."

The pathetic pale waif was actually from New Jersey.

"So did you manage to pick up any of the Thai language in your many years here?" I asked.

"Not really," he said. "But I



Well and truly clucked

Downsider

By George Bentick

feel as if I have retained the spirit of the language in my soul."

Then came the clincher.

"There is a lot of negative energy on Phuket. That's why you have a lot of chicken 'flu there."

"What chicken 'flu?" I barked defensively.

"The one people are getting from eating the chicken there."

There it was. The clown had been twisted into thinking that chicken 'flu was rife on Phuket.

It didn't matter that it's impossible to contract the 'flu by eating chicken – you would have to have a weakness for chicken sh*t sandwiches for there to be even a slight chance of getting ill.

And it did not matter that no chicken 'flu had been detected on Phuket.

Here we were, no further than 40 minutes' flight from Phuket, and rumors like these were rife.

I was so mad at hearing this that I wanted to ram his mantra up his you-know-where. Ignorant off-the-cuff comments like this are so typical of the crap that's out there.

It did not matter that it had no factual basis – it was as if the hint was enough.

It was also at this point that I realized that this kind of stuff will always be with us, one way or another.

For some reason, the world

is going through a time when foolish fodder is the nourishment of the masses.

The media seem to have developed a mandate based on

their ability to convince us that we are only a chicken dinner away from extinction. I think they learned from Sars that plagues sell.

Suddenly the spa attendant came by to tell me my enema chamber awaited me. He also said that he recognized me from my last trip and that it was good to see me again.

"Good to be back," I said.

"Where have you been?"

he inquired

"Back at work in Phuket,"

I replied.

"Wow! I guess you're really relieved to be away from the chicken 'flu."

To hell with this. I am off to KFC.

Win a trip to Dublin!

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Closing Date for submissions: February 27, 2004

Prizes:

The winning essay in each of the two categories (Thai and non-Thai) will earn the author and one parent a trip to Dublin where they will attend the senior International IMPAC Dublin Literary Awards ceremony, which confers the richest literary prize in the world, and take part in a reading with the winning author.

There will also be five merit awards worth Bt10,000 each. All prizes will include a certificate.

Judging Panel:

1. Her Excellency Sirikorn Maneerin, Deputy Education Minister of Thailand
2. His Excellency Daniel Mulhall, the Irish Ambassador to Thailand
3. Assistant Professor Chusak Pattarakulvanich, English lecturer and critic, Thammasat University
4. Ms Ngarmphan "Jane" Vejajiva, writer and translator of the Harry Potter series
5. Mr Pana Janviroj, editor, The Nation

The contest is open only to children (Thai or non-Thai) attending schools in Thailand. Entries should be sent to:

Portrait of a Young Thai
Office of The Editor
The Nation
44 Moo 10, Bangna-Trad Highway 4.5 km
Bangkok 10260 or
email: portrait@nationgroup.com

Please include your full name, address, telephone number, email address (if any), and the name of your school and the address. The results will be announced in The Nation, Nation Junior, Krungthep Turakij, KomChad Luek, and Phuket Gazette newspapers at the end of March, 2004.

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The problems of Utopia

Thailand's Ministry of Culture says it aims "to safeguard the cultural norms of Thai society." That's a fine aim. But just what are "cultural norms"?

A recent poll of 1,000 Thai men showed that three-quarters of the married ones regularly had sex outside marriage. Is that a "cultural norm"?

The question is a rhetorical one, asked simply to make the point that differentiating between acceptable and unacceptable behavior is extremely difficult – unless, it seems, you happen to be a member of the Thai Cabinet.

Ask anyone what the word "democracy" means, and more often than not you will receive the response, "freedom". Good governments interfere in people's freedoms only when the actions of individuals violate social standards.

But not here, apparently. Instead of concentrating on improving the crumbling education system, Thailand's government prefers to treat all children as potential malcontents and criminals.

That the recent proposal for a 10 pm curfew on those under 18 got as far as it did before falling apart is a worrying sign that the government fails to understand that parents, not governments, are responsible for the moral standards of children.

The troubling puritanical streak in this government also surfaced in its edict cutting back the opening hours of entertainment venues with effect from March 1.

Unlike many provinces where the fun must stop at midnight, Phuket is at least treated as one large entertainment zone, with the existing closing time being brought forward by one hour to 1 am.

It's plain the government would like to turn the clock back much further in an attempt to return the country to a mythical and perfect past when no one frequented bars and all went to bed at sundown.

As has been proven in other countries time and again, this kind of moral zealotry is doomed to failure.

The new regulations will simply create more confusion as entertainment venues try to beat the system by pretending to be unregulated "food venues".

Jobs will be lost, corruption will most likely grow and the serious vices that the government says it wants to contain will continue to thrive and prosper in darker, less controllable corners.

The "cultural norm" in Thailand is the culture of *sanuk* – having fun where and when one chooses, provided one abides by existing laws. Seriously enforcing existing laws would do far more good than curfews on children – or adults.

– The Editor



Letters

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

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

Chaos will result from earlier closing

What does this government hope to achieve by meddling with licensing hours for entertainment venues? Don't they understand that forcing some venues, but not all, to close early will cause chaos?

Jobs are bound to be lost and this will affect not only individuals but also their families, especially those up-country where hard-earned money is sometimes sent.

With lower income because of shorter working hours, increases can be expected in prostitution, theft, gambling and illegal drugs.

Having gone through the Bali bombing, Sars and now bird flu, many business owners have been struggling.

This early closing will more than likely be a death knell for most entertainment businesses unfortunate enough not to be in an entertainment zone.

Anyway, not all tourists wish to visit a "zone". Some prefer a relaxing night out away from the din and the techno. But these people do not necessarily want to go home at midnight.

Would the last person to leave Thailand please turn off the lights?

Bill Scott
Phuket

Early closing creates 'Brothel Thailand'

Congratulations, Thailand. By closing down all venues outside the "entertainment zones" at midnight, you just turned the country

into the world's greatest brothel.

What is in the zones that can stay open later? Girlie bars and gay bars, nothing else. I have seen no indication that these are being closed down to protect your young people.

Maybe that is what you want young Thai people to learn: do not get a job at a good, happy place.

Sell your body instead – the money comes in faster and you won't need that much anyway. After all, you will have HIV in a couple of years, and then you will die.

This plan is repulsive and I would like to know why the sex industry, instead of nice, moral places, is being protected.

Britt-Marie Bergman
Nai Harn

Immigration clue from the queues

I fully sympathize with the gentleman who waited so long at the Immigration queue on arrival (*Letters*, February 7-13). I had a similar problem recently, but this time on departure, waiting almost an hour in a queue.

Once again, only five of the 12 desks for Immigration officers were occupied. The queue reached the back wall. People were clearly unhappy. Planes left late.

Phuket airport is now getting a bad reputation for Immigration delays. This is extremely bad for a tourist island in a competitive environment. The problem could be solved simply by having officers at the desks that are already there.

Michael Renolds
Cheng Talay

Where's the acid?

Holy smokes. Are we seeing a kinder, gentler James Eckardt? His past four book reviews had none of his trademark smug, acerbic sarcasm. Can he be reviewing books that he *likes*? Keep up the good work, Jim.

Frank Visakay
Rawai

Please don't sin. Put it in the bin

Dr Georg Klima (*Letters* February 7-13) is not alone in seeing that Phuket and its surrounds are in need of a serious cleanup.

We have good garbage collection but what's really needed is education about the scourge of plastic bags and containers.

Imagine, in thousands of years to come, archeologists discovering the early 21st century layer of undegraded plastic.

Pick it up and put it in the bin, please. We all want to see Phuket looking its beautiful best.

John Lock
Rawai

Fare deal should replace tuk-tuks

I spend three months a year in Bangkok and know how well the metered taxi service works there.

I also know more about the tuk-tuk business than an average tourist, and how full of corruption the whole thing is.

If there is one thing that really could make Phuket a better place, it would be for the government to get national taxi services to establish themselves here.

Thomas
Rawai

The Phuket Gazette

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Letters conveying views and suggestions are published here. Those seeking comment from government officials and/or business owners are published in *Issues & Answers* on the facing page.

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

I write this to warn any readers considering building a house. They need to be careful in their choice of contractor, looking out especially for contractors who cheat Thai women who have foreign partners.

Two years ago, I bought land on which to build a house. A Thai contractor heard about my plans and offered to construct a Thai-style teak house for me.

He took me on a tour of houses – and a resort – that he claimed to have built. He introduced me to the resort's owner, which made me feel I could trust him.

He told me he owned a teak plantation in northern Thailand, as well as a large construction materials shop – which was why, he said, he could build the house at a very reasonable price.

On September 24, 2002, I signed an agreement with him whereby he would build my house at a cost of 1.5 million baht, including built-in teak furniture.

The contracted completion date was March 5, 2003. The contract also stipulated specific dates by which certain work would be completed before any payment was made.

The first and second periods of the contract went very well, but the third phase of work started slowly and the contractor kept asking for money – to deal with a variety of “problems” – in advance of the scheduled payment date.

I then began to wonder why I had not seen any teak arrive. When I questioned him about this, he told me that he had a problem with transportation – and then asked me for an advance payment of 100,000 baht to allow him, he said, to deliver all the teak in one go.

He kept asking me for money to solve problems and I gave it to him, although I always made him sign a detailed receipt, thinking that work might go faster if I agreed.

After all, I knew that I would have to pay the whole 1.5 million baht eventually.

The teak did not arrive and I asked him to explain what had happened to it. I was very angry when he told me that he didn't have time to explain and, in any case, he did not *want* to explain.

We could, he said, cancel the contract if I was not happy. I retorted that considering the amount of money he had received in advance, I could see why he would be happy to cancel it.

The number of workers on site dwindled daily. His staff tried to take equipment away, but I stopped them because the contract stated that nothing could be moved from the site until construction was complete.

On July 15, 2003, he made a report to the police asking them to arrest me for “stealing” a piece of equipment. All work stopped the next day.

In total, I have given him about 835,000 baht, but what has been built so far is probably worth only 400,000 baht.

