

The Phuket Gazette

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Tourism firms in plea for help

By Dhirarat Boonkongsan

KARON: "We're trying to help ourselves, but we can't do it on our own." That was the message sent out to the government by representatives of the six tsunami-hit provinces of Thailand when they met in Phuket on January 23.

Delegates from tourism associations from all six provinces told the Andaman Tourism Restoration Committee meeting at the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa how tourism in their areas had been further harmed by international media coverage of the December 26 tsunami.

Somchai Silapanont of the Phuket Tourist Association (PTA), told the conference - and Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop, "Tourism is the lifeblood of this region; if the [tourist companies] go, it will create a chain reaction of economic problems. The government should take care of this ahead of any other long-term projects."

Chidchai Sakornbadee, of the Tourism Council of Thailand and Honorary Secretary General of the Association of Thai Travel Agents, worried about jobs.

He said he had heard of employers laying off 20 to 30 staff at a time, as they struggled to keep their businesses alive.



Deputy PM Suwat Liptapanlop remains optimistic that tourism will bounce back very soon. Local business leaders are not so confident.

"The bank loan system isn't helping us," said K. Chidchai. "[It] doesn't match what we need."

Ittirit Kinglek of the Krabi Tourist Business Association also criticized Bangkok for the gap between promises and delivery. Initiatives should be implemented faster, he said.

However, DPM Suwat remained optimistic that the tourism situation would improve. "It will not be this way forever," he told the meeting. "I believe that foreigners are aware of the 'Thainess' and the generosity

shown by Thai people after the disaster, and this will help tourism in Thailand to improve sooner than expected."

Participants were echoing calls made just days before when spa owners met at the Club Andaman Beach Resort, Patong.

PTA president Pattanapong Aikwanich told that seminar, "We are about 90% ready to do business now, but occupancy is only about 10%. We're losing about 10 billion baht a month."

And he warned that spas and other businesses would soon have to start laying off staff, and this could cause a domino effect that could affect society as a whole.

"I have been asking for monetary aid from the government but there has been no sign of it so far," he said. "We will really struggle without it."

Opas Netraumpai, Vice-President of the Tourism Council of Thailand, said, "The government must help businesses more than it is now doing, for example by deferring social insurance fund payments. Also, the Revenue Department and Excise Department should give businesspeople longer to pay their taxes; if they do this, it makes it more likely that people will stay in business - and thus will be able to pay taxes in the future."

Global IT leaders set to attend Phuket conference

By Gategeo Phetsawang

KARON: About 1,000 leaders of the global information technology (IT) industry, including Microsoft Senior Vice-President Craig Mundie, are expected to attend a three-day conference in Phuket next month that will aim to restore international confidence in Phuket's IT infrastructure after the December 26 tsunami.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Minister Dr Surapong Suebwonglee was quoted on the Software Industry Promotion Agency (Sipa) website as saying that the conference, to be held at the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort & Spa on Karon Beach from February 17 to 19, would address widespread misperceptions about the extent of the damage to Phuket's infrastructure - particularly its IT infrastructure - and would aim to restore confidence among potential tourists and investors.

Dr Surapong said he expects 1,000 experts from both government and private organizations from across Asia, Europe and North America to attend.

Among the many issues to be discussed will be the use of IT in delivering warnings about impending natural disasters, such as tsunamis, as well as in helping deal with their after-effects.

The minister said this might include the development of computer graphics software to assist in forensics investigations and search-and-rescue operations after a disaster.



The Gazette Guide 2005 is now available at more than 50 vendors across the island. See www.phuketgazette.net/guide/vendors2005 for full list!



90 companies to exhibit at Home Show

PHUKET CITY: More than 90 of Thailand's top homeware, interior design and décor specialists are due to take part in the first Home Show Asia, to be held in Phuket from March 25 to 27.

The show, at the Royal Phuket City Hotel, will feature the latest in contemporary Asian living, ranging from soft furnishings to high-end furniture to state-of-the-art lighting.

The event, co-sponsored by *The Nation* and the *Phuket Gazette*, is being organized by YMSO Events, the Phuket-based events company best known for staging the Andaman Sea Rally offshore sailing race.

YMSO Events Managing Director Gareth Twist said the show has been introduced to Thailand in response to massive demand for homeware and interior and exterior design services, intensified by the continuing property boom.

