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Yacht taxes cut to zero at last



Sunsail yachts are loaded onto a freighter for transport to Langkawi. They were sailed back to Phuket on February 19 so that they could be imported under the new tax regime.

By Dhirarat Boonkongaen

PHUKET CITY: Phuket's marine leisure industry broke out the Champagne on February 18 as the government finally dropped the customs duty on imported boats to zero, following publication of the change to the tax law in the *Royal Gazette* the previous day.

They celebrated again on February 23 when excise tax on imported boats was also dropped.

A third impost on imported yachts, the Ministry of Interior tax, which was calculated as a percentage of excise tax, automatically dropped to zero.

Theera Paesathitthavorn, Deputy Chief of Customs in Phuket, told the *Phuket Gazette* that he anticipates an increase in the number of yacht arrivals in Phuket as a result.

Until the announcement, boats could be brought into Thai waters and stay for up to 12 months without the owner paying any taxes. But any boat kept here longer than a year was liable for duty and taxes totaling 47% of its value.

This in itself was an improvement on the taxes levied at the height of Thailand's austerity drive, under the Democrat government, when total imposts came to around 230%.

Under the new regime, boats may still be kept in Thai waters for up to six months without having to be imported.

Yachts that are imported will still incur VAT of 7% of the value of the boat.

The dropping of duty and taxes on yachts came after lengthy lobbying by the Marine Alliance of Thailand (MAT).

The MAT argued that the country would benefit more from the income attracted by a thriving yachting industry than it would from trying to tax yachts heavily.

Jan Jacobs, Director of yacht chartering, management and brokerage firm Thai Marine Leisure, and a member of the MAT, said, "We're delighted. It was sometimes difficult to believe it was going to happen. We hope this will boost the marine industry in Phuket big time."

"It will help us to increase the charter fleet immediately and attract more wealthy tourists."

Among the first to bring in boats and register them under the Thai flag will be yacht charter company Sunsail, which brought in 10 yachts on February 19 to replace its aging fleet of rental boats. An application to import the boats had been lodged.

Crime fighters set up in Phuket

By Dhirarat Boonkongaen

PHUKET: In a bid to tackle serious crime around the country, the Bangkok-based Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) has formed local crime-fighting forces for each police region, CIB Deputy Commissioner Pol Maj Gen Chatchawal Suksomjit announced on February 21.

Gen Chatchawal has been appointed chief of the CIB office for Region 8, based in Phuket and covering Ranong, Krabi, Phang Nga, Phuket, Chumphon, Surat Thani and Nakhon Sri Thammarat provinces.

Eight other CIB Deputy Commissioners have been assigned to similar offices to cover the other police regions in the country.

"From now on, we will be intimately involved with investigations into violent crimes and cases that the local police are too limited to handle," he said. "In the past, we experienced overlaps in tasks between the central office and the regional offices, making it confusing for both and reducing our ability to enforce the law effectively."

Gen Chatchawal said that the new force comprises hundreds of officers from the Tourist Police, Marine Police and Highway Police, as well as CIB officers from Bangkok.

In particular, he said, they will target the spiraling number of crimes by teenagers, including violent sex crimes, fighting and street racing, as well as cases "too complicated" for local officers to handle.

"There are two major prob-

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Queer News

Scam of the week

PHUKET: Anybody who enjoyed the film *The Sting* will be glad to know that good old-fashioned confidence tricks are alive and well – and being played out in Phuket.

The latest victim was 68-year-old Tanom Janthip of Pa Khlok village 4. When she was approached at her home by three friendly, well-dressed strangers looking to buy 100 rai of land of behalf of an investor in Bangkok, she was more than happy to help – especially when she was told she would collect a tidy commission.

She told them that she knew of a nice plot in the Ban Laem Sai area, and on February 17 the foursome drove to inspect the seaside property. But they never got to see it.

En route, one of the party told the driver to stop at a hut by the side of the road where a disheveled old woman was selling sarongs.

They bought three garments from the woman, who appeared to be Burmese. As she was making change, she pulled out a lottery ticket and told them that she had the winning ticket in the latest draw, but was unable to cash in on the 3-million-baht prize because she was an illegal immigrant.

K. Tanom checked the ticket number against the listings in a newspaper. It was the winning number.

The old woman offered to sell the ticket to the car driver for a piddling 500,000 baht.

He could not come up with the money so he asked K. Tanom if she could help out. She said she could put in 200,000 baht and her new partners said they would somehow find the additional 300,000. It was agreed that they would split the 3 million baht 50:50 with K. Thanom.

They visited her bank, where she withdrew the money and handed it over, before agreeing to meet them the next day to go claim their winnings.

The next day, when her new friends failed to turn up at the appointed hour, K. Tanom grew uneasy. She took the ticket to her 54-year-old nephew, who examined it. He peeled back a sticker that had been carefully placed over the ticket's real number. K. Thanom realized that she had just squandered 200,000 baht on a worthless scrap of paper.

Police said there had been many similar cases but that few of the victims filed complaints because they felt foolish about being so easily duped.

Source: Siang Tai

Divine puddle reported in Ubon

UBON RATCHATHANI: The squad leader of a Army Rangers Unit posted near the Thai-Cambodian border has located what he believes to be Thailand's most recent discovery of Buddha footprints.

The leader, Apichai Khokajai, led a band of villagers and news reporters to the remote site to show off his unique discovery on February 23. A picture of the supposed footprint, partially filled with rainwater, was prominently displayed on the front page of a leading mass circulation Thai daily newspaper the following day.

According to the report, the "footprint" measures a staggering 160 centimeters in length – about the average height of a

Thai woman – and is 86 centimeters across. It is set deep in a cavity of a rock formation about five kilometers from the border near Phu Lamduan Temple in Ubon Rachathanee's Amphur Nam Khun.

The abbot of the nearby temple told him the discovery was not new, however, but had already been reported in 1994. The monk said he wasn't sure if it was the Buddha's footprint or not, but that the rock warranted further study. He estimated the footprint's age at about 4,000 years.

The Buddha is known with some confidence to have been a normal-sized man who lived in India about 2,500 year ago.

Source: Daily News

First step toward Cyber-Paradise

By Gategeo Phetsawang

PHUKET CITY: A branch of the Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA) will open on March 1 at Saphan Hin – the first small step toward the island's much-anticipated golden future as an IT hub.

Manoo Ordeedolchest, President of SIPA, told the *Gazette*, "The Board of Investment and the provincial government will be responsible for setting up and running a one-stop service center to help foreign investors with such matters as immigration issues and work permits.

In addition, he said, the Communications Authority of Thailand will open an Internet

gateway in Phuket at the end of this year and the Telephone Organization of Thailand will install more high-speed Internet connections.

"E-commerce, animation and multimedia software will be promoted," K. Manoo said, "along with whatever else the market demands."

A pilot program will be launched soon with the aim of developing the animation and multimedia skills of local people, he said, and SIPA would cooperate with local administrative bodies to provide IT systems and to apply technology in local businesses.

The Minister of Information and Communications Tech-

nology (ICT), Dr Surapong Suebwonglee, is expected to perform the honors when the SIPA office is opened in a building belonging to the Prince of Songkhla University (PSU).

Rattana Wetprasit, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs at the university, said PSU would cooperate with SIPA to organize a Thailand Animation Multimedia Camp, with the aim of training 200 people in graphic design on computers.

She said PSU also plans to organize more courses to teach people programming.

On the agenda is the eventual development of a software park in the same area as the SIPA office.

Municipal poll campaigning begins



Somjai Suwannasuppana clearly expects to be elected mayor.

PHUKET CITY: Garlands of marigolds marked the start of the election campaign for mayor of Phuket City on February 24 as the first two candidates registered and outlined their policies.

More candidates are expected to join the race before the April 4 poll.

The streets of the newly-declared city are expected to resound with public-announcement trucks and be filled with supporters handing out fliers for weeks to come.

Crowds of supporters

cheered on Prawat Suwannathakul, from the *Chao Baan Sarng San* Party, and Somjai Suwannasuppana, from the *Khon Noom* Party, when they arrived at Phuket City Hall today.

Phuket Government CEO Udomsak Usawarangkura, who came to observe the process on the first day said, "I feel no fear of any violence during the election.

"The candidates and their supporters are educated. They won't do anything wild."

– Nonthawat Disayabutra

CIB sets up operations in Phuket

From page 1

lems we have to handle immediately. One is teenage motorbike gangs. About 100 [gang members] often gather on the street at night near Rajabhat University Phuket. We have all their details. I have ordered officers to investigate in depth.

"Society should be aware of the problem and know that we are keeping an eye on [the teenage gangs]. They are in our sights," he said.

Gen Chatchawal said that key crime bosses in the region are also high on his agenda. "We are [putting pressure on] their supporters, who are government officers, business people and ordinary citizens. If we [take away their support], it will be more difficult for these powerful people to continue to operate.

"We already have information about them. All 19 'big ones' [in Region 8] are involved in all kinds of crime: gambling, illegal weapons, lotteries and la-



Pol Maj Gen Chatchawal Suksomjit: Putting pressure on supporters of crime bosses.

bor, and gunmen for hire. We are focusing on gathering evidence against them," he said.

Gen Chatchawal rated Phuket as the third-worst province in the region for "big crime". The

worst is Ranong, he said, while Surat Thani is second.

He added that CIB Region 8 will also help to monitor the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization elections on March 14 and will help in any related investigations.

"We will cooperate with the Central Election Committee (CEC) in keeping an eye on the elections. Our officers have been trained to investigate and will report to the CEC," he said.

The reorganization of police responsibilities coincides with the increased involvement of the ruling Thai Rak Thai party in grass-roots politics.

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A bit of a flap but no bird 'flu

PHUKET: The Chief of Phuket Provincial Health Office confirmed on February 23 that a hospital patient originally suspected of having bird 'flu had been allowed to go home after doctors found he was free of the disease.

Virat Hongsib-paed, 33, a garbage man employed in Kamala, was admitted to the Mission Hospital Phuket three days earlier after feeling ill for several days.

Concern about bird 'flu arose because the patient, who had trouble breathing, told doctors that he had a waddle of ducks at home and that some of them had died in recent weeks.

Dr Wanchai Sattayawuthipong, Chief of Phuket Provincial Health Office, told the *Gazette* that K Virat was allowed to leave the hospital after treatment for what turned out to be conventional pneumonia.

"He felt better yesterday afternoon (February 22) and I went to visit him last night at the hospital," Dr Wanchai said.

The Phuket Provincial Livestock Office (PPL) checked K. Virat's ducks and found that they were suffering from an intestinal ailment.

"We can confirm that we have no avian 'flu on Phuket, in either people or birds," Dr Wanchai added.

— Sangkhae Leelanaporn

Encroachment survey gets under way

CHERNG TALAY: About 40 restaurateurs and café owners at Lay Pang Beach will find out soon whether their premises are encroaching on public land.

Officials from Thalang District Office and Cherg Talay Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) began a cadastral survey of 17 rai of the Lay Pang area on February 23 to define boundaries in preparation for taking court action against anyone found to have infringed on state land.

"Encroachers will definitely be affected," said the Chief of Thalang District, Kanthee Silapa, adding that the owners of all illegally-built restaurants would face court action to force them to obey the law.

The owners of the Laguna Beach Resort, part of the Laguna complex, are currently fighting a suit that alleges part of the swimming pool area of the hotel is on government land, he noted.

The results of the survey are expected to be completed within a few days, resulting in a map with clearly-defined boundaries.

— Gategao Phetsawang

Probe into Patong poll after allegations of vote-buying

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn

PATONG: More than two weeks after Songserm Kepsap and his Patong Progress Party (PPP) swept aside former mayor Pian Keesin and other Raksa Patong Party candidates in the Patong municipal election, the poll results have yet to be certified by the Government, thanks to allegations of vote-buying which have sparked an investigation to

determine whether the poll was tainted.

Kittipong Thiengkunagrit, Director of the Phuket Election Commission (PEC), told the *Gazette* on February 20 that he sent the results of the February 7 poll to the Central Election Commission (CEC) in Bangkok for final certification.

In return he was instructed by the CEC to investigate complaints it had received, accusing

members of the PPP of buying votes.

"We don't know when [or if] the CEC will declare a winner. If complaints are issued against winning candidates, there has to be an investigation to determine whether the charges are true or false. This is what we are doing now," K Kittipong said.

He declined to elaborate on the exact nature of the complaints or to specify how many were be-

ing investigated, though he did say that a number had already been rejected for lack of evidence.

In the meantime, Phuket's premier playground is — once again — without a municipal government.

If the complaints are found to be proven, the poll result will be voided and another election will be called — the town's sixth in as many years.

Drive against alcohol and tobacco

PHUKET CITY: About 100 people turned out on February 21 to burn cartons of cigarettes and smash bottles of alcohol.

The "No tobacco, no alcohol for a better life" project was organized by the Kalyanamitra Organization, Phuket, along with Rajabhat University Phuket, where the bottle-smashing was staged.

The message of the event was aimed especially at children, coordinator Pawinee Jularat said, adding that it would assist the government's policy of eliminating social evils.

"We burned five cartons of cigarettes and destroyed about 50 bottles of alcohol brought by people who attended today," she explained.

"We are campaigning for people to stop drinking alcohol and to quit smoking."

She said she expected the project to gather momentum, with more people becoming involved, possibly climaxing with all Phuket joining in.

The guest speaker at the bottle-smashing was Phra Tawalsak Yattisakko, from Bangkok's Wat Phra Dhamakaya, who said that projects with similar aims had begun in many provinces, including Bangkok.



Two schoolgirls use clubs to smash empty alcohol bottles placed in sacks.

"Alcohol and tobacco are on display in many shops, even though they are not good for people, especially children, and may lead to them taking other drugs," he said.

The Kalyanamitra Orga-

nization, which cooperates with the Dhamakaya Foundation, was set up in Phuket five years ago. It has about 100 members committed to projects "aimed at improving people's lives".

— Gategao Phetsawang

Warehouse blaze causes B2m damage

PHUKET CITY: An electrical shortcircuit on February 23 sparked a fire that caused damage estimated at 2 million baht in a recently built warehouse belonging to furniture company Phuket Intercraft Co Ltd, on Chao Fa East Rd.

Police at first suspected arson until they were told that the building was not insured. Nutchantart Benchakij, owner of the company, told the *Gazette* that no one was in the building when the blaze broke out.

K Nutchantart said firefighters were on the scene within 10 minutes. Meanwhile, workers borrowed a fire hose from the nearby Kajornkiatsuksa School to tackle the fire.

"It was about 11:30 am. The fire started on the second floor and nobody was in the building. The second floor contained lots of wooden furniture, sponge, plastics and cloth for making beach beds," K. Nutchantart said.

Because the warehouse was built from relatively fire-resistant materials, firefighters were able to stop the blaze spreading to nearby buildings.

— Nonthawat Disayabutra

Expo center to cost B2.5bn

PHUKET CITY: Phuket Province and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) have jointly requested 2.5 billion baht in funding from the central government for construction of the proposed International Convention and Exhibition Center (ICEC) at Saphan Hin — a site still seen by many island residents as inappropriate for such a project.

Speaking after a planning seminar at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on February 23, Gov Udomsak Usawarangkura said the ICEC was just the first step in the Phuket Bay (Ao Phuket) Development Plan, a grandiose scheme that aims to transform the city's muddy eastern shoreline into a high-tech "shopping paradise" featuring marinas, tourist attrac-

tions and even a duty-free zone.

At the meeting, the Governor said that locating the project at Saphan Hin would help ensure that the island's tourism development was not focused entirely along its western beaches.

He added that the 2.5-billion-baht budget would be enough to cover the reclamation of approximately 400 rai of land from the sea as well as the cost of the 5,000-seat ICEC "and other expenses". The budget proposal will now be considered by the Cabinet, he added.

Gov Udomsak said the government would provide initial funding for the development but wanted the private sector to become involved and would welcome any proposals.

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Last July, Immigration Police announced dramatic increases in minimum wage requirements for foreign workers wanting to stay in Thailand on a one-year basis – almost doubling the minimum monthly salary for which Immigration would grant work permit-based visa extensions.