He has taken more than 400,000 baht from me and I have since heard that he has used similar tactics on other Thai women with foreign partners.

I worry that foreigners will no longer want to stay in Phuket or Thailand with people like this around.

I have made a report to the police and the case is now going through the courts. I feel I must take this action, if only to let him know that he should not cheat anyone else.

It was my dream to build a nice house where I, my husband and our children, and my mother, could live together.

But my husband says that he can no longer accept this kind of behavior. We will move away to live in England soon.

Koranit Nuanlaong
Nakhon Ratchasima

Two visas are not better than one

I have a multiple-entry non-immigrant O visa that was issued in Sweden. It expires on August 17 and cost me 5,000 baht. I also have an extended permit to stay, valid until September 29, that cost 1,850 baht, plus 2,700 baht for official certification of my pension documents.

In addition, I have a multiple re-entry permit that is valid until September 29 and cost 3,800 baht. So far, all these stamps have cost me 13,350 baht.

When I left Thailand recently, then returned, the Satun Immigration Office stamped the date of my return next to the non-immigrant visa, not next to the re-entry permit. So it seems that I did not need the re-entry permit after all.

Do I need the re-entry permit? I hope the answer will be, “No, you don't need a non-immigrant visa and a re-entry permit, and we will refund your money.”

Ingvar Ohrn
Chalong

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

In this case, you effectively have two visas valid at the same time. If you wanted to use the re-entry permit, you should have

pointed it out to the immigration officer. The officer could not be expected to know that a traveler has both a multiple-entry visa *and* a re-entry permit valid at the same time

As you have a multiple-entry visa valid until August 17, you can enter Thailand as many times as you like up to and including that date, without having a re-entry permit.

However, after August 17 you are permitted to stay in Thailand until September 29. If you leave Thailand before September 29, you will need your re-entry permit to come back into Thailand without having to get a new visa.

Please note that if you are aiming to apply for residency, you will first need to have been issued a one-year permit to stay for three consecutive years. If you are staying in Thailand on a one-year permit and then leave the country without a re-entry permit, you will need to obtain a new visa to re-enter Thailand *and* you will have to apply for a new one-year permit to stay when you return, and start the whole process again.

Incidentally, the correct fee for an extension to stay is 1,900 baht, not 1,850 baht. It is not refundable.

Help for a radio control racing fan

I have a friend who is now in Phuket on a two-month vacation. Our hobby is driving and racing radio-controlled (RC) cars. Is there a store in Phuket Town where you can buy things like RC cars, boats and components?

I have searched through the Internet and the closest I got was the *Phuket Gazette*. Can you give me any tips?

Christer Arvidsson
Sweden

Montri Hongsyok, President of the Phuket Racing Car and Radio Control Club, replies:

The club meets to race RC cars at Phuket Country Club, while those who fly model airplanes gather at the Chaofah tin mine on Wichit Songkhram Rd. Usually this is at the weekend.

For details you can call me at Tel: 076-213453 or 076-214700/1 (my office), or 01-6931128.

Issues & ANSWERS

Want to know how to get something done? Can't understand some of the dafter things that seem to go on in Phuket? Want to pitch an idea to Phuket's authorities or institutions? Then this is the forum for you. Submit your queries or suggestions to us and we'll ask the appropriate people to respond to them.

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

Could Thai movies also be listed on your website?

Thanks for the great website and especially the Daily News. But I have one question about the movie listings page.

It's a pleasure to watch movies at the Paradise Cineplex in Phuket Town, but sometimes it's very difficult to find out from the Cineplex which movie is on at what time.

If you call the cinema, there is only one person who speaks English and he never answers the phone. So the movies page is a great idea.

The trouble is that the page contains only details of the international movies. For all the for-

eigners who are interested in watching Thai movies with subtitles, would it be possible to post details of these movies, too, on the website?

Christina
Chalong

The Phuket Gazette replies:

The movies page is provided as a free service to readers and is updated not by us, but by the Paradise cineplex staff. They tell us they are unable to publish details of Thai movies because they do not have anyone who can translate the synopses into English.

Rules for owning and driving a motorboat

I live in Thailand and would like to own and drive my own private motorboat for pleasure, perhaps a five-metre open motorboat with a 50-70 hp outboard engine, with Thai registration. What are the rules for this?

Peter Hallonen
Phuket

Sompong Srichoo, registration officer of the Phuket Marine Office, replies:

The documents required for registering ownership of a boat are as follows;

- Your passport.
- A letter from an Immigration Office or your embassy confirming your address in Thailand.
- A receipt from the previous owner of the boat.

To certify that the receipt is genuine, you also need to bring copies, signed by the old owner, of the old owner's registration, his ID card and *tabien baan* (house registration document).

The fee for registration will depend on the size and type of boat, which is established by an inspection by an official.

The driver of your speedboat will need to have a Helmsman Level 2 license.

Import duty on gifts in the mail

When I post gifts to friends in Thailand, must the recipients pay import duty?

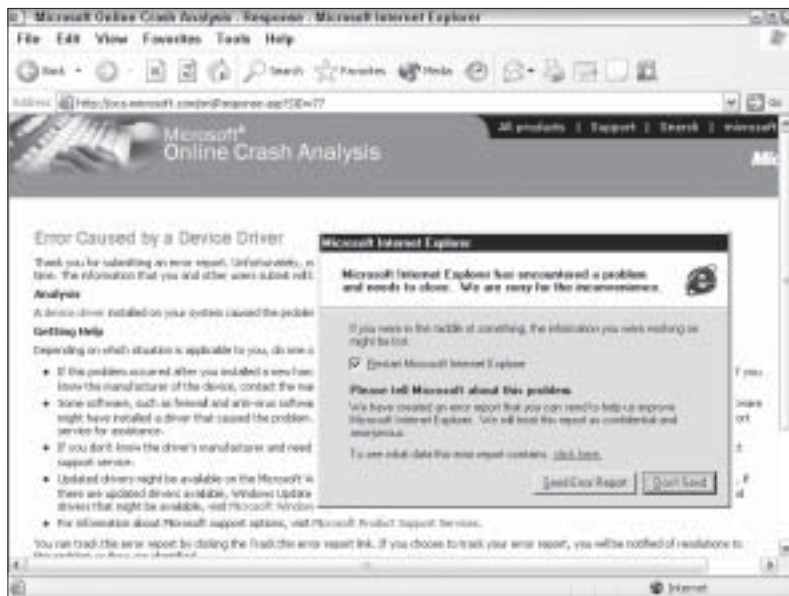
Carl Osmar
United Kingdom

The Thai Customs website (at www.customs.go.th/Customs-Eng/PostalParcels/PostalParcels.jsp) states:

“Postal items ... sent by mail as personal effects, gifts or trade samples of no commercial

nature sent at the same time by one consigner to another consignee or arrived simultaneously with a declared value not exceeding 20,000 baht and regardless of the implied amount of duties payable, the customs officers will independently [assess] their value and deliver such items to the Communication Authority of Thailand for delivery to the consignees from whom duties will be collected on behalf of Customs.”

When Windows XP encounters an error it can't handle – a so-called GPF or "General Protection Fault" – it produces a message like this one, offering to send a bunch of diagnostic data to the computers at Microsoft headquarters in Redmond.



When drivers crash, it's still Windows' fault

Q Frequently, and without any discernable pattern, a message comes up on my screen, "This program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down. If the problem persists contact the program vendor". I click OK and try to close it but cannot get rid of it. The only way to lose it is by shutting down then starting up again, which is extremely frustrating and time-consuming. How can I solve this problem?

IS, Bangkok

A Ah, the irony! Variants of this message appear in every version of Windows, and often, the program that triggers the message is Windows itself.

Most often, these messages happen when a program tries to access data that doesn't belong to it, but instead belongs to another program that's running on the computer at the same time.

These GPFs – General Protection Faults – can cause no end of havoc, mostly because they're almost impossible to trace. At least 80% of GPFs are caused by a driver, a program that controls the interaction between Windows and a piece of hardware. Your chances of finding the ailing driver are slim to none.

Microsoft has improved GPF handling a little, particularly for drivers, because it was spending a fortune fielding phone calls from irate customers confronted with obscure error messages.

COMPUTER Q&A

Ask the experts. Email chris@phuketgazette.net

In Windows XP, when a program triggers a GPF, Windows swoops in (or at least tries to) and offers to send an error report via the Internet to Microsoft.

This feature, known as "Dr Watson", has been responsible for a dramatic decrease in the number of GPFs in Windows XP. Why? Because when Microsoft gets 100,000 GPF reports that implicate a specific driver, they have enough information to go to the hardware manufacturer and figure out what is going on.

But for us consumers, the answer is simple and clear: unless you figure out what's causing the problem (say, installing new hardware or software triggers an avalanche of GPFs) there's no way to fix Windows to stop it from crashing.

By all means, send the error report, if you aren't working on sensitive data, but don't expect a reply. If the aberrant driver is updated, you'll find out sooner or later via Windows Update.

Q I have heard many reports that GPRS modems (mobile telephones that plug into your computer's USB port) have near-

broadband speed or is at least much faster than a 56.6 Kbps (thousands of bits per second) modem. I am having a hard time believing this, even though I was told by one reseller that Windows says it is connecting constantly at 120-130 Kbps. I'm hoping that you could look into this and make sure that companies aren't making claims that will convince people to buy into GPRS modems for speed reasons alone.

BH, Phuket

A Sometimes even broadband isn't near broadband speed. In my (limited) testing of GPRS performance, using the McAfee Speedometer at mcafee.com/root/speedometer.asp, I've found that real GPRS speeds in Phuket are about 40% faster than typical 56K dial-up speeds.

Windows can be tweaked to show you anything the salesman wants to show you. If you want to know how fast a connection really is going, use the McAfee Speedometer: figure about 25 Kbps for dial-up, 40 Kbps for GPRS phones or modems, and 180 Kbps for so-called 256K ADSL lines, the fastest Internet connection widely available on the island.