"More island residents, both Thai and expatriate, than ever before want to create living spaces that enrich their lifestyles," he said. "Home Show Asia will showcase high-quality products, services and designs that are now available from within Thailand.

"No matter whether you are planning a small project, an expansive renovation, or are simply looking for great ideas, this is the event for you."

More details about the show can be seen at <http://www.theshowasia.com>.



A boy scout examines an exhibit showing the life cycle of the mosquito.

Campaign against malaria launched

THALANG: The Phuket Provincial Health Office (PPHO) on January 19 launched an anti-malaria campaign at the football field in Pa Khlok.

Officers from the PPHO, local villagers, teachers and students, as well as volunteers and members of the Pa Khlok Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*), joined forces to clear up places where standing water would allow mosquitoes to breed, and fumigated areas to kill adult mosquitoes.

As part of the campaign's aim of educating people about malaria, a quiz contest was held about the disease.

Panya Sumphaorat, Chief Administrative Officer of Pa Khlok *OrBorTor*, said, "Pa Khlok people realize the dangers that mosquitoes bring, and came up with the idea of starting this campaign."

Dr Somchai Pinyopornpanich, Deputy Director of the Bangkok-based Department of Disease Control, said, "Pa Khlok is a malaria risk area this year because of the tsunami, but I am confident that this campaign will keep local people and tourists safe from malaria."

Prison governor dies in car smash

KRABI: The man appointed Chief of Phuket Provincial Prison just two months ago has been killed in a road accident.

Saree Udom died when his car collided with a motorcycle then hit a tree, on Kho-Tor Rd in Krabi on January 22.

K. Saree was on his way from Phuket to his house in Surat Thani. It is thought he died instantly, although it took two hours to remove his body from the vehicle.

K. Saree had recently been praised for his work in the aftermath of the tsunami, when he organized prisoners to search for victims and collect the bodies of the dead.

Relief coordination group launched

By Gazette Staff

THALANG: Some 85 people attended the first meeting of the Thailand Tsunami Recovery Group (TTRG) at Blue Canyon Golf Club, and three sub-groups were set up to help coordinate various aspects of the volunteer relief operation.

Mark Weingard, who convened the meeting, explained that the TTRG would not be a charity itself, would not raise funds, and would not direct relief.

Its aim, instead, would be to act as a central point for relief groups, allowing them to share resources and information, help one another and avoid duplication.

Mr Weingard is the founder of the Annika Linden Foundation, set up following the 2002 Bali bombing, in which his fiancée died. The foundation provides long-term aid to a number of organizations in Bali and, recently, Thailand.

An indication of the scale of the task facing relief groups was given by MR Supinda Chakraband of the Child Line charity, who said that so far her group has located 9,200 adults and 3,500 children living in temporary

camps in Phuket, Phang Nga and Ranong provinces.

She added that more groups of displaced people were still being discovered.

The three groups set up were health and trauma; children, education and training; and infrastructure, which will include housing, job creation and emergency response.

These groups will hold further meetings in the coming weeks. The health and trauma group will convene on February 3 at Blue Canyon at 5 pm.

For further information contact coordinator Moo Baulch at moo@alfoundation.org or visit the group's recently-launched website at www.thaitogether.org.

FantaSea closed until February

KAMALA: Phuket FantaSea opened its doors on January 19 for a special booking, but closed again the next day and will stay closed until at least February 1.

The prominent tourist attraction closed on January 8, after the number of bookings plummeted following the tsunami.

At that time, Managing Director Pin Kewkacha said that FantaSea had sustained damage totaling 60 to 70 million baht, and that, in addition, it had lost between 150 million and 200 million baht in revenue because of

the slump in the number of visitors.

Sirikul Amaramorn, Public Relations Director of Phuket FantaSea, told the *Gazette* that the theme park's management team had decided to close the attraction until February 1.

She added, "We are not yet sure if we will reopen [next month]. That will depend on the number of tourists at that time."

In the meantime all FantaSea staff will keep their jobs, K. Sirikul said. Indeed, the park is still accepting job applications.

TAT shows Hong Kong that the coast is clear

KATA: Representatives from 50 media organizations and tour agencies in Hong Kong visited Phuket for a post-tsunami tour intended to restore faith in Phuket's tourism industry.