The new regulations, which go into effect July 10 this year, are intended to protect the Thai labor market from job-poaching foreigners. The announcement was greeted with praise by nationalist elements in the country – but with exasperation by the foreign workers themselves and their employers.

The only real effect of the new rule, say the employers, will be to force foreign workers to leave Thailand every 90 days to make expensive and time-consuming “visa runs” to neighboring countries. This, they claim, will damage the productivity of companies that need to hire foreign workers, without bringing any discernable benefit to the country.

When the new regulations were announced, however, there was scarcely any mention by the government about how one of Thailand’s largest group of for-

Thailand’s quest for better English skills has embroiled foreign teachers and Thai schools in monumental bureaucracy and cultural tensions.

The *Gazette’s* Sangkhae Leelanapaporn and Dhirarat Boonkongsaeen look at a potential win-win relationship that seems to be going off the rails.



foreign workers, English language teachers, would be affected.

This came as a surprise given that the Thai government, through the Education Ministry, is the single greatest employer of foreign workers in the country.

Most native-speaking foreign-language teachers in Thailand are already paid less than the minimum wages for one-year permits, even before the new higher rates were announced.

The increases, which appear to have been based on an “ability-to-pay” basis, vary with the nationality of the foreign applicant. Citizens of the US, Canada and Japan comprise the top tier. Starting in July, people from these countries holding Thai work permits will be required to show a monthly salary of 60,000 baht to be even considered for a visa extension, up from 40,000 baht. The second

tier, Europeans and Australians, will need to pull in 50,000 baht monthly, up from 35,000 baht.

The vast majority of native-speaking English-language instructors in Thailand – and the approximately 200 registered foreign teachers in Phuket – fall into these two categories. Excluding instructors at international schools, average monthly salaries for foreign teachers in Phuket are around 20,000 to 30,000 baht a month.

So how will schools cope with the new regulation? If their foreign teachers are forced to leave the country every 90 days in pursuit of visa stamps, who will teach the students when they are away?

And if the teachers’ visas are set to expire during exam periods, how will the students be evaluated?

Have the Immigration Police coordinated their policies with those of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor?

Pol Capt Krissarat Nuesen, Deputy Inspector of the Phuket Provincial Immigration Office (PPIO), assured the *Gazette* that the new minimum wage rates will apply only to those employed in the commercial sector. Teachers will be granted exemptions, he said – provided that they can submit all the correct documentation.

An officer at Immigration headquarters in Bangkok confirmed this, explaining that the government had a separate set of guidelines for teachers – even before the minimum wage increases were announced.

But even with the exemption, getting a visa extended inside the country will still be no easy task for most teachers. Teachers employed by govern-

ment schools will most likely find the task easier than their colleagues working at private institutions, according to Capt Krissarat.

“Teachers in government schools must present an employment contract issued by the school director, along with their work permit, teaching license and other personal documents.

“These are then submitted first to the Phuket Educational Service Area Office and then prepared for final approval by the Governor. Only after this has been done can we consider the application,” he said.

Teachers at private schools also need to supply Immigration with documents proving that the school itself was legally established and is properly registered.

“In state schools, teachers need only be approved by the school principal. But in private institutions, approval by the principal is acceptable only if the principal himself has first been approved by a government committee,” Capt Krissarat explained.

“The most important factor for Immigration is the school’s paperwork. We don’t even consider how much the applicant is paid,” he said, adding that any visa extension granted is limited to the length of the employment contract.

This creates problems for teachers at schools that try to cut costs by offering only 9- or 10-month contracts in order to avoid paying their teachers during the hot-season school vacation.

Because the expiration dates of the work-permit and visas must continually “leap-frog” each other for both to remain valid, this means the application processes for both need to begin

again from scratch if the school wishes to rehire the teacher in the following academic year.

Given the complexities and the sheer volume of paperwork involved, it is hardly surprising that problems arise.

“The most common problems we encounter are incomplete or missing documents,” Capt Krissarat explained.

“Some schools leave the task of preparing the documents to the foreign teachers themselves. When we need to explain to them what is missing, we run into communication problems.

“Sometimes, the foreign teachers can’t communicate with the Thai staff at their schools. Our staff have problems understanding them too,” he admitted.

Before signing a contract foreigners hoping to work as language teachers in Phuket should take a hard look at a school to see if it will provide the necessary help in obtaining work permits and visa extensions. In the best-case scenario, the school will have a specific English-speaking Thai staff member responsible for these tasks.

But paperwork is only one problem in the relationship between schools and foreign teachers. Take the case of Satree Phuket school, considered one of the top state schools in Phuket. Last year, it launched one of six bilingual education programs on the island. Its Mini English Program provides English-language education to secondary school students in a number of subjects.

The school’s Head of English, Jansri Tansuthanyalak, told the *Gazette*, “We have seven native-speaking teachers from Britain, Canada and Australia.

“We offer them all support in obtaining work permits and non-immigrant ‘O’ visas and one-year extension-of-stay permits issued by Immigration. These must first be authorized by the Phuket Governor, who issues them under his CEO authority,” she explained.

She said that although the teachers make just 28,000 baht per month – far less than the new minimum wage standards – the government views them as “independent contractors” for the

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Teachers cooperate in class at Phuket Wittayalai School.

state, exempting them from the minimum-wage requirement.

“The problem we have found is not about visas or work permit matters – we are a government school and get full cooperation from other government branches such as Immigration,” she said.

What is more of a problem is the school’s perception of the foreigners.

It is clearly unhappy with its first batch of foreign teachers – almost all of them have not been offered new contracts for the upcoming academic year.

“We are revising the employment contract to include a more detailed description of the job requirements so that we can get more ‘appropriate’ teachers next semester,” Ajarn Jansri admitted.

Shedding more light on what makes a certain foreigner “appropriate” to serve in the Thai educational system is Chalam Attatham, who heads the committee responsible for checking qualifications and approving all foreign teachers in the province.

He told the *Gazette* that many foreign teachers looking for work in Phuket simply want to enjoy a life of leisure here – like that of a tourist.

Many foreign teachers in Phuket are not really committed to the work, he maintains.

He also noted that while native speakers have the advantage of authentic accents, few are experienced but they can still find

work here because they happen to have a bachelor’s degree, which is a requirement for teachers in bilingual programs and at Thai universities.

“We don’t get many applicants who are career teachers in their own countries moving here to teach,” he lamented.

In order to bridge the cultural divide, K. Chalam said the Phuket Educational Service Area Office is organizing a seminar for foreign teachers that will cover a number of topics and help them understand what is and isn’t acceptable dress and behavior while on the job.

The seminar will be held before the beginning of the next school term, he said, though the exact date has not yet been set.

The seminar is necessary, he said, because many foreign teachers dress “impolitely”, smoke cigarettes in full view of their pupils and otherwise fail to conform to Thai cultural standards.

Phuket is also the only province to require foreign teachers to complete a 30-hour course in “cultural training” before they can enter the classroom.

The dissatisfaction cuts both ways, K. Chalam admitted. “The problem we find is that after foreign teachers start working at school they soon want to resign because they don’t like the system.”

A study commissioned by the Thailand Research Fund also found that there was a great deal

of resentment among Thai teachers toward their foreign counterparts – because the foreigners make more money.

The expat teachers themselves, however, are far more likely to compare their wage packets to what they could earn back in their home countries, or in a third country where teachers are better paid.

With the rapid increase in the number of bilingual programs throughout the country – 40 secondary and 17 primary schools now offer programs in Thailand – there is a lot more competition between schools for effective, qualified teachers with a degree and a demonstrable ability to work within the confines of the Thai education system.

And even though Phuket is home to a number of training schools that are sources of graduates with teaching credentials, only a small fraction of these graduates stay on to work in the province.

As yet, no one has come up with solutions to these problems – problems that threaten to stall attempts to produce new generations of Thais who are at home in two or more languages.

Ultimately, the students, who have no say in matters, are likely to be the biggest losers.

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The nicest of vices

By Andy Johnstone

It may, in some ways, add to an individual's character to develop a few vices. It might even be considered a mark of disreputable maturity to have a couple of antisocial habits to fall back on, should life in paradise ever become a little staid.

Of all the vices on offer, enjoying a good Cuban must rate as one of the best.

A Cuban cigar, of course.

Combine a cigar with some great salsa music and the funky friendliness of Patong and you could be in for a great night out.

La Salsa, part of the Impiana Phuket Cabana resort along Beach Road in Patong, is a place in point.

Murals of a smiling and – naturally – cigar-toting Fidel Castro and a more solemn Che Guevara in classic pose greet you as you climb the steps from the hustle to a haven of Havana cigars.

Jitlada "Ling" Thantham-mongkol, Sales and PR Manager at the Cabana, also keeps an eye on La Salsa. Although not known to take a cigar herself, she has learned a thing or two about cigars – and their consumers – in the two years since the bar opened.

"The place starts getting busy at around 10 pm," she says. "Add a couple of cocktails, then cigars, and by midnight everyone is dancing."

But what of the cigars? Romeo y Julieta and Cohiba mini cigarillos are available at 130 baht each for anyone interested in "tasting" cigars for the first time. A longer-lasting experience is yours for around 460 baht for a Bolivar Tubos No 1, while the supreme cigar at La Salsa is the Montecristo No 1 at 630 baht.

Granted, these torpedoes are not cheap, certainly not when compared to the price of cigarettes, even imported ones. Then again, cigars and cigarettes are



Novel way to light a cigar: bartender Suesat Sangkrai is a great juggler, too.

not meant to be smoked in the same way.

Cigarettes are fast-food or instant coffee; cigars are a sit-down meal or a cup of fresh Blue Mountain.

Smoking a cigar is part of an experience, particularly in a convivial and air-conditioned atmosphere. Cigars are to be looked forward to, savored, then reminisced about. The rituals surrounding cigars, such as their selection, cutting and even lighting,

have their place but one of the keys to enjoyment is to slow down the whole process. Be patient, and indulge.

It's a sensual experience, as K. Ling pointed out, to first unwrap then touch your chosen smoke. The cigar should feel silky and springy, not dry, and must have an appetising aroma.

The staff of La Salsa do well to maintain the correct humidity and temperature for the cigars. Anything above or below

16-18°C, and 65-70% humidity, and your precious investment may not go up in smoke in the way you had imagined.

The best storage facility is obviously a humidor – effectively a cabinet with a moisture source. K. Ling advises smokers with large collections to ask their cigar merchant for storage tips or offers to store them on the customer's behalf.

Whether the cigars can be insured against fire damage is an interesting point. If they can, then smoking one presumably may be classed as arson.

Many people don't smoke, for any number of reasons.

However, it seems that a surprisingly large number of non-smokers do find

the aroma of cigar smoke pleasing.

One does not have to be Bond, or even a Bond villainess, to enjoy a nice Cuban, but just for a moment, as you sip your mojito and draw on your el Habana, you can imagine ...

La Salsa Cigar and Latino Bar, open daily from 2 pm until late. 41 Thaweewong Rd (the beach road), Patong. Tel: 076-340138 or email: smcabana@samart.co.th

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SINGHA NEW LOOK

Chicken dies while pork flies

Pork prices rose dramatically in the wake of the bird 'flu outbreak, reaching 138 baht a kilogram in Bangkok supermarkets and exceeding 90 baht a kilo at fresh markets.

An attendant at the Bang Na branch of the Tops retail outlet said, "They're the highest I've ever seen."

The chairman of the prestigious Pig Breeders Club of the South, Rewat Pokapatana, called for understanding. He said the price rise was merely a response to the forces of supply and demand.

Starting in March, the Public Health Ministry will screen health workers who may have been infected by the H5N1 bird 'flu virus while caring for infected patients.

The study will aim not only to determine whether any health workers have been infected by the patients they treated, but also whether the healthcare workers have passed the virus on to others.

A major concern is whether there has been human-to-human infection in Thailand because of lax protection against the virus when it first appeared.

As part of the study, a number of health workers who have treated bird 'flu sufferers will be tested for the H5N1 antibody, a sure sign of infection, though not one that definitely results in illness.

Airline to break even: Thailand's third budget airline, Nok Air, expects to break even within a year and pave the way for an initial public offering. Chief Executive Patee Sarasin said, "There are 65 million people in Thailand and only five million fly regularly. The pie is very big."



VENUS IN CHAINS: About 50 girls were arrested for staging lewd shows at The Cave, a bar on Bangkok's Sukhumvit Rd. As a form of non-corporal punishment, the venue was ordered closed for 90 days. Before the raid, scantily-clad girls were seen prancing about the venue with chains and whips. The lounge bar contained theme rooms, including one furnished like a classroom and another like a hospital delivery ward.

Nok Air plans to fly to six destinations starting in June: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, Haad Yai, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani and Phitsanulok. Nok Air, whose choice of name and corporate logo has been derided by some industry experts, is 39% owned by Thai Airways International.

Unflappable fables: A government excavation team revealed artifacts from the ancient Thai city of Wiang Kum Kam in Chiang Mai's Saraphi district.

One bas-relief showed a mythical creature with deer-like antlers, a cow-like head, snake-like body, eagle-like feet and fish-like scales.

"The dragon has a flame ball in its mouth in line with Chinese beliefs that it can command storms and rain, and the power to dispel devils," said excavation supervisor Sahassawas Naenna. Wiang Kum Kam preceded Chiang Mai as capital of the Lanna Kingdom.

Power brokers: Consumer groups are calling on the The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat) to repay consumers 4.3 billion baht it has garnered from charging inflated rates over the past decade.

The surplus built up because Egat no longer needed to build scheduled power plants following a sharp drop-off in energy

demand after the 1997 economic crisis. Before the economic meltdown, Egat calculated future rates based partly on its estimated capital needs for investment projects.

Energy analyst Witoon Charoen raised concerns that the 4.3 billion baht could be transformed from public funds into private assets when Egat is partially privatized in May.

Flowing uphill: Opponents of a government proposal to pipe reservoir water to high-country farms in Isarn say the project would be a social, environmental and economic disaster.

Members of the Northeastern Environmental and Natural

Resources Network released a statement opposing the scheme, saying that it would have the same results as the multi-billion-baht Kong-Chi-Mool project, where they have been monitoring negative effects for decades.

They claimed that extensive canal digging related to the project would disturb the region's natural salt dome, worsening salinity problems that have already left vast stretches of land in the Northeast barren.

White-collar crooks: The Southern Bangkok Criminal Court sentenced three company executives to 20 years' imprisonment and another to 10 years for their involvement in a value-added tax refund scam.

Sukhakit Suknanthaporn, Chanchai Jamniancharoenkul, and Pairote Nimmualpong each face 20 years in prison, while Somsak Charoenkitnapa received 10 years.

The companies named as co-defendants in the court case were ABB Trading, HUD Thailand, KPS Garment, RPB Trading, FCY, PUL Trading, and Whole World Marketing.

Scam of the week: An official of the Private Education Commission has asked chiefs of education zones around the country to verify student enrollment lists submitted by private schools seeking government subsidies, saying many names were duplicated. Suratthep Tangprasert said schools found to have cheated in applying for subsidies will be fined and the subsidies reclaimed.

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

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Tales of the terminally tightfisted

After my last article detailing the stingy habits of tourists this year, I received many calls and comments from local businesspeople confirming this trend. They all had stories of their own, of which I will pass on a few. Misery loves company.

A customer walked into an Ao Nang beachfront restaurant and asked for a bottle of water.

No food, just water. "Another big spender," thought the waiter. But the customer didn't want just any bottle of water - it had to be at room temperature. The baffled waiter complied with the request and served room-temperature water.

Then came the zinger: "How much discount do I get for water served at room temperature?" asked the customer. The stunned waiter called on the manager, who is an old hand in the restaurant business. The manager was stunned by the customer's logic, "If you don't have to refrigerate this water, I should get a discount for the amount of electricity saved," was the customer's rationale.

So if anyone knows the cost of keeping a 20-baht bottle of water chilled, please let us know. Enjoy your tepid water, Madam.

A bar owner related a story of a bartender who had just finished mixing a pitcher of some exotic cocktail. Two young men looked on in interest and inquired as to the nature of this cocktail.

The bartender, thinking of a future sale, offered a "free taste" to the two potential customers. Bingo! The marketing tactic worked and the two gents ordered a pitcher of the cocktail, and then another.