That 40% nudge in speed comes at a price. You can buy pre-paid dial-up Internet access packages almost anywhere for eight baht a minute or less. GPRS access requires a GPRS phone (say, 8,000 baht), plus a cable (which may have to be ordered, at great expense, from Bangkok), and AIS service (1,200 baht a month, unlimited; ask at the Telewiz shop in the basement of Big C).

The cheapest 256K unlimited ADSL service in Phuket that I know about comes from JI-Net, and the total (including phone line and "modem") runs to a cool 7,300 baht a month.

A company called Hutch in Bangkok claims to have lightning-fast GPRS service. I remain skeptical. Besides, you can't get GPRS Hutch service in Phuket.

– Woody Leonhard
woody@khunwoody.com

Keeping quiet no longer about Laos

I was prepared to write off Brett Dakin, author of *Another Quiet American* (Asia Books, Bangkok, 2003, 279 pp), as a priggish snob when I encountered this passage on page 6:

"My parents had served as Peace Corps volunteers as part of that first group ever to serve in Kenya, and their experience decades ago remained a central part of our family's history. My parents had hardly solved Kenya's woes back then – and, I felt, the Peace Corps had probably caused more problems in the developing world than it had addressed during its 30-year existence – but their awareness of what life was like in a place so different from their home had always struck me as integral to their approach to the world."

What problems, exactly, have the volunteers ever caused? Despite this dismissal of the Peace Corps, this child of privilege – raised in London, New York, Washington and Tokyo, a product of the best schools, including Princeton – does indeed do a Peace Corps number, in Laos.

He spends two years on a Princeton-in-Asia grant, working in the Department of Tourism in Vientiane. He struggles gamely with the language, rents a cheap house, buys a Honda Dream and hangs out with a wide circle of Laotian and expat friends in the sleepy capital. He comes across as an insightful and likeable student of human nature.

His Lao friends confide in him about their money troubles and the stifling communist bureaucracy. Dakin has arrived just after the 1997 crash and the kip is vanishing down a financial black hole.

Expatriate aid workers complain about the impossibility of getting anything done, but Dakin is also scathing about the *raison d'être* of hugely expensive and utterly ineffectual foreign aid projects.

Of one friend, Bob, the head of a UN aid agency, who had lived in Laos for six years, Dakin writes: "Bob saw a failing currency, rising prices, crumbling roads – and, above all, a development community that was do-

ing more harm than good. When I dared to suggest the possibility of UNDP funding a small campaign at my office to discourage drug use by tourists, he scoffed: 'So you want to get at the trough as well, huh?'

"The 'trough' of which Bob liked to speak was the seemingly endless source of money that funded UN operations in the developing world. It was this trough

that kept everyone associated with the world of development in business, not only the international consultants, the highly paid UN 'volunteers' and local support staff, but also the restaurateurs, nightclub owners, and real estate agents who

relied on them to survive ... After nearly a decade in the trenches, he had come to view the development community as little more than a self-perpetuating money machine interested primarily in its own survival."

The important thing about Laos is that expats love living there. The laid-back pace of life, the friendly people, the climate, the scenery, the food and the foreign exchange rate collude to create a life of indolent ease. The expat's greatest fear is not hav-

ing his visa extended and this is the only hold the Lao government has over him.

Meanwhile, the Lao-tians themselves – even the urban middle class, educated mostly

in Russia or Eastern Europe – are frustrated by the constant grinding poverty and bone-headed communist government.

"Laos was certainly a laid-back place to live," Dakin observes. "But beneath the surface, a deeply ingrained culture of fear pervaded government and society. To comment publicly on an issue, to express an opinion, or even to acknowledge a problem that everyone already knew existed, was to be avoided at all cost. People may have been relaxed, but they were afraid."

Dakin succeeds brilliantly in painting portraits of a wide array of characters. He accomplishes that most delicate of tasks: giving a feel for what it's like to live in a place. On this level, it's the best book I've read on Laos.



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

To comment publicly on an issue, to express an opinion, or even to acknowledge a problem that everyone already knew existed, was to be avoided at all cost.

Siam International

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- ❖ Visa service
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More stores win their stripes

By Gategeo Phetsawang

PHUKET: The distinctive 7-Eleven colors are already prominent in Phuket and there will be many more of the familiar red, orange and green stripes to be seen this year. As the brand expands, another 20 franchises are to be added to the existing 20 outlets in the coming 12 months.

To put the boom in perspective, First Co Ltd, which holds the 7-Eleven franchise across five southern provinces, has a total of 20 outlets in Phang Nga, Ranong, Krabi and Trang combined.

Managing Director Chockchai Nganthavee told the *Gazette* that the company, which has been

in business for 12 years and is a subsidiary of CP 7-Eleven (Public) Co Ltd, is aiming to achieve revenue of a billion baht within two years.

K. Chockchai said that sales in 2003 increased by 28% on the previous year. "This year we plan to reach 35% [growth]," he added. The company's new stores will open at sites all over the island. By researching the potential of each new site first, the company hopes to avoid competing with its existing stores.

Such is the success of the 7-Eleven brand that it has spawned many imitators. K. Chockchai said that non-franchise stores following the 7-Eleven style too

closely were usually warned about potential breaches of copyright and most mimics were quick to change.

Each legitimate store has to meet set conditions. "We are strict about standards and systems in each 7-Eleven branch; we are a subdivision of CP," he said. "Products displayed in our shops have to be checked every day to make sure they are fresh and well-packed. We also maintain a good standard of service."

Each franchisee invests as much as two million baht. The company helps to assess locations of each new store and suggests possibilities for marketing.

"Anyone can shop at a 7-

Eleven, even if they have only five baht in their pocket," he said. Each store also has targets local community needs.

K. Chockchai said that the company constantly upgrades systems and technology for such important aspects as product shipping.

Phuket has the greatest potential of the provinces covered by First Co Ltd because of tourism, and the market on the island was growing more rapidly than Krabi and Ranong, he said.

An individual store contains between 1,800 and 2,000 product lines, with the range constantly being reviewed – and 7-Eleven is no longer just about snacks or food. For example, he said, IT products are now available.

The opening of Central Festival Phuket in August should not affect 7-Eleven stores because, while people might find more time to shop at superstores, they would still need convenience stores near their homes, he explained.

On the Move

Rena Udomkunnatum, 30, from Bangkok, has been appointed

Vice-President of Marketing and Sales of Jungceylon Phuket (Phuket Square Co Ltd). She is the holder of a business management degree from Assumption University, Bangkok, and a MBA from Columbia University, New York. Her recent experience includes senior executive positions with Grammy Entertainment and Fashion People.



Kymerley Sproule, 39, from Toronto, has joined the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa as Public Relations Manager. A graduate from Ryerson Polytechnical University in Toronto, Ms Sproule has 15 years of marketing, sales and public relations experience and was Director of Public Relations at the Four Seasons Resort, Chiang Mai.

Gold, growth, interest and bricks and mortar

This week's column covers several topics. First: gold. There has been talk in the electronic media about people becoming disenchanted with paper currencies and investing in gold instead.

Not surprisingly, this has usually been mentioned by those who have an interest in a strengthening the gold price.

Disillusionment with currencies does occur but it takes inflation to cause this phenomenon. We live in an era of very low inflation so the buying power of money is being eroded slightly and slowly.

What's positive for gold is interest rates, which are low in all major currencies – and therefore the cost of holding gold means that investors in the metal are not missing out on the alternative of holding cash with high interest rates.

In the US, the Federal Reserve (central bank) has subtly announced a policy shift from not raising interest rates to "being patient before raising rates".

This has led to some interesting stockmarket reactions. For example, when the US Government released figures on new jobless claims that were lower than economists had forecast, the market took this as a positive development.

This may appear contradictory. What the market was looking at was the fact that, with lower numbers, the Federal Reserve would exercise greater patience before raising interest rates. Obviously, if the figures had been appalling, the market would have not reacted in a positive manner.

As I've said before, the economic growth figure achieved by the US economy for the third quarter of 2003 – 8.3% annualized – was not sustainable.

Economic growth for the

last quarter of 2003 reflected a 4% annualized rate. Many economists expect this to be slightly higher when the revised figures are published.

If it can be maintained, this is an ideal growth rate for the US economy. If the rate was much



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

higher, inflationary pressures would start to appear, while a lower growth rate would inhibit new job creation.

On current performance, interest rates are likely to move higher but increases are likely to be delayed for some months.

Britain is facing a dilemma. The Bank of England (central bank) would be pleased to see the pound Sterling drop in value against the dollar. The British economy depends on trade and at current exchange rates, the pound is expensive.

This is not a problem where trade with the Euro zone is concerned; the rise in the value of the Euro has helped in this regard. However, from a global point of view, the situation is different and Britain is living with a substantial trade deficit.

The solution would be to lower interest rates, which would reduce the attraction of holding Sterling and would, at least in theory – and probably in practice – allow the value of Sterling to fall. With extremely low domestic inflation, there is scope for this to happen, except for two important items: The Bank of England is concerned about rising house prices and record consumer debt.

Bear in mind that British interest rates are abnormally low.

This has enabled consumers to borrow substantially. In addition, the losses in the British stockmarket from the highs of early 2000 have encouraged investment in residential property.

In Britain, people believe that when stockmarkets take a tumble, investors should return to the tried and tested alternative of investing in bricks and mortar.

After all, to many, this sounds the safer route. In reality, residential housing and stockmarkets are merely two asset classes.

History shows that when money chases the housing market too aggressively, as happened after the stockmarket crash of 1987, it is followed by a boom then a "bust", as was experienced in the early 1990s.


The Bank of England is trying to cool down the housing market by gently lifting interest rates, but it is difficult to fine-tune such matters. Investor exuberance also stands in the way.

No wonder the International Monetary Fund warned Britain that one of the threats to its economy in 2004 was a housing market crash.

With the British consumer having also binged on other debt, it may well prove difficult to negotiate an easy exit strategy, especially when one considers that virtually all this debt, including mortgages, is on an adjustable interest rate basis.

The Euro-block economic outlook is still uncertain; the jury is still out. However, rising corporate profits give some support to Euro Zone stockmarkets.

Richard Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial planning service. He can be reached at Tel and Fax: 076-381997, Mobile: 01-0814611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th.



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(bold listings are Thai flagged boats)

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38 Ft 2000	Flybridge Watertaxi Yamaha, 2 x 200 Hp	THB 2,700,000
37 Ft 1996	Searay 370 Mercruiser, 2 x 350 Hp	USD 175,000
30 Ft 1990	Bayliner Sunbridge 2855 New King Cobra 7.5 L	THB 1,900,000
29 Ft 2003	Prowl 9000 Honda 4-stroke, 2 x 50 Hp	Price on Application
28 Ft 86/02	Italian Open Sportfisher Yamaha 200 Hp	THB 1,500,000
18 Ft 2000	Skip Jack 18 Yamaha, 2 x 85 Hp	THB 750,000
Sail		
60 Ft 50/03	Indian Dhov Isuru 84 Hp	THB 4,500,000
57 Ft 1985	B. Roberts motor sailor Ford, 120 Hp	US\$ ONLY 100,000
56 Ft 1973	Classic Comen Steel Ketch Perkins, 64 Hp	US\$ 70,000
48 Ft 83/03	Freers 48 Perkins, 87 Hp	US\$ 88,000
46 Ft 1981	Hereschoff Ketch Ford, 80 Hp	US\$ 127,500
42 Ft 1987	Westail 42 Perkins, 50 Hp	Euro 80,000
41 Ft 1978	Bluewater 41 Ford Lees Marine, 72 Hp	US\$ 128,000
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Design principles: what the doctor ordered

Dr Alistair MacKenzie was one of the most innovative course designers of his day. In an era where there weren't really any rules about course design, MacKenzie became the first to put some ideas on paper.

As with all rules, MacKenzie was quick to point out that there are always occasions where an exception could or even should be made.

His principles are still considered the foundation of sound course design and are well worth reviewing.

- The course, where possible, should be arranged in two loops of nine holes. (Note the "where possible" clause.)

- There should be a large proportion of good two-shot holes; two or three drive-and-pitch holes; and at least four one-shot holes. (MacKenzie never mentioned par. In fact, many of his greatest holes were on the "edge of par").

- There should be little walking between greens and tees ... a forward walk will allow holes to be lengthened in the future if necessary. (Until the recent hyper-extension of Augusta National, few of his greatest courses have been extended. Cypress Point, Pasatiempo and Royal Melbourne remain largely as designed more than 70 years ago.)

- Greens and fairways should be sufficiently undulating, but there should be no hill-climbing.

- Every hole should have a different character. (MacKenzie was not implying that one hole should have a windmill, while the next should be shaped like a mermaid or any of the other extremes seen on a few of today's courses. He merely implied that variety is



Jon Morrow

the spice of life on golf courses, too.)

- There should be a minimum of blindness on the approach shots. (Even though blind shots were considered "sporty" by most golfers of his day.)

- The course should have beautiful surroundings and all the artificial features should have so natural an appearance that a stranger is unable to distinguish them from nature itself.

- There should be sufficient heroic carries from the tee, but the course should be arranged so that a weaker player, with the loss of a stroke, or portion of a stroke, shall always have an alternative route.

- There should be an infinite variety of strokes required to play the various holes.

- There should be the complete absence of annoyance and irritation caused by the necessity to search for lost balls. (Any Scot would like that.)

- The course should be so interesting that even the plus-man is constantly stimulated to improve his game by attempting shots which he has hitherto been

unable to play. (Most holes satisfying this criterion would be considered unfair today.)

- The course should be so arranged that even the long (high) handicap player or absolute beginner should be able to enjoy his round even if he is piling up a big score.

- The course should be equally good during winter and summer; the texture of the greens and fairways should be perfect, and the approaches should have the same consistency as the greens.

Few architects today pay enough attention to the approaches on modern courses, despite the resources they have. For weaker players, more approach shots will land on these areas than on the green.

Perhaps MacKenzie's greatest contribution was to identify his goal as a designer: that the courses provide "pleasurable excitement for the majority of players" and "strategic play options" for all levels.

At the time, most of the player-designers of the day would generally lay out courses around the strengths of their own games. How little things have changed.

Given MacKenzie's resumé, perhaps his innovative ideas were to be expected. Trained as a surgeon, MacKenzie would often advise his patients to take up golf, believing in the value of exercise.

He claimed few of those who took his advice ever revis-

ited him. Of course, we don't hear whether they were healthy from then on or whether they just thought he was a quack.

MacKenzie also saw more than his share of the horrors of war. His observations of the Boers' use of camouflage in the 1899-1902 Boer War influenced his legacy to the world in ways he could not have foreseen.

He realized that if one's artificial hiding places were indistinguishable from nature, there was very little chance of the opposition finding them.

At the outbreak of the Great War of 1914-1918, MacKenzie was heavily involved in trying to convince British authorities of the advantages of "natural camouflage" as opposed to perfectly built straight-line trenches that could be spotted a mile away.

Unfortunately, his arguments fell on deaf ears and tens of thousands died unnecessarily.

Taking this premise into course design set him apart from most course designers then and now.

MacKenzie insisted that there were no straight lines or over-geometrical curves on his courses, just as there shouldn't be in the fields of war.

He argued that, in nature, an "organized untidiness" could be carried into both camouflage and golf course design. Not co-incidentally given his military background, MacKenzie's bunkering on golf courses is considered among the

finest. Alas, he was never given the chance to show what he could do to save lives on the battlefield.

Despite his glittering career as a designer across three continents, the frustration at his failure to save thousands of lives lost needlessly in the Great War would not go away.

At the time that one of his greatest golf design achievements, Augusta National Golf Club, was being prepared for opening, MacKenzie penned an emotional letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the leaders of the League of Nations pleading to be allowed a hearing to explain his case; a case that in his view could save millions of lives.

The center of his argument was that if generals could be made to realize that wars were "unwinnable" against armies using his recommendations on camouflage, aggressors would no longer want to go to war.

MacKenzie also felt that golf itself was a catalyst for peace. He felt that those countries embracing the game were more likely to develop an appreciation of the value of sportsmanship and fair play, inherent in the rules of the game.

The good doctor's ideas on golf course design are as relevant today as they were then. If he were alive today, he would probably still be writing letters to world leaders. And if his advice were taken, perhaps Dr MacKenzie could finally rest easy.

Jon Morrow is a golf course design and construction consultant. Tel: 01-7284492. Email: jonmorrow63@hotmail.com

Trained as a surgeon, MacKenzie would often advise his patients to take up golf, believing in the value of exercise. He claimed few of those who took his advice ever revisited him

Wachira dominates healthy games



Competitors line up for the women's 100-meter dash.

PHUKET TOWN: Thalang won the soccer in an exciting penalty shootout but Wachira were the undisputed overall champions in the Phuket Public Health Office annual sports, winning every other contest.

The competition, which comprised both athletics and soccer, was held over four days, culminating on February 15 at Surakul Stadium.

The team from Wachira Hospital must have been fairly confident they could win the soccer, having cleaned up at everything else. This positive outlook intensified in the 14th minute, when Wachira scored through

Adirek Saengthong, who kicked accurately into the bottom-right corner of the goal.

But in the 22nd minute, Aikarin Thinpob from Thalang bobbed up unexpectedly to foil Wachira's clean sweep.

And when the game ended after 50 minutes, the score remained level at 1-1.

The penalty shootout proved to be tight, with Thalang just taking the honors 5-4 to retain the title they won last year.

In the women's soccer, however, Kathu were unable to put up quite the same fight and Wachira stormed through to win 5-0.

Seniors set to compete

BANGKOK: You're never too old - as Phuket hopes to prove when it sends middle-aged athletes to join about 5,000 rapidly-graying competitors in the 13th Asian Senior Athletics in Bangkok in December.

Songsak Kitakarakul, director of the Sports Authority of Thailand, Phuket office, said that would-be participants should convey their interest by telephoning the Thai Senior Athletics Association on 02-3199482 and 02-3692565.

To qualify, women must be at least 35 years old, while men must be 40 or older. Independent competitors are welcome.

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Tight tussle in futsal battle

SAPHAN HIN: Some 68 teams are currently engaged in fighting out the 2nd Metropole Futsal Cup 2004, which concludes on February 22 at Saphan Hin Gym 1.

There are three classes in the tourney: under-13s, under-18s and an open class.

On the weekend of February 14 and 15, marathon sessions saw play begin at 9 am and finish at 10 pm.

On February 21 and 22, the intensity is likely to increase with 20,000 baht, 5,000 baht and 3,000 baht to be won in the Open category. For the under-13s and under-18s, the prize money is 5,000 baht, 3,000 baht, 1,500 baht, and 800 baht.

A typically exciting contest was seen in last weekend's first match, between Suan Mae Ju and Ruam Pol Nong Mai (freshmen), in the under-13 class.

For the 10 minutes of the first half, there was no score. But



A Suan Mae Ju player, in black, shows his opponent how it's done.

fans who held out for more got their money's worth in the second half.

Suan Mae Ju came good, beating Ruam Pol Nong Mai 6-1, with two outstanding performers.

Watchara Iamtan blew the game apart when he scored four times in quick succession – in the 11th, 12th, 15th and 17th minutes.

Teammate Surachet Ruamin helped to put the result beyond doubt with goals in the 14th and 19th minutes.

Ruam Pol Nong Mai made it onto the scoreboard when Wichai Luen-garun replied just before full time.

Restaurant serves win

PHUKET TOWN: Mai Mon Restaurant won the team title while Somboon Iewsri from the Khai kab Kai (eggs and chicken) team bowled the biggest game, a 276, in the 3rd Tantanwan 18 Family Bowling tournament at the CS Bowl on February 15.

Results: Mai Mon Restaurant (1,869), Team Wow (1,773), Spirit of Talk (1,683), Sariya team (1,636).

Individuals: Three-game-highest: Natthawuth Aikvanich from Mod Hua Duan team (697); One-game-highest: Somboon Iewsri from Khai kab Kai (eggs and chicken) team (276).