However, when presented with the bill for the two pitchers of cocktail, the men refused to pay, and instead cited the offer of free cocktails.

A ploy used over and over again by hotel guests looking for a discounted price on a room is to ask for a rate for a long-term stay, say two or three weeks. Most hotels will offer a discount and many long-term guests get their room for

3,000 baht instead of 3,500 baht. Some guests, however, have no intention of staying two weeks, and plan to stay only two days. After getting a discounted rate, and once their planned stay is finished, they cry that some family emergency makes it necessary for them to check out immediately and return home.

The sympathetic manager often lets it slide and doesn't charge the full price, and the scoundrels are off to the next hotel with a similar story. This

ploy has been seen all too often this season. That said, business picked up in the first two weeks of February, after an awful second half of January.



Lots of noise and no safe place to swim: longtail boats park along Ao Nang Beach.

But the increasingly stingy nature of customer persists, so while the number of customers is improving, overall income figures are down.

MEAT MATTERS: Gidi Mevisen, an old hand in Ao Nang, has finally made his dream come true and opened his own restaurant: The Carnivore.

The restaurant focuses on meat, as the name implies, but top-quality imported meats only

and Gidi himself can be found slaving away at the grill cooking steaks to perfection.

The Carnivore is on the road going up the hill to the Pavillion Queen's Bay Hotel and the Thai Village Resort. It is on the left-hand side, just past the Thailandia Restaurant.

CLOSING CONFUSION: The new closing time for bars and restaurants has everyone confused, and you seem to get a different answer from everyone you talk to.

The story I hear most is that Krabi Town will have different zones, but Ao Nang, which caters mainly to tourists, will have

only one zone - and we hope that it is one with a 2 am closing.

But as history has shown, these things can change in an instant, and usually not for the better.

BOATS TO NOWHERE: I recently mentioned that there was a plan to move all the longtail boats from Ao Nang Beach to a cove at Haad Nopparat Thara.

The reason was that the previously idyllic dozen or so boats had grown to five dozen, with engines that fire up with a roar like the start of a Formula 1 race.

With all these boats, there is nowhere to swim safely except the far end of Ao Nang by the Last Café. The rest of the beach is blocked with boats and the water churned and murky.

However, it doesn't look like the boatmen are in any hurry to move.



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By Gus Reynolds

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This week



COFFEE WITHOUT CARNATION: Olivier A. Janssens (center), Managing Director of Coffee World Co Ltd, presents Vitoon Supavatanakul, owner of Coffee World Phuket at Tesco Lotus, with a celebratory bouquet of flowers at the franchise's recent opening.



TAKING A BREAK: Dr Sorajak Kasemsuwan (left), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, enjoyed a recent break at Le Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club. He is shown being welcomed by Simon Bunditvorapoom (center) Operations Manager at the Nai Harn resort.



A STATELY PLEASURE: Wines from the Xanadu Winery of Australia were featured at a recent winemaker's dinner at the Phuket Arcadia Beach Resort. Back row: from left, Michel Conrad of Independent Wine & Spirit (Thailand) Co Ltd; Conor Lagan, Executive Director of Xanadu; and Jannik von Frileven, Xanadu's regional Director of Operations. Saksri Kerdpol, the local IWS representative, is seated front row, center.



ALL IN A GOOD CAUSE: The Thai Red Cross Society, Phuket, and the Wachira Phuket Hospital held their quarterly blood donation session at JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa. More than 50 good Samaritans participated in the event, part of Marriott International's "Spirit To Serve Our Communities" program. Setting a good example is Suchart Somnuk, the resort's Director of Service, together with other colleagues as well as Red Cross and Wachira Hospital staff.



FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS: Gong Ke (3rd from left), Editor of the *Guangming Daily* newspaper of China, and his team are welcomed to the Cape Panwa Hotel by General Manager Poomiphat Navanukroh (3rd from right) during a recent familiarization trip to Phuket.



BAVARIAN BOMBER: Thainaan restaurant was the venue for the recent Phuket unveiling of the new BMW 5 Series saloon. The celebratory debut party, under the slogan "Cocktail on Street Number 5", attracted many motoring enthusiasts eager to see the 280-kmh Munich mover.

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'As a child I was always interested in learning to fly. I built model airplanes and all those things.

BLUE-WATER FLIER

By Supaporn Sriprom

For Kevin Pearce, flying has been a lifelong love that shows no sign of ending. Mr Pearce is the owner of an Australian aircraft operation called Sear Broome, based in the far northwest of the continent.

But right now he and his Cessna Caravan float plane are in Phuket, assisting in the birth of Blue Water Air (BWA), which has just begun operating amphibious flights from Phuket to surrounding islands.

With more than 24 years'

experience and 17,000 hours spent in the air, Mr Pearce is a seasoned flier.

"As a child I was always interested in learning to fly," he says. "I built model airplanes and all those things. It fascinated me and there was really nothing else I wanted to do.

"This is the road I chose and this has been what I ended up doing."

After completing secondary



Kevin Pearce

schooling in Australia, he studied to become a pilot. For his first five years of flying, he took off and landed on land. Then, seeking more excitement, he switched to float planes and has been flying them ever since.

Water conditions can be difficult, he says, and the hardest thing to learn about flying a float plane is knowing when you can touch down and

when you can't. The scenery and being able to enjoy quiet beaches are the bonuses.

As well as flying in Australia, he has hopped across Canada, Fiji and Thailand. Comparing the beauty of flying in each country, he says, "They are all right up there in their own different ways, from Canada and the Rocky Mountains to the islands around Phuket.

"The longest flight I've ever done was from Monterey to Honolulu in the Pacific. That flight was about 17½ hours. I was on my own. That was a delivery flight."

From behind a mischievous smile, he solemnly declares that he had never really been in any life-threatening situations in flight but when he admits that he is not only able to perform aerobatics, but also teaches stunt flying, it's plain that he relishes a thrill or two.

"Well, a good pilot always has a Plan B in case something unexpectedly goes wrong," he said. And yes, he has had to use that second plan more than once, in bad weather and in "unavoidable circumstances".

There are limits to flying, he explains. In Australia, for example, the cyclone season brings devastation and danger – and makes it difficult for pilots.

"You have to know when to turn around and in many cases I've had to do that for safety reasons," he says. "Some pilots don't know the limits and they never live to tell about the experience."

Having a little bit of an adventurous spirit, of wanting to get out and about, is an important aspect to being a pilot.

Oddly enough, Mr Pearce says that it is common for pilots to be afraid of heights. "If I were standing on the edge of a three-story building and looked down, then of course I would be scared. But flying a plane is different, it is an enclosed space and it's safe."

Safety is, it seems, a relative concept. When he was about six years old, a flight in an old Tiger Moth biplane became a near-disaster when the engine caught fire.

"We had to land in the paddock but that didn't put me off," he says. "We landed safely and the pilot was not fussed so I thought it was just some fun."

Besides all-out disaster such as instances where the engine catches fire, Mr Pearce says, "If you worry about having an accident then you shouldn't be flying. It's like riding motorcycles around Thailand – if you're worried about getting into an accident, there is a better chance that you will."

Don't even talk about retiring. Mr Pearce says, "Once you've flown a lot you can never give it up. You just want more."

"I would absolutely never trade being a pilot for anything else. I honestly don't know what I would be doing if I wasn't a pilot. Not being one is a difficult concept to grasp.

"I guess if I had to choose something else to do, then it would probably be something in the travel industry."

His time in Phuket is a short three months, until BWA's own aircraft are delivered. After that time he and his aircraft will be on their way to pastures new and different waters.

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It fascinated me and there was really nothing else I wanted to do' – pilot Kevin Pearce



Kevin Pearce with the distinctive floats of his amphibious Cessna Caravan.



AERIAL MAGIC: Striking views from the air of the coral around Phi Phi (above) and Koh Kai (below).





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COOL running

Having recently changed jobs, one of the first things I had to do was – yes, a visa run. The first one in more than five years. I'd become extremely rusty. Where to go? What to do?

Head south, I thought, and revisit the old haunts of Sungai Golok and Kota Bahru on the east coast of Malaysia.

Gone are the days of the direct flights from Phuket to Narathiwat, so this time it was a quick flight to Haad Yai, then I needed to find a car to drive across to the eastern side of the country.

Landing in Haad Yai, the first stop was at the Avis counter. "No sir," I was told. "You can't rent a one-way rental, especially with the troubles in the South. But I do have a friend." Twenty minutes later, off we went.

We passed a few army check points (no sign of trouble) and two-and-a-half hours later, we were dropped off at the Grand

Thailand TRAVELER

By Bill Owen

Garden Resort at Sungai Golok.

On checking in, I suddenly remembered having stayed there many years ago – strange how memories fade.

Something new, however, was the notice advertising, "All-female Ukrainian Dance Troupe Tonight, 11pm."

Sungai Golok is a busy town with hundreds of cars, motorcycles, trucks and people toing and fro-ing across the border. At weekends, the population is swollen by Malaysians, especially men.

Why, one asks? Shopping is one reason but the karaoke bars and massage parlors are quite possibly added attractions.

Our evening was spent next

door in a cowboy bar – great country music and cheap beer.

Alas, because of the beer, we somehow missed the Ukrainian Dance Troupe. Next time, maybe.

The following morning, our visa run guide, K. Meow, arrived to assist the filling in of the appropriate forms and to escort us across the border.

The border itself offers a wonderful experience of constant movement and trade – huge logging trucks crossing from Malaysia to Thailand, dozens of motorcycles piled high with plastic goods and rice being carried into Malaysia, tired backpackers, just off the overnight train from Bangkok, trudging dejectedly with oversized packs.

After waiting to complete the necessary insurance forms, we were off in the minibus, and soon in Kota Bahru.

K. Meow checked us in to the Grand Riverview Hotel, and yes, it did overlook the fast-flowing river at the edge of town.

The afternoon was spent shopping, then we went looking for beer. But Kota Bahru, being extremely Muslim, had only one outlet – the Donald Duck, a Chinese "restaurant".

The next morning, K. Meow whisked us to the Thai Consulate, where we waited behind a few dive masters from Samui, an English teacher from Bangkok and a few other typical visa runners.

Then we headed back across the border to Songai Golok, stopping for a quick swim at the Genting Hotel and visiting the excellent fruit market before heading to the train station

Bill Owen has lived in Phuket and worked in Phuket's travel industry for more than 15 years. He can be contacted by email at: owen_b@hotmail.com.



Malaysian children who live in the area can cross the Thai-Malaysia border over the Golok bridge without any red-tape. Photo: The Nation

How to get there.

Fly to Haad Yai then car, bus or taxi to Sungai Golok. Flight to Haad Yai – 1,250 baht. Cars or taxis can be hired from 2,000 baht one-way or shared taxi from the centre of town from 450 baht a person. For the intrepid, buses from Phuket run to Haad Yai then on across the border.

Where to stay.

Sungai Golok – plenty of cheap guest houses. I would recommend the Grand Garden Resort at 800 baht a night, or The Genting Hotel at 1,000 baht a night. Both have pools. In Kota Bahru – The Grand Riverview from 150 ringgit a night is the closest hotel to the Donald Duck restaurant, with the only beers in town. For visa packages – PPD Travel, Tel: 07-3531531 – most helpful with hotels, minibus transfers, paperwork and consulate. Prices start from 3,500 baht for a two-day package.

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HEARD & scene

The *Gazette's* Supaporn Sriprom went out and about and asked, *Should February have more days every year and not just in a leap year like 2004, and if so, why?*



Name: Tara Plainsance
Age: 23
From: Australia
Occupation: Sales manager

February should have more weekends, although I like Mondays because I arrived in Thailand on a Monday. I look forward to the new month so I wouldn't really want more days. But December would be a good month for extra days. There's never enough time for Christmas and New Year.



Name: Tawin Tiratanapakhow
Age: 27
From: Phuket
Occupation: Engineer

February is fine with 28 or 29 days. Those born on February 29 are different – having your birthday once every four years is special and strange at the same time. Waiting four years is not a bad thing as it makes your birthday more worthwhile and more unusual. February should be left just as it is.



Name: Aiyarat Phuang-art
Age: 19
From: Bangkok
Occupation: Office assistant

February should have 29 days every year to stop confusion. Anyway, people born on the 29th shouldn't have to wait so long between birthdays. But extra days shouldn't be added beyond this. More days would mean that February would no longer be unique. It would be just another boring month.



Name: Paitoon Thongcheed
Age: 30
From: Songkla
Occupation: Architect

Why not make it a 32-day month? February would still be unique, but in a different way, and anyone born on February 29 could celebrate every year. There would be no confusion, everybody would be happy and February would still be special. I was born in May. That's a dull month.



Name: Bee Steffens
Age: 19
From: Germany
Occupation: Student

February should have more Valentines days, more time to celebrate with people you love. Valentine's Day should stretch over three days – so that means that there should be at least three more days doesn't it? But what about people with more than one lover? They need to spend time with each other, too.

In the Stars

by Isla Star

PISCES (February 20-March 20): You have the chance to approach a certain someone before this week is over. Pisceans swamped at work are advised to assert themselves. Use auspicious astral influences to build layers of confidence. You may soon be a force to be reckoned with. Wear red to attract power.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): There's fun on the beach for you

this weekend and the big outdoors should be your goal. Positive vibrations are humming and March should be one of your best months this year – but escape from an ear-bending friend.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Taureans can look forward to a quiet, artistic weekend as your creative urges re-emerge with a vengeance. Astral support is on hand as you develop career-wise.

Retain all ideas for future reference. Scorpio is in the mood for some flirtation – go with the flow.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): A harmless rumor may be anything but, so stop it dead in its tracks. It's a promising month ahead, but conserve your energy to make the most of unexpected opportunities. Spice up your wardrobe for a hot weekend date.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): Address a romantic issue before the week is out. Letting sleeping dogs lie is unlikely to work and you will feel better when you know all the facts. If this is a make-or-break situation, visualize new beginnings as a positive thing.

LEO (July 24-August 22): Leos, tantalizingly close to their goal, should make a wish upon a star –

astral activity is in your favor this week, if you believe in what you want. Early March bodes well for moving personal relationships to a more committed level.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Your arid social life is about to benefit from a shower of invitations and all Virgoans will be painting the town red. A family dispute will come to a head – seek closure. Monday and the number 3 have significance.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Travel-wise, you know where you should be heading, but a wrong turning is possible. Sit back and enjoy the scenery. You will still arrive. Look beyond your recently dim tunnel of love for romance.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): A minor irritation could activate your sting this weekend. Count to 10 and walk away if you want to make a good impression. Find a natural way to chill out if you find yourself in hot water. Your lucky number is 2.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Sagittarians pinning for a lost love will soon have cause to move on with their lives. Cupid is aiming an arrow at two hearts, and one of them is yours. Attached Sagittarians will find new reasons to appreciate their partners. Seeing is believing, on Tuesday, when it comes to a business matter.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Capricorns may be contemplating taking a break in cooler climes. Stand fast for now because you should receive an invitation to get away from it all. Financial restrictions are about to be lifted, leaving you free to chase a dream – but do your homework carefully. Wear white to encourage purity of thought.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): You may be the bearer of bad tidings, so be your most tactful self. A gamble is set to pay off on Sunday, but you don't need to share the rewards with everyone. Examine your diet if you are feeling run-down.

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KIDS THE FUN PAGE FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are at least 20 names of fish. The words may read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They may also read right-to-left or down-to-up. See if you can find more than your family or friends. Score: More than 10, good; more than 15, very good; 20 or more, excellent.

X	C	O	E	J	D	D	C	N	A	P	K	A	V	H
S	N	M	D	K	I	F	B	M	A	R	C	N	W	L
K	A	N	O	L	A	P	X	R	A	O	O	G	D	B
W	T	L	C	L	L	H	R	H	S	P	D	L	P	T
H	N	I	M	I	O	O	S	O	H	N	D	E	K	J
X	H	U	N	O	T	A	G	U	V	R	A	R	H	M
C	M	O	K	F	N	Z	C	M	S	F	H	O	J	F
Y	Y	U	I	D	N	L	P	H	E	Y	B	C	G	L
P	H	S	A	T	K	C	M	X	R	Q	S	D	N	H
L	H	C	I	D	C	A	I	P	G	T	R	O	U	T
L	E	B	R	A	B	R	U	B	E	T	Q	X	K	A
L	Z	W	V	E	P	P	X	D	A	H	T	I	K	U
H	O	R	I	O	P	O	G	C	N	B	Y	U	W	X
K	S	J	E	J	J	V	I	R	T	X	E	R	T	M
G	I	H	Q	P	R	R	X	E	M	M	M	D	W	M
H	S	I	F	N	U	S	J	R	A	U	W	O	V	L
D	J	B	E	Z	B	O	E	M	J	O	E	R	F	Y
E	G	A	C	K	T	M	R	E	O	U	C	T	B	V
Y	H	R	M	L	O	U	B	G	R	T	U	Y	K	M
P	N	D	W	R	E	P	I	R	A	N	H	A	C	S
P	P	R	A	T	K	X	B	A	N	U	T	F	N	A
U	N	M	V	A	A	S	K	Y	P	M	Y	B	H	L
G	C	S	G	Z	G	B	B	H	L	H	F	P	P	Z
B	R	Y	S	V	O	S	B	Z	U	E	O	U	I	T
J	D	K	M	O	P	B	T	J	U	G	G	Z	X	C

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



1. What was the name of the world's first digital computer, built in 1946?
2. Roughly how much did it weigh?
3. In which country is Mbundu spoken?
4. The word "piano" is abbreviated from "pianoforte". What does it mean?
5. Which singer was known as Lady Day?
6. In Hawaii, which town's name means "Sheltered Bay"?
7. Where would you find a gnomon?
8. The word "shambles" derives from a Latin word meaning what?
9. Where were Artemis and Apollo supposedly born?
10. What is the other common name of the cottonmouth?
11. Whom did US Vice President Aaron Burr kill in a duel in 1804?
12. What is a quokka?
13. If an animal is scansorial, what is it adapted for?
14. What is the highest peak in the Bernese Alps?
15. What is the correct term for a person who is paid to pray for another person?
16. What English word can mean both "color" and "shout"?
17. If you were pedicular, what would be your problem?
18. Which canal connects the North Sea with the Baltic Sea?
19. What is the job of a fletcher?
20. The Tagalog word for "mountain" has become part of the English language. What is it?

Answers next week

Never a Cross Word!

Across

1. Symbol of extinction.
3. Not harmony.
6. Chinese and Filipinos, for example.
8. Pimples.
9. Exist.
10. Meat and two...
13. With a skull, the sign of pirates.
16. And in Paris.
18. Colored.
19. Peers.
20. Harvested.
21. What tourists do?

Down

1. Not colorful.
2. Citrus fruits.
3. Sad, angry or ill.
4. Bootlegger's equipment.

1			2		3			4		5
6	7						8			
9										
	10						11		12	
13		14			15					
									16	17
18					19					
20								21		

5. Anteaters have really long ones.
7. Cut.
11. Feast.
12. Support for artist.
13. Apple drink.
14. Definitely not an Alpha.
15. *Baby I'm a want you* band.
17. Russian autocrat.

Solution next week

Brain Buster!!

Q. The more of them you take, the more of them you leave behind. What are they?

A. Footsteps.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S MONSTER QUIZ

1. Emily Pankhurst; 2. The Sublime Paralytic; 3. Belgium; 4. Cuba; 5. *Lady Chatterly's Lover*; 6. Nonthaburi; 7. Mae Hong Son; 8. Devon; 9. Peter the Great; 10. Poverty; 11. Jean Jacques Rousseau; 12. William the Conqueror; 13. Abraham Lincoln; 14. Oscar Wilde; 15. Scott Joplin; 16. Philadelphia; 17. The Phoenix; 18. Vilhjalmur Stefansson; 19. Cyan; 20. Melpomene

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Solution to last week's crossword

	M		M	A	D			T		
D	I	R	G	E		A	C	C	R	A
	C		M		M			A		
P	R	I	S	O	N	S		O	N	E
	O	I			E			S		
U	S	U	R	Y		L	A	D	L	E
	C		O			W		U		
S	O	N		N	E	G	L	E	C	T
	P		D		E			E		
A	I	S	L	E		R	H	O	N	E
	C		R	U	M			T		

Great debate: Hotmail vs Yahoo

Just about everybody in Phuket has a Web-based email account. For some folks, a free Web account covers all the necessary bases.

For most of us, free Web accounts come into play when we're traveling, or when we need an emergency account when Outlook or Outlook Express fails.

As long as you can get on the Web, you can always get your Hotmail or Yahoo messages. But that naturally raises the question: which service is better?

Not surprisingly, the short answer is: it depends. The more complete answer is: maybe neither – or both. Let me explain.

Hotmail broke new ground as the first free Web-based email service when Sabeer Bhatia – a native of Bangalore and a graduate of both the California Institute of Technology and Stanford University – spent US\$300,000 to launch it in 1996. On December 31, 1997, Microsoft bought Hotmail for US\$400 million. The service has never been the same.

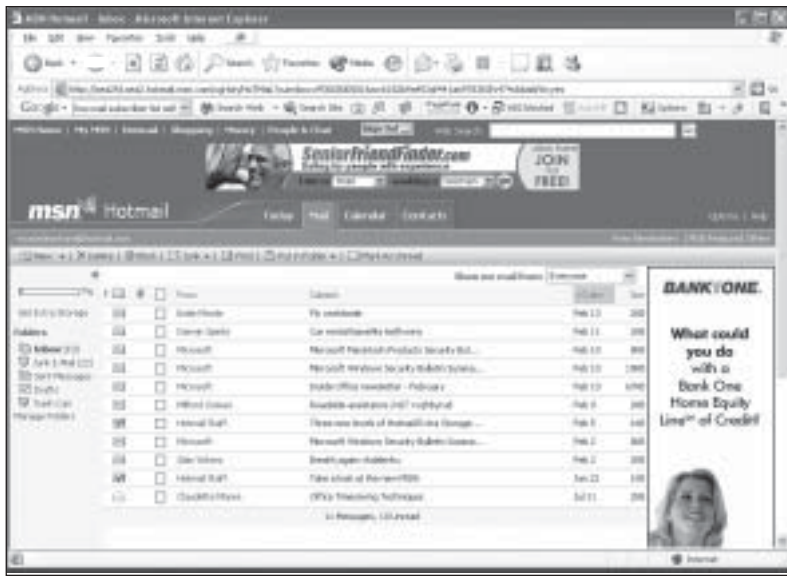
Microsoft struggled with Hotmail for years, attracting new users like flies, but always suffering severe performance problems and crashes.

Ultimately, Hotmail was placed under the Microsoft Network (MSN) wing of the corporate umbrella, its free services clipped, and its user interface subjected to more face lifts than Dick Clark.

Yahoo also bought its way into the Web-based mail business, by acquiring RocketMail from a company called Four11 back in November 1997.

Unlike with Microsoft, most people I know who use Yahoo have good things to say about it – even though Yahoo has a less-than-stellar record for keeping its servers going.

Yahoo has also had prob-



Microsoft claims that Hotmail's latest version looks and acts like Outlook. Hogwash. Behind the paper-thin pretty face beats the old Hotmail heart, where advertising still reigns supreme.

lems with bouncing incoming mail for no apparent reason, and for playing fast and loose with its subscriber lists.

Having used both services for some time now, I've come to the conclusion that the free version of Hotmail works better than the free version of Yahoo.

It's easier to get at your mail in Hotmail, organize it, and write new messages – particularly with the built-in spell-checker, dictionary and thesaurus.

That is, of course, if you use Microsoft's Internet Explorer to surf the site. If you use Netscape, Opera or Mozilla's Firebird or Firefox browsers, some functions and features may not work.

The spam filter in Hotmail works much better than Yahoo's SpamGuard – with more caught messages and fewer "false positives" – and it's easier to notify Hotmail when you receive spam, so the offending messages can be added to the Hotmail database.

But even that may have been a recent development. One friend said that he had yet to receive a single spam email in his Yahoo account, which he opened three years ago.

In comparison, up until the latest Hotmail interface surfaced, he used to receive on average about 15 spam emails a day in his Hotmail account. Now he says he receives about five a day.

Yahoo also has a better calendar by far, and – perhaps most persuasive of all – Yahoo doesn't require you to buy into the "Big Brother" MSN Passport database

just so you can use free email.

The big advantage Hotmail has over Yahoo is that you can access your mail free with Outlook 2003 and Outlook Express.

Rigging Outlook Express to handle Hotmail is easy, but Outlook forces you to jump through several hoops above and beyond the usual problems with Internet-based "POP3" email.

Both Yahoo and Hotmail offer extra-cost services, which prevent your email address from being terminated after 30 days of inactivity, grant you extra disk storage space, and allow you to send large files as attachments.

I think it's a ripoff, but others may need the

space, or the insurance. Hotmail gives 2MB of storage free, but charges US\$19.95 a year for 10MB of storage and 3MB attachments; and \$59.95 buys 100MB of storage and 20MB attachments.

Yahoo gives 4MB storage free, then charges \$29.95 for 25MB, up to \$59.95 for 100MB.

If you're thinking about spending money for Web-based email, consider signing up for free Hotmail and Yahoo accounts, and tying them together at www.mailblocks.com.

Mailblocks not only pulls down Hotmail and Yahoo messages for you, it can also grab mail from "POP3" mail accounts. The interface is slick and fast – and free of advertising.

You can have Mailblocks work with a "challenge" spam-blocking system: mail sent to you from an unknown account triggers an automatic message, asking the sender to verify their identity.

The sender needs to respond only once, and from that point on, any mail from that ID is delivered. It isn't infallible, but it puts a big crimp on spam.

Mailblocks costs \$9.95 a year for 15MB of storage, up to \$24.95 for 100MB. It's cheap, reliable, and may serve you better than Hotmail or Yahoo alone.

Woody Leonhard has written a number of books in the "...for Dummies" series on computing. Readers can contact him at: woody@khunwoody.com

KHUN WOODY'S COMPUTER

A sexual adventure – and the hunt for a serial killer

Meg Ryan has just done a star turn in *In The Cut*, playing a dark sexual adventuress in contrast to her type-cast role of America's sunny sweetheart. The movie was based on Susanna Moore's novel of the same name (Penguin Books, New York, 1995, 267pp).

Its graphic description of a woman's avid sexuality evoked a lot of critical comment at the time. Joyce Carol Oates compared it to *The Story of O* while *The New York Times* dubbed it an "erotic thriller".

It certainly is a fast and highly enjoyable read. The heroine is Franny, 34, a Foreign Service brat who grew up around the world, divorced and happily single again, living in a Greenwich Village brownstone on the "Henry James side of Washington Square", a scholar and New York University English don.

She has a best friend, named Pauline, with whom she hangs out at a strip bar called The Pussy Cat, and a highly adventurous sex life.

Susanna Moore is very good at describing Village street life. "The bars in my neighborhood fill me with dread," her heroine writes.

"French tourists studying subway maps, and punk teenagers from Rockland County who look and talk like they're about to explode, perhaps with rage. I hope it is rage, since they have so much to be angry about, even if they don't know it. The blank-faced 13-year-old girls with fake IDs and nose studs hoping to meet some sweet-talking Jamaicans...boys jerking restlessly on the streets outside the bars with bottles of malt liquor in brown paper bags.

"Just the thought of Bleeker Street makes me a little anxious. Stores full of baseball caps and silver-plated ankhs. Nowhere is there a sense of peace."

The club Frannie decides to take one of her students to is called the Red Turtle, a cops' bar. The student is Cornelius, a black street kid, and she is trying to educate him in the use of irony in preparation for his writing a term paper about the mass murderer John Wayne Gacy.

In search of a bathroom in the basement of the Red Turtle, Frannie opens a door and finds a large white man receiving expert fellatio from a woman with long red hair.

"She began to slow down when he came, and I thought, this girl knows what she's doing." The man knows Frannie is watching. She can't see the his face but notices the tattoo on his wrist.

She recognises the tattoo the next day when she is accosted by police detective Jim Malloy.

The red-headed woman has been killed in what appears to be the work of a of a serial killer. Malloy is a big, crude, native New Yorker and Vietnam vet. Frannie doesn't know what his game is but she lusts after

him and they have a romp in the hay that lasts a very torrid 13 pages.

But could he be the killer?

Just a few nights later, on a deserted street, Frannie fends off a knife-wielding mugger. A few nights after that her closest friend

Pauline is ritually murdered and cut apart.

In both cases, Malloy is quick to respond and Frannie is more than titillated when he violates her from behind on a desk in an office in his police station. The edge of danger and sadism whets her appetite for more.

I don't want to give away anything more of the plot. I only

want to say that the ending is one of the most shocking I have ever read. I had paid attention to clues as the plot unfolded, but was still totally unprepared for the ending, which violates every rule of thriller writing and is therefore even more of a real triumph.

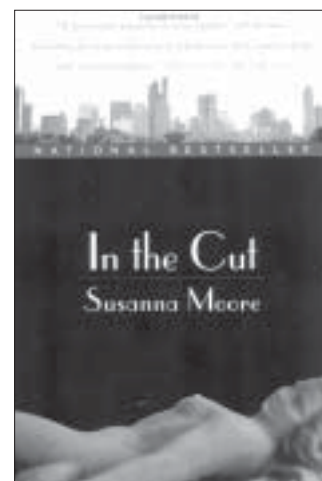
This is the perfect beach book, exactly what you want to read as a needed break from big, fat, serious books.

Having enjoyed *In the Cut* so much, now I want to read all of Susanna Moore's books, starting with the first one, *My Old Sweetheart*, which was nominated for the prestigious National Book Award in the United States.



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt



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A chat with the Prime Minister

I would like to talk about several points I discussed recently with Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who came to Phuket to attend the Bimstec [Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation] meetings earlier this month.

The first point was the need for more cooperation and support from central government to develop Surakul Stadium for the big soccer matches to be played there this November [qualifying games for the 2004 Fifa Under-19 Women's World Championships].

We need about 38 million baht to improve the stadium's lighting system and scoreboard. I submitted a proposal to the PM, and he will discuss it with the relevant committees. I think we may get his support for this.

As we were on the way from Phuket International Airport to Surakul Stadium, PM Thaksin ordered me to improve Phuket's roads. He specifically mentioned that, because Phuket depends on tourism, Thepkrasattri Rd [the island's central artery] should have more greenery and better lighting. We will hurry to do this. I hope to see improvements to this road before the rainy season arrives.

PM Thaksin also asked that every *tambon* administration organization and municipality work together to develop the province. To help achieve this, we are organizing a monthly competition to determine which places are the tidiest and most attractive.

For this project, which is unique in Thailand, we will get an annual budget of 2.4 million baht. Local administrations that produce the best results will receive cash prizes.

We aim to start within three months and are already in the planning stages. This demonstrates PM Thaksin's commitment to Phuket and his desire to improve our tourism industry.



Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra will authorize the Royal Thai Army to help clean up Phuket's grubby, clogged Klong Bang Yai.

Another thing PM Thaksin said he was worried about was the state of Klong Bangyai, which is an eyesore in many of the localities though which it flows.

He would like to see the canal cleaned up through a combination of dredging and increased public awareness.

The PM said he would authorize the army to help in the effort, and we are already moving forward on this project.

I told the Prime Minister that we plan to widen the bypass road and will study the feasibility of building a flyover at the

Thainaan intersection, where motorists now face lengthy waits at traffic lights. The purpose is to improve traffic flow between Phuket Town and Patong.

The night is for sleep: The new closing time for the island's nightspots will affect many people. Enforcement may be a problem at the outset, but eventually everything will improve. The central government truly recognizes the need to solve problems among our young people and to impose some order.

I think people will still be able to



THE GOVERNOR'S LETTER

enjoy the nightlife, even with the new closing time.

Please don't forget that even if you happen to work late at night, there are many more people who need to sleep during these hours; we get numerous complaints by both phone and fax about noise from nightspots.

I think people should be in bed by 2 am so they can rest properly and do quality work the next day.

When we looked at closing times in other countries, we found few places that stayed open after 2 am, and only rare cases, like Las Vegas [Phuket's sister city], that stay open round the clock. Even in most late-night cities you find most people going home at 10 or 11 pm to escape the cold.