CS Bowl presented Mongkol Kraithas with a JRD motorcycle for scoring 267 points in a tournament on January 31.

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LEXUS Goes from boring to soaring



The styling may still be a bit staid, but underneath it the Lexus 430 is a highly refined mix of power and luxury.

The Lexus was introduced in 1989 as Toyota's upmarket brand. The first model was the Lexus LS400, a large luxury sedan powered by a 250bhp (184 kW) V8. It was a blatant attempt to take on Mercedes-Benz and BMW, and it was uncannily quiet and also gained a well-deserved reputation for reliability.

The problem was that it was a bland and rather boring motor car.

But then Toyota introduced the new LS430, with a redesigned front end, new headlamps, a lower-drag body and a larger, more powerful engine. The motor is a light-weight 4.3-liter V8 which develops a strong 278bhp (207kW) with an impressive torque output of 417Nm at just 3,500rpm.

Engine output is aided by constantly-variable valve timing



By Jeff Heselwood

that provides optimum opening of the inlet valves, depending on driving conditions.

This results in greater torque, better fuel economy and reduced noxious emissions.

A five-speed electronic automatic transmission is fitted, which features a wide-range lock-

up system to further improve fuel efficiency.

The renowned silence of the Lexus is helped by a low drag factor of just 0.25 – the lowest of any passenger sedan – and is now complemented by a superb Mark Levinson audio system, one of the world's best.

This US-made, custom-built sound system is as good as the best high-end home stereos, with a six-disc CD auto-changer, tuner and cassette deck, and no fewer than 11 strategically placed speakers. It is concert-hall reproduction at its finest and puts other audio setups in the shade.

The interior of the Lexus is sumptuous throughout, with leather upholstery, beautiful bird's-eye walnut wood paneling and electrically-operated front seats – the driver's with three individual memory settings that control the seat, the external mirrors, the headrest and the upper anchor for the seat belt.

There is also state-of-the-art air conditioning, with individual left and right temperature controls and independent swing register controls. So clever is this system that

if the passenger seat is not occupied, the climate control concentrates flow on the driver.

The system incorporates an automatic recirculation device with a nitrous oxide sensor and an odor-removing charcoal filter.

In the rear, power seats are also fitted, with a built-in vibration system, while there are separate controls for the air conditioning and the audio system.

New electronically-controlled air suspension maintains a constant ride height, while simultaneously adjusting the dampers according to driving conditions and surfaces. Two height settings are included: high for rough roads, and normal for other conditions. The suspension automatically lowers the car by 20mm for increased stability at speeds above 100kmh, returning to normal height when the speed drops below 80kmh.

The claimed top speed of the Lexus – and make no mistake, this is a big car – is 250kmh, with a 0-100kmh time of only 6.7 seconds. Impressive.

Safety is paramount within the LS430. It has dual front airbags, front-side bags and a full-

length air curtain to protect against side impact.

The front seat belts and the rear outer ones are equipped with pre-tensioners and force limiters, while the body structure features front and rear crumple zones, side impact beams and a high-integrity passenger safety cell.

Brakes are huge vented discs all round, with four-piston aluminum calipers in the front and two-pot calipers at the rear.

Other safety features include automatic rain-sensing wipers, as well as water-repellent windshield glass and automatic headlamps. Vehicle stability control is standard, as are brake-assist force distribution and traction control – the system that detects emergency braking and increases line pressure.

The Lexus is undoubtedly a masterpiece of engineering in all respects. It may still look a little insipid on the outside, but it is by far the quietest luxury sedan on the market and one of the most comfortable.

Jeff Heselwood may be contacted by email at jhc@netvigator.com.

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The recently re-opened Friendship Beach Resort has quickly become a popular hang-out for both local residents and guests.

Whether staying in one of the bungalows or dropping by for drinks and a meal with friends, everyone will appreciate the casual yet upscale atmosphere, with food served against a backdrop of blue sea and nearby islands.

Executive Chef Charlie Maurer inherited his love of cooking from his father. Despite studying political science at Portland State University in Oregon, Charlie gave up a career in law and followed his heart and became a chef.

There has been an occasional musical diversion along the way, however, as Charlie is also an accomplished drummer. But these days at Friendship Beach he is too busy building up the restaurant's reputation to indulge his passion for music.

"I'd been to Thailand on holiday nine times and loved it," explains Charlie, "So I jumped at the chance to come and work here."

The change of climate may have had a small part to play in Charlie's enthusiasm at the move; before coming to Phuket, he had prepared food for the rich and famous at the Outlook Inn on Orcas Island in the San Juan archipelago, off the coast of rainy Oregon.

Charlie is still developing the menu at Friendship Beach, and is listening carefully to guests' suggestions. He is glad to have found a skilled assistant chef, Walika "Cha" Samart, who previously worked at the Felix Karon Hotel on Phuket.

"K. Cha can already prepare at least 80% of the dishes I have created here and is a very efficient chef," says Charlie.

The restaurant is open from 8 am until around 10 pm, seven days a week, for meals and various snacks. There's also a poolside buffet barbecue available on Saturdays and Sundays from lunchtime to early evening.

With reasonable prices and a friendly atmosphere, this is the ideal place for families to relax at the weekend.



DYNAMIC DUO: Executive Chef Charlie Maurer (right) and Chef Walika "Cha" Samart believe that some of their secrets to serving tasty treats, including their popular Greek Salad (top right) and Nachos (right), should remain just that – secret.



Big bites by Chalalong Bay

Sea Bass with Grilled Prawns and Citrus Herb Beurre Blanc Sauce For 2 people

- Ingredients:**
 2 sea bass fillets, each 150 gms;
 6 medium prawns;
 1oz white wine;
 freshly squeezed juice of 1/2 a lime;
 2 tablespoons butter;
 2 teaspoons dried tarragon;
 A large pinch of salt;
 A large pinch of pepper;
 Flour to dredge the fish in;
 1/2 oz cooking oil;
 1 tablespoon whipping cream;
 2 teaspoons finely chopped shallots.

Method:
 Heat the oil in a skillet until it is hot. Dredge the fish fillets in flour and put into the pan with the prawns, salt and pepper. Sauté the fish and prawns for a minute or two on a high heat. Remove the prawns and keep warm. Turn the fish over, add the chopped shallots and cook for another minute.

Guest chef
 By Jenna Wise

Add the white wine, reduce the heat to low and cover the pan so the fish will steam. When the fish flakes to the touch, remove from the pan. Put the butter, tarragon, lime juice and cream into the pan, stirring well.

If the sauce is not thick enough, add a dusting of flour and stir again. Serve the fish with steamed vegetables, garlic butter and jasmine rice.

Nachos For 2-4 people

- Ingredients:**
 30 gm tortilla corn chips;
 50 gm grated mozzarella cheese;
 50 gm grated mature cheddar cheese;
 6 black olives, sliced;
 1 tomato, diced;
 1 mild red chili pepper, diced;
 1/3 red bell pepper, diced;
 2 spring onions, chopped small.

Method:
 Put half the chips onto a microwaveable plate. Spread half of the mixed grated cheese over the chips, then cover with the rest of the chips. Sprinkle the other ingredients evenly over the top and microwave on medium setting for about three minutes until the cheese has melted. Serve hot.

Greek Salad For 2 people

- Ingredients:**
 5-6 large green salad leaves, broken into pieces;
 5-6 large iceberg lettuce leaves, broken into pieces;
 1 1/2 tomatoes, chopped;

- 8 whole black olives;
 2 artichoke hearts, cut into quarters;
 1/3 cucumber, sliced;
 1/2 onion, julienned;
 40 gm feta cheese, cut into small cubes;
 Oil and vinegar salad dressing.

Method:
 Mix all the salad ingredients together and drizzle with dressing. Charlie prefers to preserve some culinary secrets, so you will need to make the dressing to your own taste.

Friendship Beach Resort, 27/1 Soi Mitrphap, Rawai. Tel: 076-288996.

If you have a recipe you would like to share with our readers, please email chef@phuketgazette.net.

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Home of the Week

Surin Beach

Fragrant haven for easy striders

The Surin Beach area has long been regarded as one of the best locales on the island, thanks in no small part to the success of the Amanpuri resort, The Chedi hotel and the beauty of Surin and Bang Tao beaches.

This home is in Surin Springs Estate, a small and cozy oasis just 259 large strides from the beach (yes, we counted them).

Easy living was the serious ambition behind the design of this three-bedroom luxury home. The design brief was to produce a practical, user-friendly home that could be enjoyed without too much fuss.

The result: a peaceful house with a minimalist feel that is easy to maintain and fun to live in.

The location in the Surin area puts it in a perfect spot for a morning on Bang Tao Beach and an afternoon on Surin Beach.

Restaurants, shopping and local markets are all within easy



walking distance, and it's a drive of only 20 minutes from Dulwich school, a factor that is becoming important to many families on the island.

The gardens have been reduced to a minimum yet the house is nevertheless surrounded by flowers. Gentle breezes carry their sweet smell to the centrally-located features, including the infinity pool and sala.

There's no better way to

unwind after a hard day's graft on the beaches than to enjoy a cool, tall beverage and have a natter in the sala, which is comfortably situated to track the passage of the Moon.

The internal layout of the house features two ensuite guest bedrooms with wooden flooring and ample wardrobe space in one wing; and in the other a fully-fitted kitchen, dining area and separate living room.



The master bedroom is on the upper floor, above the dining room. There is also a maid's room and plenty of storage space.

The central lake at Surin Springs provides a pleasing focus – and possibly even fish for the table.

The house is on the market for 20 million baht.

For details contact Dave Raybould at Andrew Park for details. Tel: 076-354016; Email: dave@andrewpark-phuket.com; Website: www.andrewpark-phuket.com

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Construction Update

More housing on the horizon

RAWAI: A 101-million-baht residential development, aimed at families and styled to resemble a park or country club, is due to be completed by October this year, next to Don's Café.

Called "The Park" and set on 7.5 rai of land, the 20 houses – a blend of Balinese and Northern Thai-style architecture – are priced from 4.9 million baht to 8 million baht.

The project is a mix of detached one- or two-story homes. All units come with maid's quarters, two parking spaces and built-in kitchen equipment.

The bungalows – with living space of approximately 221 square meters – have two bedrooms and three bathrooms. The 262sqm two-story units have three bedrooms.

Developer Chanon Rittiboon of Good Build Good Co Ltd says that although the project is only 30% complete, two units have already been sold. The company also developed the Baan Pleonchan estate in Pa Khlok.

The Park is less than 10 minutes from Rawai and Nai Harn beaches, which is expected to be one of its major attractions.



Computer-generated impression of one of the rooms in the new wing of the Royal Paradise Hotel in Patong.

PATONG: Construction of the seven-story, 102-room annex building at the Royal Paradise Hotel in Patong is well underway. Work began at the end of 2003 and is more than 40% complete; the 200-million-baht development is on target for an October opening this year.

Dr Jirachai Amornpairoj, General Manager of the Royal Paradise Hotel, told the *Gazette* that the project, featuring a spa

and, interestingly, an Arabian restaurant, was a response to falling profits over the last few years. "We have to improve," he said. "We don't want business and innovation to stagnate."

Dr Jirachai also said that the 7,500 sqm building – being constructed by Poteam Builder Co of Bangkok – will hold its own against local competition, in terms of both room availability and quality.

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Aloe, aloe, aloe

My apologies for the title and I hope that I have not upset too many fans of that doddering British TV series about the police, *Dixon of Dock Green*.



The aloe has long been used for medicinal purposes – both internally and externally. Picture by Tatiana Anderson at www.TopTropicals.com

The aloe vera is bit of a victim of its own name, really. I won't even start to mention the similarity between the plant's name and the greeting a Yorkshireman would give his wife after a hard day down t'mine.

Aloe has a fibrous root system and produces long, tapering, light-green, stemless leaves that have spiky edges and are surprisingly tough.

The plant is usually grown for the oddly attractive leaves, but older aloe plants also occasionally bloom – the firm, upright stems bearing several bell-shaped, fleshy, yellow-orange flowers.

Its leaves grow in a rosette formation to allow it to gather as much water as possible when it rains – not that it can do at this time of the year in Phuket.

and refreshes the skin. Apply it before going out in the sun to help filter out UV rays, or if you are already suffering from sunburn, use aloe to soothe the skin and help it heal. This really works.

The clipped leaf won't regenerate its tip, but it will heal over and continue to grow.

Aloe can even be taken internally, to borrow a medical term. One of the ingredients in aloe is a powerful laxative, so if you

do decide you want to take this internally, then expect the results to be fairly dramatic.

Taken in very small doses, it is apparently a good digestive tonic. Personally, I'll stick to applying it to the outside of my body.

Aloe prefers a rough, gritty growing medium and a well-drained, sunny location, but it will also be quite content in partial shade. Due to the searing heat in Thailand, it's not unusual for the tips of the leaves to turn brown, so don't worry if you see this happen – it's not necessarily a sign of abuse or neglect.

The aloe breeds for fun. A healthy plant will constantly produce more offspring from its roots. A pot will always contain a smaller version of its mother. Replant the youngster and give it its own space, and it will accelerate towards adulthood.

The aloe is probably best known for its medicinal properties. Clip off the tip of a leaf and you'll see a huge amount of gel-like sap inside it. This goo can be applied to all sorts of skin injuries, with impressive results.

It helps to heal cuts, burns and abrasions and also soothes

Understanding the key to the Thai way

I recently attended a function at the Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce on the subject of relationships in business between expatriates and Thais.

A prominent Thai businessman said that many Thai people have the perception that foreigners, especially Westerners, are "telling us what to do" and that Western management and business styles are weak and ineffective in this part of the world.

Likewise, the expatriate community often expresses frustration with getting things accomplished and often views their Thai counterparts as uncooperative.

For 50 years or so, representatives from many nations have brought ideas and methods to this region, assuming that these would be embraced with enthusiasm.

This has not proved to be the case. While change has been brought to Thailand, the concept that the values and norms that were here when the expatriates arrived would simply disappear was a long way off the mark.

Foreigners buying a house or living and working in Thailand should understand that a sense of indignation is often felt and expressed by local residents.

These are not people to be taken lightly or underestimated or, as some people seem to believe, to be treated as children in need of "valuable" tutelage and guided towards prosperity.

These perceptions can be dangerous and counterproductive. Many people in the local community perceive that *farang* with this attitude are trying to tell them what to do.

We should always try to achieve an atmosphere of working *with* each other, not *against* each other.

Thailand has a rich history, and Thai people have an outlook on life that should be understood and appreciated. You don't have to agree, accept or adapt it, but you do need to understand why they do what they do.



By Graham Doven

As much as expatriates have something to offer, the people of this country have even more to offer the "guests of Thailand".

Whether you are from a developed country or a developing country, frankly, who cares? Relationships and experiences of the differences in cultures are a foundation for learning and eventually create another level of understanding.

There is often debate, and sometimes fear, about globalization and the disappearance of ethnic identity. This can be a dangerous trend because it implies that, the greater the interaction with outside cultures and forces, the greater the danger of pollution of the ethnic identity.

A well-known Thai academic and political figure expressed the view that ethnic identity cannot be lost or polluted or taken away – for it to disappear it has to be given away.

Success for an international tourist and investment destination such as Phuket is based on the mutual ability to understand that any trend towards insulation, isolation or animosity is the fault of expats and locals alike and is best countered by a closer relationship and respect and understanding, especially in business.

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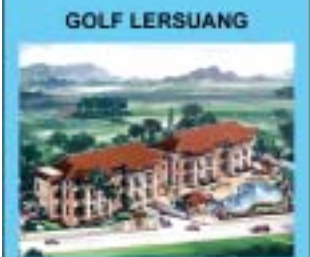
Property Gazette



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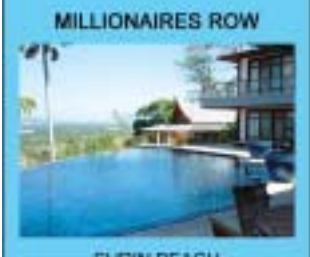
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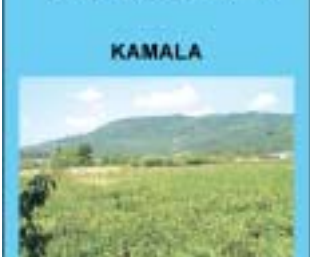
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with 2 bathrooms, aircon, UBC, phone. Just 150m to Chalong Bay. Only 8,500 baht a month. Tel: 06-7408146.

Properties Wanted

PROPERTY WANTED

Large one-bedroom apartment, condo or house on beach, in Patong or nearby, for off season, from March 1. Also looking to rent lot (land) 90-year lease, on the sand in Patong or close. Call Joe at 06-1461431.

KATHU AREA

I am looking for a rental house, Kathu area, from mid-April onwards. Must have fenced garden and at least two bedrooms. Tel: 01-8933462. Email: tempthai@yahoo.com

HOUSE NEEDED

Looking for long-term house rental, furnished with aircon. I will need the house next month. Email full details to me at: jimberan1@hotmail.com

SELL YOUR HOUSE

on land now. Investor looking for land, villas and houses. Contact us. Tel: 01-8921199. Email: cadillac@loxinfo.co.th

Accommodation Available

BEAUTIFUL APARTMENT - KATA
Superb one-bedroom apartment in Kata, aircon, fan, hot shower, free Sat TV, fully furnished/equipped. 12,000 baht per month. Tel: 01-3430777, 07-2675376.

BUNGALOW 4 RENT
Aircon, hot shower, fridge. 300 baht/day; 6,000 baht/month. Tel: 076-202644.

ACCOM AVAILABLE
Two-bedroom bungalow, Kamala Beach. Pool, close to beach and center, quiet, convenient location. Short or long term. Tel: 01-8952911.

PATONG LUXURY
Luxury apartments in central Patong. 1- and 2-bedroom apartments. Please email for more info and photos. Email: suites247@yahoo.com

2-BEDROOM APT

2 bathrooms, kitchen, secure parking, two floors. 5,000 baht/month. Chao Fa East Rd. Tel: 09-7939268.

HOUSE NEAR PATONG

A fully furnished, 2-bedrm, 2-bathrm house with a big living room and 2 aircon available for rent. 10,000 baht/month. Tel: 09-6459527, 09-7319960.

ROOMS FROM B300

Fan/aircon rooms with ensuite bathrooms plus fridge, hot/cold shower, white bed sheets changed daily. Pool table, UBC TV, bar, lounge. All rooms are ground level and have windows, 10 min walk to beach, 15 min walk to all nightlife. Contact for pics and more info. Tel: 076-342280, 01-9781956. Fax: 076-290-383. Email: palm@phuket.ksc.co.th

View Thailand's **LARGEST** portfolio of Classified Ads - more than 2,000 of them - and most ads are **FREE!** See the *Phuket Gazette Online* at www.phuketgazette.net

Agents for Classified Advertising

PHUKET

- Kata Pharmacy & Mini Mart** Taina Rd, Kata Tel: 076-330898
- K.L. Mart** Patak Rd, Chalong Tel: 076-280400/3
- NAVA Language School** Phang Nga Rd, Phuket Town Tel: 076-232398/9
- Sin & Lee** Thalang Rd, Phuket Town Tel: 076-211230
- Taurus Travel** Aroonsom Plaza Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd, Patong Tel: 076 344521-2
- A la Carte** Kamala main road, Cherng Talay Tel: 076-278019

PHANG NGA

- Maew Internet Shop**, Khao Lak Tel: 076-420627

Classified Advertisements

Please use this form to write your classified advertisement. Then hand it to any of our agents.

_____ (heading)

Classified ads are charged per line. Each line is 60 baht, with a minimum of 4 lines (heading included) per ad.

All advertising must be paid for in advance.

Deadline for Property Mart page: Friday 3 pm.

Deadline for all other pages: Saturday 12 noon.