If you find you don't have enough fun on your night out, you can always go out again the next night – or start your evenings earlier. We need to make this adjustment to tackle social problems.

Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura

10 things you should really worry about

Fueled by media coverage, issues such as bird 'flu and Sars have created considerable anxiety over what really is a small threat to our health.

The number of deaths from Asian bird 'flu and Sars in Thailand is small. Although these deaths are tragic for those involved, the chances of contracting either of them is smaller than the odds of winning the lottery.

Let's put this in perspective: on a daily basis, many of us take unreasonable risks with our health that are far more dangerous.

If you enjoy worrying about your health, here's a Top 10 of things you really ought to be concerned about.

The good news is that most of them are health issues that you can do something about.

Cardiovascular disease. Forty

percent of all deaths in the US are due to heart problems, and it is likely that this holds true for Phuket among foreigners.

Cancer. Failure to detect treatable cancers – including breast cancer, colon cancer and prostate cancer – at an early stage leads to many unnecessary deaths each year.

Smoking is also a serious killer and, again, it's preventable.

Accidental death, particularly from motorcycle accidents, also claims a large number of lives in Phuket each year. Again, many

of these deaths are preventable. Don't drink and drive, don't speed, do wear a helmet and do drive defensively.

Alcohol. In the US, there is an alcohol-related death every 30 minutes. Drink less.

Obesity is a major contributor to heart disease and diabetes. Looking at the general profile of the average foreigner in Phuket, many of us could do with losing some weight. Think about your diet.

An inactive lifestyle. Many of us do not get enough exercise and there are a few who, while they do some gentle exercise (like walking to the bar and bending the elbow) do not do enough to gain any significant health benefit.

Sexually transmitted diseases. Although not usually fatal, chlamydia and herpes rates are on the rise. There is also likely to be an increasing rate of new HIV infections. Wear a condom.

Influenza. This can kill and the rate would be much reduced if those at risk were vaccinated.

Depression and loneliness. These problems can be deadly. They contribute to self-neglect, substance abuse and suicide.

So if you really want to be afraid of something, get scared by the things you can do some-

thing about – the things that are killing us in far higher numbers than chicken 'flu.

If you feel overwhelmed by these health issues and their potential for affecting your life, that's understandable. Start by picking one and reducing your risk factors.

Better still, make an appointment with your healthcare provider and, together, do a risk analysis or have a health check-up.

Look at the things you are doing that are most dangerous and generate a plan to do something about them.

The life you save may be your own.

Peter Davison is the Manager for International Services at Phuket International Hospital. Questions or comments may be sent by email to peter@phuket-international-hospital.co.th or by fax to 076-210936.



HEALTH WATCH
By Peter Davison,
Phuket International Hospital



PHUKET INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB

Join us...to give Phuket's children the chance for a better future.

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Contact: Linda on 01-8937749, Joan on 01-0814611
E-mail: piwc@phuket.com

Phuket Gazette
- Since 1994 -

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Wrong approach to social ills

The recent bottle-smashing event at Rajabhat University Phuket, staged by citizens concerned about alcohol consumption in Thailand (see news pages), has some logic behind it.

In the past 40 years, consumption of alcohol in Thailand has soared. According to figures issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), in 1961 the average Thai aged 14 or older annually consumed the equivalent of 0.26 liters of pure ethanol, the base alcohol in all booze. By the year 2000 the figure had risen 52-fold, to 13.59 liters.

According to the WHO stats, in 2000 Thailand ranked fifth in the world in 2000 in terms of per capita alcohol consumption, outstripping such well-known boozing countries as Russia (10.7 liters) and France (13.31 liters).

Thailand's Ministry of Public Health records that the average consumption of distilled spirits rose from 20.2 liters a person in 1988 to 30.2 in 1996, while beer consumption rose in the same period from 6.5 liters to 34.3 liters a person.

Alcoholism is definitely a problem in Thailand. Rare is the person who does not have a relative, a friend or a colleague who has made a mess of his or her life and those of loved ones through excessive drinking.

But one wonders whether the well-meaning souls who joined in the theatrical bottle-smashing session – claiming that they were trying to “assist the government's policy of eliminating social evils” – were on the right track.

One has only to look at the 1920s in the United States, when alcohol was banned because of pressure from similarly well-meaning people, to see what a disastrous result the prohibition of drink could bring upon a nation.

In the US, it gave rise to the great age of gangsterism, reaching its zenith with Al Capone, the man who encapsulated his personal philosophy thus: “You can go a long way with a smile. You can go a lot farther with a smile and a gun.”

The government has already gone some way down the prohibition road with its clampdown on the entertainment industry. Can there be a single person who believes that the industry will bow to Bangkok's will? It will inevitably result in the growth of corruption and abuse as operators go underground, beyond the reach of regulation.

Let us hope that the government does not go down the same route in its zeal to suppress the social evil of alcoholism. Banning “evil” does not make it go away. It just chases it into the shadows and makes it nastier.

– 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.

Don't drive tourists to other destinations

I travel to Thailand for holidays quite regularly – four times in the past 12 months – and I have friends who love Thailand for its many virtues.

When people travel several thousand miles for their annual holiday, logic dictates that they do not want to have to finish their evening at 1am.

Singapore has 24-hour opening and the residents do not appear to suffer because of it.

The Thai authorities really do need to consider the benefits derived from the tourism industry and retain some perspective.

If they continue this recent obsession with early closing, tourists will definitely be considering alternative destinations with less Draconian ideas.

I hope common sense prevails.

Graeme Thompson
UK

Time to slow toll of needless deaths

The death toll on Phukets roads rose again in 2003, mostly among vulnerable motorcycle riders. It's really something to be ashamed about, yet the toll seems to rise inexorably every year.

It would be interesting to investigate the reasons why it seems that this high number of deaths is tolerated.

I regularly see two, three and even four people – sometimes whole families with small children – riding on main roads, all without helmets bar the driver.

While I agree with the latest crackdown, I do not think it goes far enough to prevent these deaths.

We need a strict ban on more than two people riding one bike; all riders must wear helmets; bikes (and cars) with faulty lights to be subject to on-the-spot fines; increased amounts of road safety taught at school; free reflective armbands given away (the arm bands could be designed so that it becomes “trendy” to wear one); identification of accident hot spots then the use of “cats' eyes”, reflective warning signs and vehicle-slowing chevrons in these areas; greater penalties for driving under the influence of drink or drugs.

Nick
Phuket

Murky water meets with shady business

Your excellent feature on the beach recliner boom [*Shady Business*, *Gazette*, January 24-31] would seem to have had the opposite effect to what was intended.

We went to Nai Harn beach recently and bulldozers had blocked the sandy gully that once led from the reservoir to the sea.

The artificial “lagoon” thus formed is now covered in floating debris and a thick, slimy slick. It may well become a stagnant, unhealthy water trap.

There are now two rows of recliners and umbrellas – three in some places – along the beach.

How can this environmentally-risky sand-moving work be carried out on public land?

I hope the Governor acts

before the beaches of Phuket are the same as those on the Costa Brava in Spain. Recliners should be properly regulated and those who profit from them should pay taxes.

Disgusted
Chalong

Bring law to bear on bare tourists

With reference to your online Issue & Answer about nudity and lewd behavior on the beaches [see also facing page].

First, the Thai police should be all over this and put a stop to it; second, if they don't, someone's backside needs kicking.

If the police don't do their job, somebody will do it for them.

Travis Jones
Haad Yai

Put trash to work for Phuket's poor

I have no doubt that many tourists visit Phuket once, never to return, and tell their friends, “Don't go. It's a trash heap.”

But money speaks loudly. Set up three or four collection points around the island, complete with trucks and scales. If trash is worth money, you don't throw it out.

No one in the world is more industrious than the average Thai trying to scrape a living from life. Help solve two problems: too much litter, which affects everyone's quality of life, and a lack of money for the poor, which affects all humanity.

Ken Taylor
Rawai

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.

The dark side of supplying meat

Between 400 and 500 pigs – about 60,000 kilograms of meat – are required each day in Phuket to satisfy demand but only about 100 to 150 approved and registered slaughtering take place here each day, at the Phuket City municipal abattoir.

By approved, I mean the slaughter of an individual animal authorized by me, subject to a vet from the PPLO examining the animal and declaring it healthy.

We do not currently have the resources to approve more than this number every day.

About 250 animals are supplied from Bangkok, Nakhon Pathom and Songkhla, particularly for large retail outlets such as the Tesco-Lotus and Big C superstores, a number of large restaurants, as well as a few meat wholesalers.

The illegal slaughterhouses – there are at least 20 on Phuket – tend to be small-scale businesses satisfying local needs. Between them they butcher up to 100 animals a day.

You can see that the legal supply cannot currently meet demand and if we closed the illegal abattoirs tomorrow, we would simply be giving more business to meat smugglers.

We can just about monitor the illegal abattoirs; dealing with smugglers is far more difficult.

FIRST PERSON

Slaughtering animals is an unpleasant business but one that is crucial to meeting growing demand from Phuket's residents and visitors. On the island, as much as 50% of the slaughtering is done illegally. This fact is nevertheless reluctantly accepted by the authorities as a necessary evil. Sunart Wongchawalit, the Chief of the Phuket Provincial Livestock Office (PPLO) gives his views on a subject most people would rather not think about.



Like it or not, it is the illegal operators who keep the island supplied with meat.

So we issue them with one-day licenses every day. This allows us to enforce basic minimum standards. The main aim of these standards is to ensure that the beast has no communicable diseases and poses no threat to the consumer's health.

The way animals are slaughtered and butchered in the illegal abattoirs is not humane, nor does it meet even the most basic of standards.

Butchers, for example, strip

down to their underwear as they don't want to ruin their clothes with blood and waste from the animals.

Carcasses are not refrigerated after slaughter and are usually taken to the market in the back of a pickup truck or an open lorry.

I accept that such methods are substandard, and we have charged a number of operators who failed to meet requirements.

However, the law on communicable disease in livestock, one of our main concerns, was

introduced in 1956 and some sections of the law haven't been updated since then.

For example, the penalties for operators of non-registered slaughterhouses are a short prison term or a fine of not more than 10,000 baht, or both. The Department of Livestock Development is working to reform the law and the penalties.

We are trying our best in this situation and, I think, it's better than it was because we are working in the slaughterhouses to check for diseases in livestock. This has not been done before.

We're also fortunate that there has not yet been an outbreak of a dangerous communicable disease among livestock on Phuket.

We are also trying to get one officer – it doesn't need to be a veterinarian – from each of the Tambon Administration Organizations to be trained in how to check an animal before issuing permission for it to be slaughtered. This will ensure that minimum standards are met, at least in some areas.

The only real solution that will guarantee standards is to have a modern, hygienic, highly automated abattoir where all of the slaughtering of animals in the province can be done under strict controls.

We are planning to build one in Kathu within the year, to be operated by the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization.

This plant, when it is up and running, will effectively end the careers of the many small-scale illegal operators, but it is worth the social cost. Standards will be higher. It will be possible to detect and contain diseases more efficiently, and consumers will be able to feel more confident about the quality of the meat.

– Compiled by *Dhirarat Boonkongsaen*

Disgusted by lewd beach behavior

Once again, I am astounded by the nudity and obscene behavior at Laem Singh and Patong beaches. I've seen men masturbating in the water while children swim nearby – and I've confronted these individuals.

I've seen women walk around naked, yet again while children are around.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but surely this is illegal in Thailand. Maybe these tourists should go back to where they came from. I am truly disgusted.

Steve Stander
South Africa

Pol Lt Col Panudej Sookwong, Superintendent of the Phuket Tourist Police, replies:

If what you are saying is true, then those people are all

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

breaking the law. If you make a complaint with the police, they can all be arrested.

If Tourist Police officers

pass by, you can complain to them. They do not have the power to make an arrest but they can issue warnings or request of-

ficers at the local police station to take offenders to the police station and fine them.

As for the details you give, if they are wearing absolutely nothing, then they are also offending Thai traditions.

The penalty is a small fine. Call 191 (the police hotline), 1155 or 076-254693 (Tourist Police). You can also stop patrol police if you see them driving by.

The Phuket Gazette notes:

Section 388 of the Penal Code of Thailand states (in the official translation): "Whoever does any shameful act in public by indecently exposing his or her person, or by committing an other indecent act, shall be punished with fine not exceeding five hundred baht."

Is my Irish will valid in Thailand?

I have a bank account at a Thai bank and another at a bank in Ireland.

I live in Phuket and I want to change my Irish will so that, on my death, funds in both accounts will go to my Thai girlfriend. I have no property in either country.

Will that be acceptable, or do I need to make out a Thai will?

Michael Finn
ex-Dubliner

Friedrich "Sam" Fauma, of the International Law Office, Phuket City, replies:

A last will and testament drawn up anywhere in the world is enforceable in Thailand.

However, it is best, in your will, to appoint an executor who is able to appear in a Thai court in order to be appointed the executor of your assets in Thailand.

The court will require that your will be translated into Thai, and that translation must be verified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Bangkok, or by a translator recognized by the MFA, or by any Thai embassy or consulate abroad.

Nasty neighbor is stinking up our home

We live in a quiet village in the Chalong district. Unfortunately there is a gentleman who does not live in the village but who owns land next to us and uses it almost every day as a place for burning household rubbish.

Sometimes this causes thick smoke to drift across to our house.

At other times we get terrible pungent smells, and the fires

keep on smoldering for most of the day.

The smells and smoke are so bad that some days we cannot open our doors or windows and we have to keep the house closed with the air conditioning turned on.

We have asked the security guards if they can do something but because the person burning the garbage does not

actually live in the village and because he is a very large, irascible man who bellows at everyone, the guards seem scared to do anything to get him to stop.

Please can somebody tell us whether it is legal to burn household rubbish? If not, what is our correct course of action?

Choking in Chalong

Dechakanee Leelanon, Chief Administrative Officer of OrBorTor Chalong, replies:

You can file a complaint about this with our officers at OrBorTor Chalong or call us at 076-383776.

We will send an officer and a lawyer to check if what you say is the case. If we find that it is so, the offender will be fined 500 baht.

Roving through the mangroves

EDGEWISE

By John Gilpin

No orders shouted. No voices raised. No waves. No wind. The purr of the 50-hp, four-stroke engine at low speed is hardly audible from the bow of the nine-meter, flat-bottomed, shallow-draught riverboat, *Pitta*, as she slides through the backwaters among the mangroves like a slow ripple across the surface of a millpond.

The sudden screech of a bird tears through the stillness like a knife through canvas. What is it? We have no time to raise binoculars to our eyes before a flash of wings disappears into the thick green mangroves. Perhaps it was a rare *Pitta* – even a Gurney's *Pitta* – after which the boat is named?

But we do see a Black-Capped Kingfisher with a bright white collar sunning himself on the weathered gray thatched roof of a floating fishing hut – a beautiful sight with the lambent beams of the late afternoon sun glinting off his iridescent turquoise feathers.

And we spot several Pacific

Reef Egrets, or so we think, with long, S-shaped necks, silhouetted against the sky like creatures from the age of the pterodactyls.

Cruising quietly through the mangroves of Phang Nga Bay is indeed to “experience another Thailand”, which is the slogan of River Rovers, the company that operates these inshore charters in remote areas.

Not a tourist in sight. In fact, hardly anyone at all. We see two fishermen rowing as they stand in their boats. It makes sense, this way of rowing: you use your whole weight to lean against the oars. But you don't see it often around Phuket.

Pitta herself, recently built and comfortably outfitted to accommodate four passengers and two crew, is the first of the River Rovers fleet.