Property Gazette

Accommodation Wanted

PATONG BEACH

I am looking for a room for rent in Patong from March 9 to April 22. Please email details of anything interesting to: mats.sioland@ocom.se

PATONG/KAMALA

I'm looking to rent an apartment, preferably quiet. I'm planning to be in Phuket for a minimum of 2 years, so I'm hoping to find a place for approx 5,000-7,000 baht. Please email any offers to: teflsteve@yahoo.co.uk

KATA CENTER

Single male requires bungalow accommodation in Kata/Karon area for about 6 weeks. Location is important as I have no wish to hire a car or a motorbike. Accommodation must be about 20 minutes' walk from Peach Hill in Kata. Please email any offers to: pmarkcrotty@btinternet.com

APARTMENT/ROOM

Looking for long-term rental apartment or room. Should be in Patong, Kamala, Kathu or Karon. Fully furnished and with fan ok. Max price 5,000 baht/mth. Tel: 05-1601670.

2-BEDROOM HOUSE

wanted. Would like a 2-bedroom house in Land & Houses Park for 15,000 baht/month. Tel: 07-889-3675.

NAI HARN

Expat is seeking to rent a bungalow in the Nai Harn area for an initial period of two months. Please email details to: beachcomberwa@yahoo.com.au

HOUSE WANTED

A friend of mine wants to move from Bangkok to Phuket. She is looking for a house in Chalong or Rawai with 2 bedrooms, etc. Very basic is ok. She has 2 Rottweiler dogs, so the house should be fenced or have a wall around it. The dogs are quiet and clean. Long-term rental preferred. Tel: 076-344852, 01-0798065. Fax: 076-344852. Email: thaigerd@ji-net.com

APARTMENT

wanted from first week of March for 3-6 months. Must be in good condition with the usual facilities. Prefer Patong but will consider anything that's close to Patong. Please email with details of price and pictures. Email: james@bentleycc.fslife.co.uk

NEED ROOM, HOUSE

Expat seeks room or house. Furnished, phone line, fan/aircon, 7,000 baht or less. Let me know what you have. Please send full details by email to: rogerthai@hotmail.com

NICE HOUSE

urgently wanted. We are looking for a nice 3-bedroom house in Patong, Kamala, or Surin area, with a lease of 1-3 years. Up to 50,000 baht per month is acceptable. Call K. Sand Panit. Tel: 076-255389, 09-6521525. Fax: 076-354-724. Email: pkhongmak@courts.co.th

NAI HARN

Expat is seeking to rent a bungalow in the Nai Harn area for an initial period of two months. Please email details to: beachcomberwa@yahoo.com.au

BUDGET ROOM

British expat requires budget accommodation in or around Patong for six months commencing June/July. Please email details to: fletcher2u@tesco.net

WEST COAST

We need accommodation Kata, Karon or Kamala from December 6 and max until December 27. We are 4 adults and two children. We prefer accommodation near the beach. Please email details to: fam.karlstrom@bostream.nu

WANT TO RENT

a room with aircon for 500 baht per night. Email with full details as soon as possible. Email: r_solli@yahoo.no

QUIET HOUSE

or apartment wanted in Phuket Town or very near, for 6 months from April. Please email offers to: eunson101@yahoo.com

HOUSE FOR RENT

Looking for accommodation from March 29, 2004. Email: polymath2002@hotmail.com

APARTMENT IN BKK

needed. Need long-term contract for rental of 2-3 bedroom apartment in Bangkok. Bangna Trad area, Thana City preferred, or any apartment that has easy access to expressway. Email: chatchada@phuketinternet.com. Tel: 01-8946403.

HOUSE IN KATHU

wanted. Looking for 1- or 2-bedroom house for long-term stay (minimum 1-yr contract) in Kathu. Should have basic furniture, garden, telephone line and cable TV or UBC satellite. Tel: 01-7378523. Email: roithmayr@loxinfo.co.th

CLOSE TO TOWN

Moving to Phuket to work and need a house near town, prefer Kathu or Chao Fa areas, starting in March. 1- or 2-bedroom house with fenced yard/garden, aircon and furnished. Price in the region of 12,500 baht a month. No agents or realtors please. Email: jimberan1@hotmail.com

HOUSE/APARTMENT

Long-term lease needed. High-standard house or apartment with minimum 2 bedrooms, living room and kitchen in the Phuket area - furnished, access to swimming pool, and aircon. Preferably including electricity. Willing to pay up to 15,000 baht/month. Email: daniel_lundell@lycos.com

Property Services

HARDWOOD FLOORS

Change your old floor to new-look hardwood floor in 1 day. It's pre-varnished, real hardwood, no dust, easy to install. Teak, maple, *maka*, etc. Prices from 900 baht/sqm. 01-4241354. Email: vira@tropical-decor.com

Property Services Wanted

FOREMAN WANTED

We are in need of a good home construction foreman. We have contracts for four houses and want to proceed immediately. Must be able to communicate in English, build in concrete and building blocks, and be willing to learn. Tel: 076-254752.

If an event isn't listed in the Gazette's

Events Calendar

it probably isn't one.

List **YOUR** event now - **It's free of charge.**

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Steam room/sauna and accessories, and portable hot tub from USA. Quality equipment, designed and installed for your needs. Business and residential. Call us at 09-793-9268.

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Original build plus equipment. Please call 06-2761504 or visit our website at: www.sea-business.com/renokit

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Phuket & Samui PROPERTY EXHIBITION

Singapore 2004

Raffles City Convention Centre - Swissôtel The Stamford.

Don't miss this opportunity. Limited Space Available.

The Singapore market is proving very active with many sales to Singapore buyers reported.

The **Phuket & Samui Property Exhibition** will provide high-profile advertising ensuring that every potential buyer in Singapore will be aware of the event. Join the major developers from Phuket & Samui in Singapore 5-7th March 2004

The database of visitors will be available to all exhibitors.

The **Phuket Gazette**
The Local Paper with the International Outlook

Phuket

HOMES
Tropical
Samui

Enquiries: www.ap-expo.com

E-mail: jade@aapress.net or graham@ap-expo.com

Thailand: **Graham Doven 66 1 897 0225**

Singapore: **Mr. David Lee, Eastwest Executive Travellers 65 6238 8488**



Island Job Mart



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Thailand

Do values like 'career development' and 'retaining the best available talent' motivate you to perform at your optimal level?

Will an atmosphere filled with energy, creativity and innovation entice you to offer your very best? Is working in one of Thailand's leading resorts that has achieved multiple awards your career aspiration?

If it is the affirmative for the above, Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket is the place for you.

As a member of the Luxury Collection of Starwood Hotels & Resorts and one of the five resorts at Laguna Phuket, we are currently seeking highly qualified professionals with the relevant experience for the following positions:

Senior Events Manager

In this challenging role, you will support the Director of Events in controlling and managing all aspects of daily operations including:

- Confidently conduct site inspections of our prestigious property.
- Operational management of events from the initial enquiry to its successful completion.
- Establish new, and support ongoing relationships with our customers, suppliers and local tour operators
- Achieve departmental and individual sales budgets and goals.
- Training and development of staff within a team environment.
- Administrative tasks including departmental reports, constant monitoring and yielding of incoming business.

Reservation Sales Agent, Reservation Group Co-ordinator

The desire to provide excellent customer servicing in an efficient and friendly manner including:

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- Enthusiastic and motivated with a willingness to learn.
- Attention to detail in a timely effective manner.

In addition to relevant experience and skills, applicants should have a positive attitude, as well as good interpersonal and communication skills. Excellent command of English and computer skills are essential.

Successful candidates will be offered attractive salaries and benefits, in addition to excellent career development.

Please apply prior to 15 March 2004 in person or send application, resumé and recent photo to:

Human Resources
Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket
Bang Tao Bay, Phuket 83110
Tel: (66 76) 324 101-7; Fax: (66 76) 324108
Email: chayanuch.chudhabuddhi@luxurycollection.com



THE LUXURY COLLECTION
Starwood Hotels & Resorts

ENGLISH TEACHERS required. Kajonkietsuksa Bilingual School in Phuket has positions available for English teachers in the new academic year (May 2004-March 2005). Candidates must be native English-speakers and hold a degree. Teaching experience is preferable. Please apply by fax or email. Fax: 076-248976. Email: info@kajonkiet.com

WEB DESIGNER & PROGRAMMER

Looking for project-based Web designer/programmer to build a company website related to a custom-made draperies business. Work from your location. Required: extensive Web design and programming experience, including Pearl, CGI-bin, e-commerce, MacroMedia, Photoshop and Frontpage. To apply, please send your resumé by email to: jinny@siamleathergoods.com

5-STAR BOUTIQUE RESORT

Soon-to-open 5-star boutique resort in Kata Beach requires staff for the following positions: F&B service/kitchen, Front Office, Spa. Fluent English is essential. Please fax or email your application with CV to Alistair Why, or call for appointment. Tel: 076-333031. Fax: 076-333035. Email: alistair@aspasiaphuket.com

HOTEL ACCOUNTING

staff required for a new 4-star hotel. We are now recruiting and training staff for the opening in July 2004. We require a Thai female with good spoken English and computer experience. Please send CV by email to apply. Email: job@karon-phuket-hotels.com

CARETAKER WANTED
Caretaker wanted for small 6-unit resort during May-July closed season. Expats only with documented work and character references. Free car, satellite TV and use of other facilities. Tel: 06-2742044. Email: brian@coco-p.com

PROPERTY AND LAND scout required. Vacancy for Thai with good English to seek out property and land for sale, for real estate business. Must have transport. Good salary and commission offered. Tel: 076-280805. Email: info@siamrealestate.com

STAFF REQUIRED

An honest and friendly person - who must be able to communicate in English - is required to work in an Internet cafe. Training will be provided. To apply, please call or send your CV. Tel: 076-296617, 06-2810515. Fax: 076-296617. Email: natanri@hotmail.com



BUPA

is a global health and care organisation with members in nearly 190 countries worldwide.

We protect members throughout the world and offer a range of affordable plans and cashless access to over 200 leading hospitals and clinics throughout Thailand. We are ISO 9001:2000 certified. To support our operation expansion, we offer career opportunities in the following position:

Telesales Officer (Based in Phuket and Hatyai)

You will be responsible for managing and expanding sales volume and market share of health insurance products in Phuket and the surrounding area.