The company (its website is at www.riverrovers.com) is the brainchild of British yachtie Gordon Williams, who arrived in Phuket at the end of 1999 after

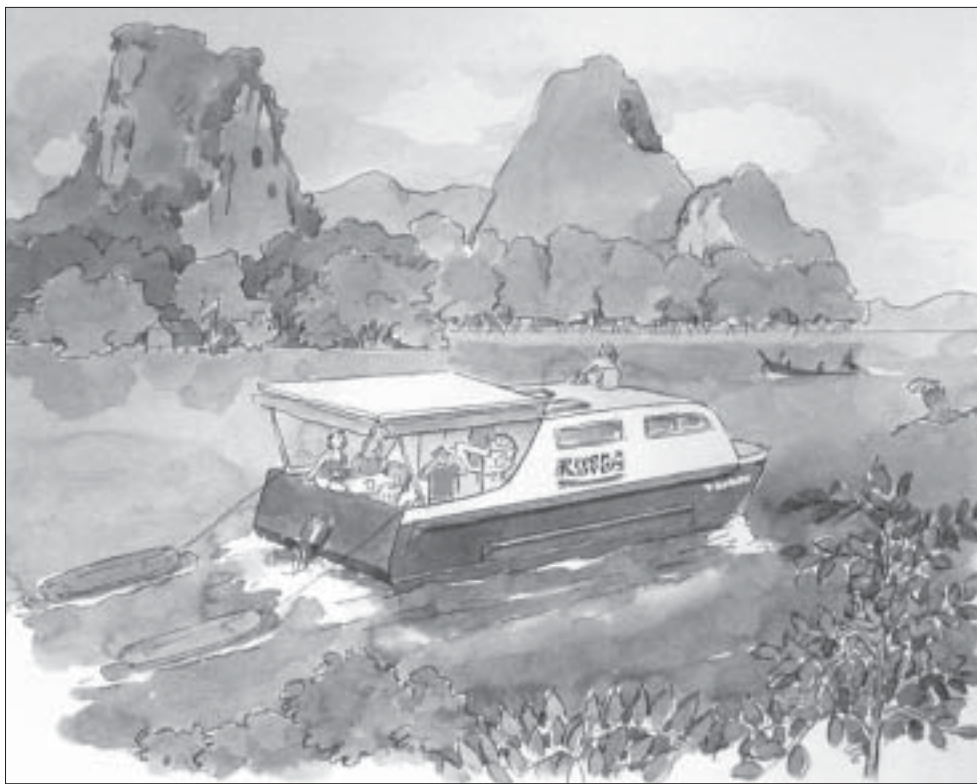


Illustration by Sumi

sailing his boat from South Africa.

The River Rovers base is a hut and rickety jetty on a river through the mangroves, about half an hour's drive around Phang Nga Bay from the Sarasin Bridge. Gordon's partner in River Rovers, Prasit Tantipiriyakij, owns the rubber tree land

here, and this is where *Pitta* is moored.

If they wish – as we did – charterers can be treated to an interesting talk and demonstration about rubber tapping before stepping on board.

What you can do depends on how much time you have. If you have a night or more you can

sleep under the stars on a secluded beach. Equally, you can sleep on *Pitta*, which has two comfortable double cabins. The riverboat also carries kayaks for exploring sea caves and hidden lagoons within the karst formations of Phang Nga Bay.

Ours was a day trip, which gave us time to putter up and down the river and motor over to a pretty, sandy beach on an island where we swam. On the beach there's a bamboo bar where we drank beers. It was a relaxing day out.

Motoring back upriver, we spoke of boating in the canals of England and in the Everglades in Florida. Inshore boating in Phang Nga Bay might not be as well known but it is certainly just as appealing in its own way.

Next time we'll go overnight to have time to explore more of the rivers and the mysterious lagoons within the giant fairy-tale rocks of Phang Nga Bay. I know of no place on earth quite so beautiful. And it's right on our doorstep.

Storming about a non-existent teabag

My comments about the Tesco's no-tea party really brewed up quite a stir. I can boast that a record number of emails poured in – my e-mug runneth over; not one, but two tea-mails on the subject are stewing in my inpot.

Most people I have spoken to about the issue are as outraged as the massive e-outpouring suggests and most are hoping that Tesco's will show us the milk (and two sugars) of human kindness and bring the tea bags back.

So it was with a deep breath that I approached the most recent issue of the *Gazette*, in particular the Issues & Answers section, where another reader had expressed displeasure. There was a reply. I was delighted to see it. I was righteously vexed when I read it.

A purchasing manager gave the following reason for the absence of Tesco's tea bags:

This imported tea failed to reach its expected sales target, so no more will be imported.

My response ... what utter nonsense!

I have never in my life heard such tosh. There was a bizarre incident a few months ago when over-stocking led to a surplus of short-dated bags – well done Derek Priest who wrote to me about going there for the sale – but normally, it takes two visits at least to ensure a purchase.

The shelves are frequently bare, stripped by proper lads and lasses like me, and owners of the more savvy B&Bs and cafés. I used to buy at least three packs every time they were there.

So what we have here is either a Catch 22 or staggering incompetence.

The reason there is poor demand, Mr Purchasing Manager, is that frequently you have no bloody stock. Simple task, really: have stock, will sell.

I would have thought that

this was Lesson 1 in Purchasing Managers' school.

We now know the reason behind the absence of chocolate digestive biscuits: no demand, obviously, as the one crate you brought in sold out in a day – and after that, no-one ever bought them again.

These *farang* – try to do 'em a favor and what do they do? They don't buy the bloody stuff.

I wonder what other morsels we have been denied because of this highly dubious rationale? Did they once get a case of Fray Bentos Steak and Kidney Puddings?

Maybe a coupla cases of Bachelors Mushy Peas, Ambrosia Rice Pudding and Birds Custard made a fleeting visit next to the now-disappeared Tesco's own brand soup and furthermore, Spaghetti in Tomato Sauce.

I have one tin left. Any offers? I can't bring myself to eat it, I just look at it sitting on the shelf and sigh.

I'd even introduced my boy Louie to it on toast. It was one of the rare moments when I felt like a real dad and not one who works too much and never has enough time.

I almost fear to mention another similar moment, the Weetabix and hot milk breakfast

he so loves, for they may disappear, too.

There are rites of passage for a northern lad and dad and many of these include the introduction to crap processed food. Are we to be denied these?

This may sound like the petty grumbles of a miserable expat who should just pass off back to England if he does not like it here.

I too have levelled that criticism at other people and have been right to do so. But there is a subtle difference here: the products I am complaining about are products that they once stocked.

They flirted with us, they toyed with our emotions and our appetites, they led us on and didn't stay true and it's plain wrong to do that.

A note to anyone who has restored their source of illicit tea bags ... Fiddy of Fiddy's Guest House on Soi San Sabai has always had a steady source for a good brew (even before Tesco's). To his credit, his supply has remained unhindered. The man is a real pro.

But let this not all be criticism of Tesco's ... oh sod it, why not? I've got my dander up now. Tesco's still have a single malt for sale in their, ahem, wine sec-

tion. Naturally they have weeded out any truly outstanding wines they used to have, such as the Taylor's Promised Land, and replaced it with the average stuff available at any liquor store.

CULTURE CLASH: To my unending amusement, I have an American sub-editor (the guy who checks the column for accuracy and spelling and stuff).

Every week I look forward to his calls earnestly enquiring as to the meaning of such phrases as “chuffed”, “arsed”, “brassed off” and “I'll go to the foot of our stairs”.

He reminds that I am at heart a simple man, he is always polite and patient, a real gent.

However let this be warning: replace the word biccie or biscuit with cookie again er, buddy, and I'll slap you from our 'ouse to 't traffic lights and back again. Is that copacetic? Good.

Oooh, I feel better now.

MIDDLE AGES: Just time to let you know that I turn 40 at the end of Feb. The party is on the 29th, location to be announced in the Events Calendar of the *Gazette* Online.

Regardless to say it'll be a reet good do. (Note to the American sub: a very jolly time indeed).

Konrad Stalin may be reached at konradstalin@hotmail.com.

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Silk leader boost shops, lowers prices

By Rungtip Hongjakpet

PHUKET: Jim Thompson, the well-known Thai silk manufacturer and retailer, now has two factory sales outlets on the island – one at The Courtyard, on Chao Fa West Rd, and another smaller outlet at Canal Village Laguna, in Cherg Talay.

The move follows the opening of seven Thompson-brand shops in Phuket hotels and resorts in November and makes a more complete range of goods available to local shoppers.

It will mean that developers and decorators – and visitors from Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong especially – will no longer have to travel to Bangkok to buy Jim Thompson home furnishing products.

“These are the first factory sales outlets outside of Bangkok,” says Somnuk “Lek” Charuwongwankij, Assistant Manager of Home Furnishing Factory Sales.

He oversees all the factory

outlets and rates the opening of the ones in Phuket as a milestone to be compared with Thompson’s presence in more than 30 countries, including more than 30 retail outlets in the US.

As he said to the *Gazette*, “Why Phuket? Because we like to explore new markets, and we know that the local market has the purchasing power to buy luxury items, such as silk, for the home or office.”

K. Lek said that most of the items sold at the main factory outlet, at The Courtyard, were home furnishing products, including silk and woven cotton for curtains and upholstery, to cater to the booming property market in Phuket.

“Quite a few of our new customers are local property developers, both big and small,” he said.

“Local Thais, including interior designers and decorators, are also starting to use more Jim Thompson silk. Before we opened this outlet, they had to go to

Bangkok for Jim Thompson fabrics.

“We are also attracting more customers from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Some of them make a trip here just to shop for Thai silk.”

K. Lek pointed out that Jim Thompson was countering the prestigious – and pricey – image of silk by offering top-of-the-range goods at competitive prices.

“Some people believe that Jim Thompson silk is a bit costly, but if they visit the outlets, they will see that our prices are not high. The outlets [have been opened so that] new customers can buy high-quality products at prices they can afford,” he said.

The cost of items at the factory outlets is 50-70% lower, which K. Lek confidently said makes the most expensive items no more than 5% dearer than other retailers, with most items being cheaper.

Discontinued designs, special order overruns, silk made

specifically for sale at the outlet, and a small range of items of less-than-usual Jim Thompson retail quality are for sale. The main outlet also accepts factory orders for catalog and custom-design fabrics.

Fending off criticism that Thai silk is not durable for use on furniture, K. Lek said, “First, silk is a luxury. No one should use or treat silk as an ordinary fabric.

“Second, the user has to have some understanding about how to use silk. If you use it for the wrong purpose, it will not last long at all.

“We always advise our customers which fabric to use for the desired purpose. But if someone really wants to use a particular fabric for something inappropriate, we would recommend them to at least take one or two extra precautions, such as using a backing or using silk spun with cotton for extra strength, to ensure that they get the best out of the material they buy from us.”

On the Move

Dr Manit Sirikangwalkul, 51, of Bangkok, has been appointed Director of the Bangkok Samui Hospital on Koh Samui. He studied microsurgery at McMaster University in Canada and spent another three years as Director of Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital in Bangkok before moving to Samui.



Giada Pergolini, 32, from Italy, is the new Quality Manager of Le Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club. A graduate in political science from the University of Milan, she has experience in tour operations, event planning and public relations on three continents, including work with the travel company, Grandi Viaggi, in Europe and Africa.



The wonders of offshore insurance firms

Expats who investigate the investment world soon discover that the best place for their money is that well-known destination, “offshore”. But what exactly is meant by this somewhat vague description?

Basically, it describes jurisdictions, many of them islands, that offer a wide variety of financial services.

They are often also known as tax havens. However, most would prefer to be referred to as “low-tax jurisdictions”. The list of respectable tax havens includes the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, Bermuda, Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands, to name a few. It also includes some surprises – Luxembourg, Switzerland, Ireland and Hong Kong.

As our expat investigates further the offshore financial services on offer, it will not be long before he comes into contact with the insurance companies.

Offshore insurance firms fill an important role as homes for long-term savings. They also offer services that no other financial institution provides.

Many expats contact their banks for financial advice, only to find that their bank is offering them an investment contract from an insurance company.

Sometimes, a bank will keep its asset management in-house and sell its own financial products to its clients. But if our expat is of an inquiring mind, further research may well show that his bank’s individual products are not the best available and that their track record in any given investment area is mediocre or downright appalling compared with competitors.

It is quite common for a customer to find that his bank has sold him, say, a bond fund that is listed by independent rating agencies such as Standard & Poors Micropal or Lipper as 205 out of 255 funds in its sector.

What the insurance industry offers is a much wider range of choices. They are effectively “investment supermarkets”. Insurance companies will normally have a range of funds (mutual funds/unit trusts) available that they actually manage or co-manage but these will usually be only a small percentage of the range they have on offer.

The remainder will be chosen from a wide variety of international asset managers and may encompass as many as 200 funds.

The funds will commonly cover a wide range of investment areas. Included will be managed funds (with a choice of risk areas from cautious to aggressive) bond funds both international and country-specific or currency-specific funds – Euro bond funds, for example.

Other choices include money market funds, equity funds varying from international, or regional (for example, Southeast Asia) to country-specific. They also usually offer specialist funds that can cover wide and very different areas, such as real estate or gold.

The insurance companies negotiate special terms with all investment houses on an institution-to-institution basis, which not only reduces or eliminates initial costs but may also reduce annual fees.

Clients can also select several investment choices and



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

change their selection at any time without having to get involved in what can be a messy and time-consuming amount of paperwork.

Any foreign exchange transaction that may be required is conducted on the client’s behalf at institutional exchange rates as an everyday part of the service.

The range of choices available to the larger clients of the insurance companies includes access to a huge range of funds – well over 10,000 – or individual shares and bonds on all of the world’s main capital markets.

I even know of one insurance company that will include your house as an asset inside your personal portfolio bond.

With the recent introduction of anti-money-laundering regulations and the requirement to prove the origin of funds’ “source of wealth” and all the attendant red tape, investors are going to find it increasingly difficult to move money from one institution’s products to another’s.

But when money is under an offshore insurance company’s wings, all this red tape simply disappears. Any money inside an insurance company is treated by all governments as being “clean”.

The insurance industry makes dealing with money much easier and also allows for the individual to make regular withdrawals, without any charge.

Clients can also have debit cards attached to their insurance company investments – and even bank accounts.

A client in Phuket, for example, could pay for an airline ticket or a hotel bill, or even purchases at Big C or Tesco Lotus.

For those who require it, many of the insurance companies

will offer trust services at rates that are so low they are simply unbeatable.

In other cases where families are prepared to do the trust work themselves, the insurance companies will supply the documentation free of charge.

Insurance firms also have technical departments that will advise on a variety of subjects including taxation, estate planning and so on, also free of charge.

The insurance companies are spreading their wings. They now commonly offer products that do not resemble insurance in any shape or form.

They do not even use insurance company jargon and are suitable as investment vehicles for individuals, companies and trusts.

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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Dulwich kids get tips from Arsenal expert

By Nonthawat Disayabutra

KOH KAEW: One of the architects behind Arsenal's rise to the pinnacle of English soccer recently visited Phuket recently and coached students at Dulwich International College.

Alan Sefton, head of the Premier League-topping London team's soccer school, spent five days in February enhancing the skills of youngsters aged six to 18 at Dulwich.

The students were surely the envy of millions of young football fans across Asia, where the passion for English clubs runs almost as high as on the terraces of Manchester United, Liverpool or Chelsea.

Arsenal's position at the apex of the Premier League is the surest sign that Mr Sefton's 18 years with the Arsenal school have not been idly spent.

Encouraging young players to be interested in soccer comes naturally to him, and Mr Sefton seemed very happy with the attitude of the Dulwich group.

"We're here to improve their soccer skills and develop more practical programs for them," he said. "I believe they are working out well.

"They have to enjoy what they're doing. If they are not, they will not get better. But we believe the ultimate test is that the enjoyment of playing creates better players, so they are constantly improving."

He said that soccer improvement was a mixture of education and entertainment: the more children enjoy it, the more reason they will have to continue to play, too.



Alan Sefton: 'I am an Arsenal man. I think it's the best club.'

"The training sessions here in Phuket are the same as we have in the real Arsenal Soccer School," he said.

"The players here have good skills in every age group. I love the students here. They want to listen and they are enthusiastic. They want to learn and they are very disciplined.

"They could become my spares," he said, not entirely in jest.

The skills program at Dulwich covered running with the ball, passing, and shooting. Mr Sefton's free bit of advice to all would-be soccer stars: shooting is most important – because it means scoring for your team.

"We train, then we finish the day with matches to let them use the skills from the training sessions," Mr Sefton said.

What never ceases to surprise him is how children everywhere love playing soccer. "Whenever I travel abroad, wherever I go, children love the game. That never

changes."