Qualifications:

- Male/Female: age 30 or older
- Bachelor's degree in related field
- 2-3 year's experience in sales
- Good personality, service minded with good interpersonal skills
- Fluent in spoken and written English
- Good computer literacy

We offer a competitive remuneration package for the right candidate. If you believe you are qualified for the above position, please send your application in English and detailed resumé with current salary and expected salary, together with the transcript and a recent photograph.

BUPA Health Insurance (Thailand) Limited
Phuket Branch
156/15 Fang Nga Rd.
T. Taladyai, A. Muang,
Phuket 83000
E-mail: phuket@bupa.co.th



Member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World

This well established Deluxe resort, on Koh Lanta, Krabi is searching for a candidate with the following qualifications:

Chief Engineer

- Male over 35 years old and of Thai Nationality
- Bachelor's or Master Degree in engineering field or higher
- At least 5 years experience in a similar position and preferably in a resort environment
- Strong ability in leading a team of 30/35 engineering & gardening staff
- Good command of written and spoken English language
- Computer, Internet, and emailing proficiency.
- Able to work under pressure and handle multiple projects simultaneously.
- Hard working, dynamic, hands on and highly responsible.

Other positions available:

Asst Front Office Manager, Cost Controller, HK Supervisor, Room Attendants
Waiter/Waitress, Store/Cost Officer, Cooks - Thai/Western cuisine, Engineers/ Technicians

Interested candidates, please submit, resume, recent picture and expected salary to; fax at 00 75 407 998 or email at hr@pimalai.com; only short listed candidates will be contacted. Pimalai Resort & Spa, 99 Moo 5, Ba Kae Trang Bay, Koh Lanta, Krabi 81150, Thailand

DULWICH INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE, PHUKET

WWW.DULWICH.AC.TH



URGENTLY REQUIRED !!!

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE MANAGER

Qualifications:

- Thai, age at least 33 years
- Bachelor's Degree or higher in Accounting and Finance
- 7-10 years' experience in finance and accounting with at least 3 years in the management level
- Oversee monthly reporting, budgeting & forecasting
- Strong leadership, communication and interpersonal skills
- Good command of both spoken and written English
- Good computer literacy

The successful candidates will receive an attractive salary package commensurate with experience and capabilities.

Please contact in person or send CV, letter of application and recent photo to: (Personnel Department)

DULWICH INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE, PHUKET
59 Moo 2, Thepkrasatthi Rd.,
T.Koh Kaew, A.Muang, Phuket 83200
Tel: (076) 238-711-20 ext. 1111
Fax: (076) 238-750
E-mail: siritratp@dulwich.ac.th

An international day and boarding school from Kindergarten to Secondary level, Dulwich International College offers top quality education to the Thai and International communities of the Asia/Pacific region.

MARKETING

Manager required. Siam Wireless has position for a full-time Marketing Manager. The successful candidate must have basic technology/computer/Internet understanding and strong organizational skills within a marketing background. Neat and professional in appearance, he/she will be responsible for writing/submitted proposals and managing a marketing team. High standards of spoken and written English are required. Please submit CV to apply. Tel: 01-8355771. Email: pat@siam-wireless.com

HOTEL STAFF

A new 4-star hotel in Karon is looking for English-speaking staff to work in our office, reception and restaurant. Please email CV to apply. Email: job@karon-phuket-hotels.com

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Full-time English teacher required for Text and Talk Academy. Please contact for further information. Tel: 076-346188, 09-7674257, 06-6077493.

NANNY WANTED

English-Thai family requires a live-in, English-speaking, experienced nanny. Salary 8,000 baht per month. Please email or call to apply. Tel: 01-8937027. Email: ianpotter@hotmail.com

MANAGER WANTED

for beauty salon and massage shop. Must be female, speak English and have professional experience in beauty salons. Call Max at: 09-4707786.

Employment Wanted

WEB DESIGNER

looking to join a team or company to design, develop and maintain websites. Other offers will be considered. I have a bachelor's degree, good English and German language skills, references. Tel: 07-0208107. Email: damianator@gmx.ch

HOUSEKEEPER

available for foreign clients only. Fair spoken and written English. Tel: 06-9469997.

EUROPEAN

architect/construction engineer with work permit looking for employment. Tel: 06-9510987.

SEEKING WORK

21-year-old English male, ex-Marine, extremely hard-working, very punctual and willing to learn, is looking part-time or full-time work. Contact Mike. Tel: 07-8813949. Email: m_forbes30@hotmail.com

JOB WANTED

Thai man with international experience and skills in speaking Swedish, English and Thai. Tel: 01-3081026. Email: jayphuket@hotmail.com

Recruitment



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- HOUSEKEEPING SUPERVISOR
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- GOOD COMMAND OF ENGLISH
- COMPUTER LITERACY
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 HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
 214 MOO 2 TUMBON AO-NANG, AMPHUR MUANG, KRABI 81000
 E-MAIL: PERSONNELS@RAYAVADEE.COM

The Phuket Gazette

the island's English-language newspaper

The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd is seeking creative, motivated Thai nationals to join our team. The ideal candidates will have the following qualifications:

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT

- Thai, age 23 up
- Bachelor's degree or higher (in any field)
- Reasonable command of written and spoken English
- Must have a car driver's license
- Accounting experience would be an advantage, but the Gazette is willing to provide training for a novice with good interpersonal skills and unquestioned honesty

Please send CV to the Personnel Manager.
 Tel: 076-236555. Fax: 076-213971. Email: mem@phuketgazette.net

REPORTER

The successful candidate will be a Thai national with initiative, an outgoing personality and plenty of curiosity about the world and how it works. Also essential are the ability to communicate in English, both spoken and written, and a car driver's license.

Applications should be submitted by email to: alasdair@phuketgazette.net

If an event isn't listed in the Gazette's

Events Calendar

it probably isn't one.

List **YOUR** event now - **It's free of charge.**

phuketgazette.com/calendar

Tout, Trader & Trumpet

Articles for Sale

GENERATOR

from Germany, secondhand, 125KVA, 225KVA, top condition (90%). Contact for further information at Rothermann 1998 (Thailand). Tel: 02-618 5925 or 01-6176313. Email: roterman@cscoms.com, wattana@rothermannthai.com

SEALY MATTRESSES

for sale. Pair of new Sealy "Platinum" mattresses, 3 feet x 6 feet, for sale at 60% below retail price. Please call for details. Tel: 01-0833071.

PORTABLE FEEDING

chair, car seat, stroller, toys are now for sale at reasonable prices. Tel: 06-2723885.

BEST THAI SILK

for wholesale and retail at low prices. Call Khun Wa at 09-8742960. Email: pwarunee@hotmail.com

Articles Wanted

WASHING MACHINE

Second hand, cheap washing machine wanted. Must be working fine. Tel: 07-2679780. Email: lovinda1@hotmail.com

STUFF NEEDED

I am looking for an MP3 player, music CDs/tapes, and a mobile phone - all in good shape for under 2,000 baht each. Email: philip_kicker@yahoo.co.uk

Boats & Marine



FOR A FREE OF CHARGE INSURANCE QUOTE FOR YOUR BOAT, COMMERCIAL OR PLEASURE

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The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd
 367/2 Yaowarat Road, Phuket Town
 Tel: 076-236555 Fax: 076-213971

Tout, Trader & Trumpet

BOAT FOR SALE

29-foot fiberglass motor yacht with Thai registration. 2 x 280hp Mercruiser engines. Price: 3.5 million baht ono. Please contact for more info. Tel: 076-239864. Email: hktmkt@ksc.th.com

BOSTON WHALER

Unsinkable 21-foot Boston Whaler-style fiberglass fishing speedboat with central console, 140hp Yamaha outboard engine, trailer and, Thai registration. Absolutely as new. For sale at only 490,000 baht. Please contact for more details. Tel: 01-8626954. Email: karom@libero.it

Business Opportunities

RESTAURANT 4 RENT

Located on main road between Chalong and Rawai on 1 rai of land. Rent 8,000 baht/month, key money 700,000 baht. Tel: 09-6467176.

GUESTHOUSE/BAR

Guesthouse and bar restaurant for sale. Situated in Soi Sansabai, opp Soi Bangla. Has 6 bedrooms and 30-seat restaurant plus bar. Call Mark for full details. Tel: 09-8664559.

RESTAURANT/BAR

Restaurant and bar for rent in good area. Includes 5 rooms to rent out. Please call for more details. Tel: 07-2708206.

BOOMING AREA

Very nice bar and restaurant for sale. Located in Nai Harn, must see it. Tel: 07-8860295.

COMPANY FOR SALE

Profitable company, located only 150 meters from Phuket's longest beach. Buildings and land have freehold title (Chanote), with easy foreign transfer. Includes a 20-room hotel, 25-seat restaurant, several rented offices, 3 work permits and space to build owner's quarters or to expand. Priced for quick sale. Email: hotelinparadise@yahoo.com

ORCHID BUSINESS

Have 5,000 plants, and permit to hold and export all species with culture equipment: autoclaves, laminar bottles and shelving. Tel: 076-388396, 06-9579325.

GUESTHOUSE

Guesthouse for sale with 7 bedrooms, open-air restaurant and bar. Land on 10-year lease plus option for another 10 years. Monthly lease rate for land is 15,000 baht. Registered capital of 4 million baht for two work permits. Attractive location in unspoiled environment between Rawai and Nai Harn. Two minutes' walk to the beach. 2.9 million baht. Contact for more info. Tel: 01-2724648. Email: osbornjo@loxinfo.co.th

KAMALA BAR 4 SALE

A fully equipped bar in Kamala for sale. 250,000 baht. Tel: 01-7374295, 01-8929524. Email: stevebragg28@hotmail.com

CHAWENG BEACH

Three garden bars for lease in central Chaweng Beach, Koh Samui. 10-year leases. Construction starts in April. Tel: 01-8957276. Email: gringos@isdn.loxinfo.com

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

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Motorbikes

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