On the other hand, the approach to sessions is constantly changed to introduce new ways to keep their interest up, and new methods of playing and improving their play.

The usual session in England runs for two and a half hours, slightly longer than in Phuket, Mr Sefton said, explaining that, because Phuket is so hot, he was concerned for the health of young players.

"While we were teaching, we were also trying to promote a healthy lifestyle so we told them what dehydration means, and explained that water is best – no fizzy drinks during a game.

"We also advised them to keep exercising so that their health will be good for a lifetime."

Mr Sefton said there were no soccer secrets or special tactics behind Arsenal's success, and he hoped Dulwich players would perform well in local competitions as a result of his tuition.

As for him, Arsenal is likely to remain home. "I am a one-club man," he said. "I will not work with other clubs even when I quit or retire. I am an Arsenal man. I think it's the best club."

That said, he clearly enjoys the trips abroad. "Soccer has become more global," he said, undertaking to return to Phuket as soon as possible. "When they hire me again, you'll see me here."



Wreathed in smiles, 13-year-old Marcus Bolinsson beat all-comers in the first organized race at the go-kart track in Kathu.

Swedish teen shows karters how to race

KATHU: Michael Schumacher must have been occupied elsewhere, probably warming up for the first F1 Grand Prix of the season. As a result, the first Patong Go-Kart Open Grand Prix 2004 produced a young champion with considerable prospects.

Swede Marcus Bolinsson, aged 13 and doubtless aware that Schumacher started his golden career in go-karts when he was a boy, triumphed after three hours of speed and noise to win the final race by four seconds.

It was his first race hut is unlikely to be the last – regular races will be held at the go-kart track from now on.

Twenty-one competitors turned out on February 22 in the cool of the evening to contest the prestigious first Phuket title, with their total time being recorded over nine laps.

The 720-meter track includes four sharp corners and the racers, five or six at a time, contested a series of race-offs over

three laps to determine who should advance to the final.

The go-kart track has been open for more than 14 years, but this was the first time an evening of racing had been held there. The concept for the event sprang from John Deverport, who owns a go-kart track in England.

"I suggested the idea and from now on, racing will be held each week, or possibly on a monthly basis," Mr Deverport said.

It's hoped that Thais will soon join the competition, which attracted starters from Britain, Germany, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Finland and Australia.

The final round at 9 pm saw Marcus take the gold trophy and the obligatory winner's champagne with a race time total of precisely 28 minutes.

Four seconds behind him was Markus Bahr, 27, of Germany, and third, just three seconds further back, was Englishman Mark Richmond.

Playing a defensive game

PHUKET: Students from National Defence College of Thailand (NDCT) played a friendly soccer match against Phuket provincial government officials, including Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura, at the Surakul Stadium on February 20.

With some of the Phuket players seen walking in less-than-hasty pursuit of the ball, the younger team from the NDCT should have run rings around their gubernatorial opponents.

But it wasn't to be. The NDCT team – chosen from the 100 students who came to Phuket – lived up to its name, defending and defending, and was unable to place the ball in the back of the Governor's goal.

The result was a well balanced 0-0 scoreline at the final whistle.

The NDCT students traveled on to the Similan Islands before returning to Bangkok on February 23.

QSI plans second fun run

KATHU: Quality Schools International (QSI) Phuket is holding its second Easter-Songkran Fun Run at the Bang Wad Dam near Phuket Country Club on Sunday, March 28, starting at 4 pm.

Competitors will have a choice of two courses – over one kilometer and over six kilometers. Prizes will be awarded in the 8-and-under, 9-12, 13-17 and over 17 age categories.

Those interested in taking part should contact QSI Phuket (Tel: 076-350076; Fax: 076-354077; or Email: qsi@phuketinternet.co.th).

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Paradorn's brother coaches local kids

PHUKET TOWN: Tennis superstar Paradorn Srichaphan's elder brother Thanakorn was in Phuket on February 21 and 22 on his third visit to the island to give lessons to young tennis players.

The all-day sessions were limited to just 20 players from Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi, and Trang, ranging in age from eight to 16 years old.

"We've had to limit the number of students because we need to work as closely as possible with each of them so that they will get the most out of the sessions," Thanakorn explained.

A former member of the Thai national tennis team, Thanakorn has his own private tennis court in Khon Kaen, where he trains young people.

But, he said, he is likely to have less time for teaching youngsters in the future. "These days, I have to go with Paradorn to all his tournaments because I am preparing to replace my father [as Paradorn's coach]. He needs a rest."



Thanakorn: Replacing his father as Paradorn's coach

Xiao Long wins Valentine's Day race by just seconds

AO CHALONG: A perfect 15- to 18-knot easterly wind propelled a number of Ao Chalong yachties in a small fleet of five yachts to Nai Harn for a fun race on Valentine's Day.

Due to the fact that *Beyond Rotto* had no mainsail, it was decided that she should become the committee start boat, leaving the start line incident-free, much to the delight of the competitors.

A short windward start followed by a downwind drag race past Koh Lone, around Koh Kaew Noi and onward to a breezy finish at Nai Harn.

It was an extremely close tussle all the way to the finish between the two cruisers but *Xiao Long* went ahead to beat *The Four Winds* by 26 seconds.

Two recent Phang Nga Bay Regatta winners, *Charro*, a Pescott multihull, and *La Samudra*, a Swan 42, sailed a slightly

longer course, finishing just 20 minutes behind the cruisers. *La Samudra* finished just eight minutes behind *Charro* after racing for two and a half hours.

Beyond Rotto, cruising down the course flying only a Yankee staysail, kept well out of harm's way, until the slow-motion sinking of her dinghy – full of people at the time – provided the afternoon's entertainment.

The evening party at Ao Sane was a great success providing mirth for all.

A fast cruise back to Ao Chalong the following day made for an enjoyable weekend and proved that everyone on the water was a winner.

– Brian Ritchie

Ao Chalong Yacht Club series races begin on March 14. For more details see the club's website at www.acycphuket.com.

Don't miss....

Issues & Answers

www.phuketgazette.net/issuesanswers/index.asp

Laguna triathlon set for Nov 20

CHERNG TALAY: Saturday, November 20, 2004 has been set as the date of the 11th annual Laguna Phuket Triathlon.

Organizers have decided to continue with some of the popular add-on events introduced in 2003, including five- and 10-kilometer fun runs, a team relay division and a triathlon clinic hosted by World Ironman Champion, Scott Molina.

Four new classes will be debuted at this year's event: Clydesdale (men over 90.7 kilogram)

and Athena (women over 68 kg) divisions, as well as new age classes for Men 60-64, and Men 65 and over.

Race Director Murphy Reinschreiber expects many star triathletes to return for the 2004 event.

Online registration begins March 1. For more information, visit lagunaphukettriathlon.com, or contact Michelle Payette, Events and Press Relations Manager, at email: triathlon@lagunaphuket.com.

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The 2004 F1 Grand Prix season starts on March 7 in Melbourne. All the teams have been hard at work designing, building and testing their latest chariots since last October's final in Japan.

The most visually radical of the latest clutch is the Williams FW25 with its "twin tusk" nose, which, designers say, improves aerodynamics beneath the car.

It has proven quick in initial testing in Spain but whether the FW25 will work as well on all circuits, particularly when maximum downforce is essential, remains to be seen.

McLaren is introducing the MP4-19, a development of its unraced MP4-18, for this season. Although many of the gremlins have been ironed out and the MP4-19 is undoubtedly quick, the Mercedes-Benz V10 engines are proving a little troublesome.

Engine reliability will be crucial this year as the FIA has introduced a rule stating that cars must run the entire weekend on just one engine, with penalties imposed should the engine be changed.

This new ruling means that engines will be required to remain intact for *double* the previous distance, or around 800 kilometers.

While many are predicting this "one-engine" rule will have few ramifications, power outputs and therefore overall speeds will have to be reduced. A marked increase in lap times on some circuits is expected.

The 2004 season will favor teams with proven engines, such as Renault and Honda. Renault has abandoned its wide-angle V10 in favor of a narrower 72-degree V-configuration.

This unit is based on the old Supertec engine last seen in the Arrows in 2000. Although it is less powerful than some of its rivals, it should offer advantages in terms of dependability.

Likewise, Honda has pro-



Ready to roar



TESTING TIMES: Jaguar and Toyota are two of the up-and-coming F1 teams. Austrian Christian Klein, seen here top left and bottom left and right, has been impressing in trials before the Grand Prix season begins. Australian Mark Webber leads the team. The Toyota racers, top right and middle, are also tipped to do better, with Olivier Panis and Cristiano da Matta in control.

duced a light, compact engine based on its much-maligned 2003 unit and team leader Jenson Button has been setting some impressive test times in Spain.

The Williams-BMWs of Ralf Schumacher and Juan Pablo Montoya have similarly been showing a fair turn of speed at Barcelona although with their 19,000-rpm engines – previously one of the most powerful in For-

BEHIND THE WHEEL

By Jeff Heselwood

mula One – BMW will suffer more than most because of the new rule.

Ferrari, and Michael Schumacher in particular, will start the season as favorites to retain both the drivers' and manufacturers' titles.

Many believed Schumacher would retire after clinching his sixth world championship in 2003 and others are predict-

ing that this will be Ferrari teammate Rubens Barrichello's year.

A solid race-winner, Barrichello has so far always been in Michael's shadow.

The 2004 season could change that in the Brazilian's favor.

Jordan and Minardi, the perennial back-of-the-grid teams, are hoping for an improvement in their fortunes this year and both feature new driver line-ups.

At Jordan, Nick Heidfeld will attempt to restore his reputation after two frustrating years at Sauber, while Heidfeld's new partner is little-known Italian, Giorgio Pantano.

Pantano, the 2000 German F3 champion and a consistent F3000 race winner, could spring a surprise and turn out to be quicker than his more experienced German teammate.

Minardi has elected to take Gianmaria Bruni and Hungarian Zsolt Baumgartner. Bruni is likely to outpace Baumgartner despite the latter's two-race experience last year with Jordan.

Jaguar, after a reasonably successful 2003, anticipate a further boost to its fortunes this year with acknowledged quick qualifier Mark Webber leading the team for the second successive year. Partnering the Aussie is 20-year old Austrian Christian Klein.

Although inexperienced, Klein has adapted to the new Jaguar R5 very rapidly and testing times have been impressive.

Toyota retains its driver line-up, with Olivier Panis and Cristiano da Matta, while it's all change at Sauber, with Giancarlo Fisichella switching from Jordan and Felipe Massa returning after a year out testing for Ferrari.

At McLaren, David Coulthard knows this is his last chance to win the championship before he makes way for Montoya to join Kimi Raikkonen at McLaren next year.

Coulthard will be out to impress in order to maintain his Formula One career, but it is Raikkonen who will become the regular podium visitor this season.

The Formula One supremo, Bernie Ecclestone, is predicting Kimi will take the 2004 title, but there's a long way to go before the final race in Brazil on October 24.

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

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Frankenstein and the science of making wine

Q: Thailand is moving to allow genetically modified (GM) food into the country. I wonder, are there GM wines?

A: It is difficult to modify grapevines' genetic structure because the DNA has many recessive alleles. The French have had one success I know of, but this has yet to be commercialized.

The giant American jug wine producer E&J Gallo employs a small army of scientists in one of the world's most modern GM research facilities but has produced little to show for their effort.

Most attempts to create GM grapevines focus on resistance to disease and pests rather than flavor. The goal is to grow grapes in a wider variety of climates and places than nature intended.

Scientists, governments and industry tell us there is no danger. Of course, at one time they said the same about lead, uranium, DDT, diesel emissions and cigarettes.

The truth is that the potential consequences of GM technology are unknown. But for now, there are no GM wines and wine remains the most natural and uncorrupted of foods.

Q: Why are white wines yellow and red wines purple?

A: The yellow color is from carotene and chlorophyll in the grape and tannin from the oak barrels used during aging.

Red wine's purple hue is determined by the chemistry of the grape variety and the wine's pH. Young wines tend to be



By Steven Roberto

purple, becoming red and finally brown as they age.

Q: Are pink wines made by mixing red and white wine or by using pink grapes?

A: Both – although more commonly by using red grapes but taking away the red grape skins

after only a few hours of soaking in the fermenting juice.

Q: How do you know if a wine is of high quality?

A: How do 'planes fly? Why is the sky blue? These questions have complex answers that most of us are not aware of; we simply accept the effect.

Similarly, wine quality is more easily recognized than understood. Some claim that quality is the ability to create a product that closely matches the desired specifications. If a wine turns out the way it was intended, then it is high quality. By this standard even the most common jug wine would be high quality.

Others say quality is "better" than average. But what pleases one person may offend

another and both conclusions cannot be correct.

I am convinced there is no such thing as "quality". Yet, when a great wine is tasted, everyone can agree that there is something special about the wine, even if they can't say why.

So, what is it in the wine that people recognize as greatness? I have no idea. It is a mystery that makes wine intriguing and compelling. If scientists ever do discover what "quality" is, I hope they won't spoil the mystery by telling us.

Steven Roberto is a winemaker and restaurant consultant from California. He is the Wine and Beverage Director for the award-winning Baan Rim Pa restaurant in Patong. Email: sroberto@lycos.com

Many diners these days seem to display characteristics that are throwbacks to our hunter-gatherer past. They will drive from one end of the island to the other following some primordial instinct, risking life and limb in the process, honing their appetites to fever pitch.

But taking a five-minute drive to Phuket City recently was more than enough to satisfy my instincts – and my hunger.

Indeed, it was a pleasant irony that it took so little time to reach Baan Garn Vela (the House of Time), formerly Eternity restaurant, on Kra Rd.

Baan Garn Vela, serving traditional Phuket food, is housed in a shophouse that has been extensively redeveloped since the building's earlier incarnation as a bar.

It is striking how quiet it is when one walks in from busy Kra Rd through a small oasis of plants and a covered outdoor dining area. It is as if the sound of the traffic has been turned down.

Through the door and into the restaurant proper, one is welcomed by the warm decor created by the rich maroon on the seat-

Where time is on your side



On the menu
with
Andy Johnstone
Baan Garn Vela

ing, the tablecloths and the window frames.

Counterpoint, detail and

style, as well as a love of food, are obviously high on the agenda for Kanokporn "Poo" Wachirawarakarn and her husband Sunai, the owners of Baan Garn Vela.

K. Poo, 26, hails from Songkhla and a family of restaurateurs. K. Sunai is from Phuket and obviously proud of his, and his home town's, heritage.

The couple have filled the stark, white walls with specially-commissioned paintings showing day-to-day scenes of Phuket. The windowsills have an occasional miniature plant pot or knick-knack: cute without being kitsch.

My companion and I were treated to a series of "smoothies" – refreshing fruit shakes, as Kerkchai Boranbuppha, executive chef of this 40-seat restaurant, recommended some dishes including one novel "chicken speciality" created ostensibly for children.

Having never really grown up, naturally I chose it. It consisted of a plate of deep-fried tiger prawns in a crisp herby bat-

ter, with mashed potato fashioned to look like a chick's head atop the "body".

Served with deep-fried shredded greens and home-made mayonnaise, this was a fun starter and absolutely bird 'flu-free, costing 150 baht for 10 "birds".

We were then treated to a piquant local salad of deep-fried fish with lemon grass.

Emphasizing that detail is as important to the food as it is to the décor, tiny square pieces of fresh lime peel were mixed in with the dish. That detail added another level of taste and texture to a fresh, tasty salad at 80 baht.

Baan Garn Vela reflects the history of Phuket and offers a snapshot of the creative, committed local restaurateurs with the desire to take the dining experience into new, but still recognizable territory – without resorting to "fusion food".

Chef Kerkchai changes the menu at Baan Garn Vela monthly, to take advantage of locally-sourced, seasonal produce. I intend to repeat my local hunting and gathering there very soon.

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Home of the Week

Rawai

Opportunities to live in a luxury estate on the beach don't come along often. This Thai-style property is in Fisherman Way, well known for its elegant houses and a sought-after place to live in Phuket.

An open-air swimming pool is the central feature of the house, with the buildings arranged around it on all sides.

The main entrance to the property is in the center of the house, through a decorated wooden gate, which leads into the hallway, with the swimming pool immediately in front.

There's a step up to the bridge across to the other side of the house. The bridge is covered and doubles as a sala, overlooking the center of the pool. It's a pleasant area, with complete privacy.

To the right is a large kitchen, with built-in fridge-

freezer and dishwasher hidden behind wooden doors. High-quality German kitchen appliances are used throughout.

At the front of the house, overlooking the beach and bay, there are two master bedrooms, each with a large ensuite bathroom.

To the left from the front door is a third bedroom or study, with an outside shower.

Also at the front of the house is the large living area with high ceilings and thick hardwood beams that match the floor. From here one can view the bay through sliding hardwood patio doors that lead out to the terrace and garden.

The property is well built and features large-framed hardwood windows and doors, giving plenty of light and an airy effect. The floors are a mix of terracotta tiles and hardwood.

Utilities include tele-



phone, alarm system, well water, three-phase electricity and septic tank. Fans and air conditioners cool the property.

Outside, a garden surrounds the building, with a sala by the beach. Separate maid's

quarters and laundry room are at the back of the car port.

The property was built about five years ago. It was let, and is now being refurbished by the owners to sell.

The estate is secure and

the property has a Chanote land title. Price: 25 million baht.

Contact: Richard Lusted Siam Real Estate. Tel: 076-280805. Online: www.siamrealestate.com

A plant that only its mother could love

I like plants. Some people might find that a little sad, but I really do like them. I usually manage to get quite enthusiastic about most species of flora, and most of the time have at least a few kind words to say about the vast majority of them. All plants have their own kind of charm somehow.

There's always an exception to every rule, though. In my case, the Crown of Thorns plant is that exception. To quote Basil Fawlty, you just want to look at it and say "My God, you're ugly, aren't you?"

It just doesn't seem to make an effort. Its nasty-looking thorns dominate the plant around the fat little stem. It has a few tiny flowers at the end that appear almost



Gardening with Bloomin' Bert

to be a kind of afterthought.

Believe it or not, this odd creation is actually related to the poinsettia, or Christmas plant.

The poinsettia certainly hasn't passed on the *suwai* genes to its cousin.

The Crown of Thorns, or *Euphorbia mili* is a succulent plant originally from Madagascar, which some feel is where it should have stayed. Like many plants that can be cultivated here in Phuket, it's incredibly easy to grow.

Some plants reward the gardener by producing results which are proportional to the amount of effort he puts into it. This one is the same - it requires absolutely no work whatsoever. Nothing. It therefore gives very little back, and just sits there looking depressed. It doesn't even need a great deal of water, and can endure long periods of neglect.

The small flowers are pleasant enough, I suppose, and beauty is certainly in the eye of the beholder. My old next-door neighbor loved them and must have had about 50 of them in pots scattered around his balcony.

There are literally hundreds of varieties of the Crown of Thorns, each one slightly different from the other. You certainly can't knock the variety of colors, from bright scarlet to pale yellow, with just about every hue in between.

Some flowers even have more than one color. But why does every other part of the plant have to be so unattractive?

Predictably, it's also poisonous. I wonder who could have

been daft enough to have first ingested this monster? The milky sap in every part of the plant will make you quite ill should you choose to eat it. Blisters will eventually form if it touches the skin, and it can cause temporary blindness if it comes into contact with the eyes. It really wants to hurt you.

If it falls into your pond, it will even paralyse your fish.

Apart from the lack of care required for its upkeep, another reason for the Crown of Thorns' popularity is that it blooms year-round. It normally becomes dormant in the hot season, so don't throw it away if it loses its few leaves.

To propagate, it's another "cut it and stick it" kind of plant. Trim the stems that are too long (wearing gloves, to prevent contact with the sap), let them dry for a couple of days, and stick them into potting medium.

They'll grow easily. An older example can reach up to about five feet but it isn't in much of a hurry to get there.

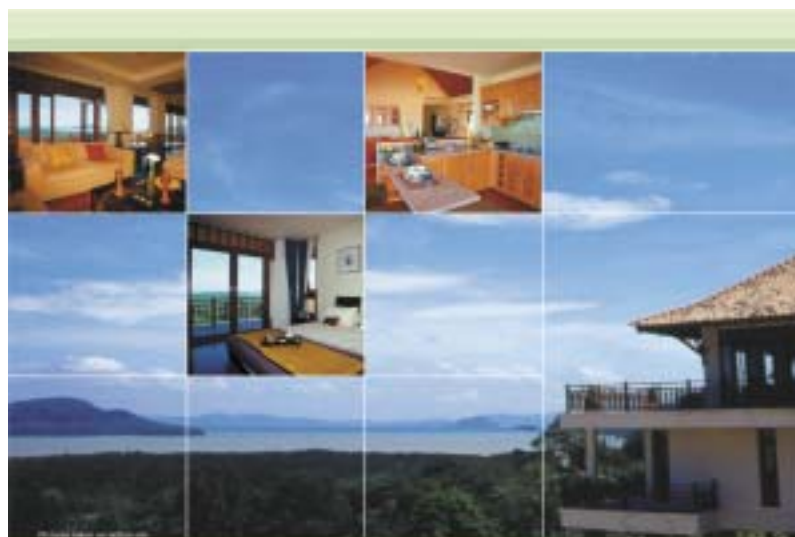
As much as I hate to admit it, the Crown of Thorns is actually quite versatile. It can be grown as a dwarf shrub or ground cover. It can be used as an edging or container plant.

It's also quite at home on the ocean-front and is common in rock gardens because it requires little or no irrigation once it's established.

It will grow best when placed in an area of the landscape that receives full sun or partial shade.

Just about its only requirement is well-drained soil - it won't put up with over-watering or over-fertilization. Just leave it alone.

The ugly duckling of the plant world does have its uses, but don't pamper it. It doesn't deserve it.



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The secret is in the shell

I have a friend in Australia who makes his living from building houses. To be more precise, he spent many years trying to make a living out of building houses, but somehow he never seemed to finish up with a reasonable reward for his efforts.

"No matter how much time I spend doing the sums at the beginning, it always ends up costing more," he lamented over a beer one night.

"I seem to be a charity for new home buyers. It always seems to go wrong at the end – waiting for finishing materials, the supplier has run out by the time I need them and can supply only half the order ... all sorts of reasons."

"Why don't you let the buyers worry about the finishes?" I suggested. "Just sell them a shell."

Within two weeks my friend had bought land and started building shells. He also built a showroom with a large display of tiles, samples of wood for the floors, window frames, bathroom taps, decorative sandstone and all sorts of other goodies.

"Brilliant idea," he told me later. "I make a good profit from the shells, but the real money comes from my showroom. Effectively I've become a shopkeeper selling finishing materials."



SIMPLER, BUT SMARTER: More developers on Phuket are building shells of houses, leaving the buyers to choose the finishings.

"When the customers are choosing their own finishes, they spend a load more money at the end of the day. Way to go!" he enthused, "if you don't mind putting up with the arguments between husband and wife over the cost of the Italian tiles."

In return for my brilliant idea I got a beer.

Grant Radonich, Director of ATZ Projects, and project manager for several projects on Phuket, says, "Several developers on Phuket are starting to go in this direction. They are building a bit more than just a shell, but the same principle applies."

"They are selling a house

built to lock-up stage, with doors, windows and ceilings; air conditioning and electrical wiring without the fittings and lights; and bathrooms with plumbing but no tiles or taps. Let the customer order all this separately, and you don't get into trouble with deadlines or cost overruns.

"That way the developer stays out of trouble, and the customer can't complain about his own choices."

Next week in this column we'll have a look at how this works with some new projects on the island.

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By Graham Doven

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Different drums lift surround sound

When it comes to decorating the home, one of the last things people consider is matching the appearance of their stereo system with their overall decor theme.

Thanks to the miniaturization of audio components, it has become easy to set a complete audio system on a single shelf. This eliminates much of the problem, but not all – because most component systems come with undistinguished plastic speakers with poor sound quality.

Because reproducing sound depends on the generation and transmission of sound waves, miniaturizing speakers in the same way as fully electronic components is not possible with existing technology.

And for the best acoustics, speakers often need to be placed in highly-visible spots in the home. But no distinguished villa owner in Phuket wants speakers that looks like they came off the set of a 1960's *Ultraman* movie, marring the *feng shui* flow of their carefully chosen decor.

For audiophiles who want speakers that not only have top-quality sound but also look good, Valiant Audio in Phuket Town is the sole Phuket distributor of nOrh-brand speakers.



MUSIC TO THE EYES: nOrh combines state-of-the-art technology with traditional folk art to make attractive, hand-carved speakers from materials such as marble, ceramics and wood.

At its plant in Bangkok, nOrh combines state-of-the-art technology with traditional folk art to produce attractive, hand-carved speakers made out of materials like marble, ceramic and wood. Woofers and tweeters are from Danish company Vifa, and nOrh's high-end models come with Scanspeak Revelator drivers.

Perhaps best of all, the speakers are reasonably priced compared to fully-imported models because only sound-producing components need be imported.

The speakers are indeed unique in appearance. Intended to match the excellent acoustic properties of a drum, they are

molded into the shape of traditional Thai drums rather than the box-shape of most conventional speakers.

The drums, which sit on stainless steel pegs, pump out precision bass and crystal-clear high ends. We had never heard Brian Ferry's *Slave to Love* in such well-balanced clarity.

The wide range of materials practically ensures that at least one set of speakers will match just about any home decor theme, whether it be traditional Thai teak, art deco, or tropical contemporary.

Ceramic speakers come in a wide variety of colors. Marble speakers, hollowed out from large slabs in a laborious process using a diamond-tipped drill, are available in black or an attractive white with a pink sheen.

For homes with predominantly wood interiors, speakers hand-crafted from raintree wood have a lighter, more natural appeal. And for those who find drum-shaped speakers impractical – parents with boisterous children come to mind here – nOrh has also come out with a second line of more stable prism-shaped speakers that can sit comfortably on a bookshelf.

Valiant also designs and installs home theater systems and sells other nOrh audio components. It also carries a wide range of other state-of-the-art audio products to bring out the best in your music collection.

Valiant Audio, next to Jomthong Home Mart at 10/20 Kwang Rd, Wichit. Tel: 01-8934661. Email: valiant@loxinfo.co.th.

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Property Gazette

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European-style bungalow for sale in Kathu. Located on small private development between 2 golf courses, only 9 minutes from the sea at Patong. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, large living room, kitchen, parking area. Approx 128-sqm house area on 63 sq wah land. Price: 2.5 million baht. Tel: 076-321954, 09-4729841. Fax: 076-323421. Email: somsr@myway.com

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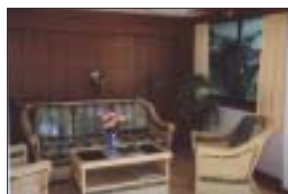
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Property Gazette

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Clean, inexpensive room wanted near Silom or Sukhumvit Rd for a couple with small child for about a month starting from March. Please send offers with details, including amenities, location and price by email. Photo appreciated. Tel: 01-8918689. Email: villathani@hotmail.com

ARE CATS WELCOME?

I will be travelling to Phuket in mid-March with my cat. Hoping to find a teaching job but have enough money to live comfortably for a while. Short or long term. Email: cooltranejazzgame@yahoo.com

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

BEACHFRONT HOME

We would like to rent a newer beachfront home in December. Prefer southern Phuket, but open to any nice homes/villa with maid service and security for weekly/monthly rental. Please email details to: s6girl02@hotmail.com

PATONG/KAMALA

Looking to rent an apartment, preferably quiet. I plan to be in Phuket for at least 2 years, so I'm hoping to find a place for 5,000-7,000 baht. Email: teflsteve@yahoo.co.uk

SMALL HOUSE

I am planning to relocate from Alaska to the Patong Beach area around October this year. I would like to rent a small house on or near Patong Beach. I am looking to pay 12,000-15,000 baht a month for a nice home. Please email details, with pictures if possible. Tel: 907-2506089. Email: john.kiser@gci.net

BUDGET ROOM

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

KAMALA/KARON/KATA

We need accommodation starting December 6 up to a maximum of three weeks. We are 4 adults and two children. We prefer accommodation near the beach. Please email us with any suitable accommodation you might have. Email: fam.karlstrom@bostream.nu

CONDO OR ROOM

I am looking for a condo or room to rent for 6 months from March 2. Should have cable TV, kitchen, aircon and furniture. Close to beach. Max rental: 6,000 baht/month and 1 month's deposit. Please contact me by email at: k.l.olsen@mail.dk

WANTED TO RENT

I wish to rent a large luxury home with swimming pool and garden in Phuket for one week in October. Preferably the house will be on the beach and have a swimming pool. Please reply by email to lynbeechem@hotmail.com or Tel: 07-2745636 detailing accommodation, the rental price expected and location. A photo would be appreciated.

LIVE/WORK SPACE

Artist seeks two-story live/work space - live on top, work below - in Phuket City, Patong or Karon. Any condition. Will rent long term. Email: eunson101@yahoo.com

RANG HILL

I'm looking for accommodation in Phuket City on a long-term basis, minimum one year starting May 1. Price: between 5,000-6,000 baht per month. Tel: 06-951-6593. Email: teflsteve@yahoo.co.uk

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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.

Find more Classified Property ads at www.phuketgazette.net/



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

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

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

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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



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Dutch entrepreneurs, in co-operation with Thai partners, with real estate plans are looking for an experienced Project Leader/Manager for 5/6 days a week, minimum 4 hours a day. We offer: a work permit with social security, rewarding to Thai standards (depending on experience), mobile telephone, free lunches. Please call, fax or email to apply. Tel: 07-893-5703, 07-8278854. Fax: 076-345099. Email: gm@clubbamboo.com

RESERVATIONS

Whitebay International, the most successful vacation ownership company in Asia, are currently recruiting new staff to fill the position of Reservations Officer. Applications from candidates with the following qualifications are being taken: male/female, age 20 years and up, fluent in spoken and written English, good computer skills, enjoys working with people, responsible, service-minded and self-motivated, has previous tourism industry and/or hotel reservations work experience. An attractive remuneration package awaits the successful candidates. Salary will be commensurate with experience. Please submit your CV by email or call to apply. Tel: 01-9700559. Email: hr@vipphuket.com

HOTEL STAFF

The following positions are available: Front Office Manager and Assistant; Reservation Manager and Assistant; Reservation Supervisor; Housekeeping Supervisor; Reception/Reservations; Restaurant staff and Cooks. Please submit your application by fax or email. Fax: 076-292531. Email: jps@loxinfo.co.th

Due to business expansion, a leading Thai public company requires instructors to teach Thai primary school teachers in Phuket how to teach English.

Thai Instructor

Requirements:

- Bachelor of Arts, Education or a related field with a major in English.
- Excellent command of written and spoken English.
- A minimum of 2 years' experience in teaching English. Experience in training teachers in English would be an advantage.
- Pleasant personality, ability to work well in a team.

Foreign Instructor

Requirements:

- Native English-speaker.
- Bachelor's degree in any field.
- TEFL/TESOL qualification.
- A minimum of 1 year's experience in teaching English. Experience in training English teachers would be an advantage.
- Pleasant personality, ability to work well in a team.

Please send your CV to Khun Suchaya by e-mail at suchaya@nationgroup.com or by fax at 0-2751-4385, 0-2317-2107.

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If interested, please send your resumé and recent photo to:
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HONDA ACCORD
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 Trailer that can be towed by a motorbike wanted. Or can you tell me where to get one. Tel: 076-333154, 09-6463657. Email: bthow@hotmail.com

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 Kawasaki ZX11 OR ZZR100 wanted by private buyer. It has to be in good condition with immaculate body and paintwork. No scratches. Email: chrispalmer33@hotmail.com

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 Late model Nissan NV or Wingroad wanted. Must be in very good condition with low mileage. Please email or call. Tel: 01-8941530. Email: andrewdb@leemarine.com

PHANTOM 200
 Phantom 4-stroke wanted, good condition. Price: 50,000-60,000 baht. Tel: 076-381683, 06-2728099. Email: spiefilme@gmx.net

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 Looking to buy a Honda Wave 125cc. I am looking for a secondhand bike, but not too old and must be accident free. Email: dutch@ehotelier.com

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