The visit was organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in conjunction with Katathani Phuket Beach Resort and Evergloss Tours of Hong Kong.

At a press conference, TAT Region 4 Director Suwalai Pinpradab expressed confidence that many activities scheduled for February and March would lure tourists back to the island.

Among them are the Old Phuket Festival on Thalang Road from February 8 to 11, which coincides with the Chinese New Year celebrations. Highlights include performances by a troupe of 100 acrobats.

Phuket also still intends to host its first F1 powerboat competition on March 13, K. Suwalai said, noting that this will be followed in April by a major sand sculpting contest.

Phuket Tourism Association President Pattanapong Aikwanich said that there are now some 30,000 vacant rooms in Phuket ready to take visitors.

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Austrian child 'may have been mistaken for Thai'

PHUKET: The International Victim Coordination Center (IVCC) has appealed for help in tracing a three-year-old girl from Austria who is believed to have survived the tsunami but been mistaken for a Thai child.



MR Supinda Chakraband, of the IVCC, told the Gazette, "It is thought the little girl, who calls herself 'Anita' and 'Alexandra', survived the tsunami but she is now sick and being cared for by Thai people somewhere in Phuket."

"Anita can speak no Thai, but her face looks Thai and her skin may be darker because of the sun."

Anyone with any information can contact the parents' representative, Gunter Neubert, at Tel: 01-0917223, or Child Line at Tel: 1387 (Thai language).

At the time of going to press, the child had still not been located.

'Mick the Pom' murder case adjourned to October 06

PHUKET CITY: Briton Michael John Taylor - known as "Mick the Pom" - appeared before Phuket Provincial Court on January 24 in the first hearing in his trial for the stabbing murder of his girlfriend, 28-year-old Jantra Weangta, on August 17 last year.

The judge was told that both prosecution and defense lawyers needed more time to interview witnesses in the case.

Somsak "Sam" Chattay, Taylor's lawyer, told the court, "Mr Taylor still denies the murder and he will continue to maintain his innocence in court."

The case was adjourned until October 24, 2006, the earliest date available in the court's calendar.

Patong sun lounge operators get reprieve

PATONG: In another sign that things are returning to normal, Patong Municipality is allowing sun lounge rental operators to begin limited re-colonization of the tsunami-swept sands of Phuket's most popular beach.

The move follows a request by the Municipality to the central government to allow a limited number of sun loungers, arguing that the government's plan to ban them completely fails to reflect the desires of tourists and would cause undue hardship among rental operators.

After the tsunami hit Phuket, the government announced a plan to ban sun loungers entirely, allowing only plastic mats, and to limit the number of rental umbrellas along Patong Beach to just 2,000, compared with 7,000 before the tsunami.

The beach chair operators, with the support of former Deputy Mayor Somkiat Kuru and

other beach business operators, have successfully petitioned Phuket Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and Patong Municipality, to be allowed to set up loungers on the beaches - if only on a temporary basis.

Starting January 25, they were allowed to set up a single row of plastic beach loungers with tables and umbrellas. Heavy wooden beach loungers, most of which were destroyed in the tsunami and are thought to have been responsible for many deaths, are banned.

Patong Municipality Chief Administrative Officer Poonsak Naksena said the government had eased the restriction somewhat in order to allow the lounge operators to make a living while the beach reorganization plan is being drawn up.

He said that once the plan is finalized and new rules are in



Beach chairs returned to Patong Beach on January 25. Now all that's needed is the tourists to use them.

place, the beach chair operators will be required to abide by them.

"The zoning of the beach, to be carried out by the TAT, will determine exactly where opera-

tors can set up," he said, adding that there would be sufficient gaps between rows to allow quick evacuation of the beach should it be hit by another tsunami.

Umpian Thernthim, the leader of Patong's 55-member beach lounge rental co-operative, said that on the first day the rules were relaxed, 200 lounge-and-umbrella sets had already been set up.

"The number is low because operators are still ordering replacements from Bangkok, where the cost of one set with two loungers, a parasol and drinks table is 6,300 baht. This is cheaper than in Phuket. However, this number should be adequate for now because that aren't that many tourists around," he said.

- Kamol Pirat
Letters: pages 18 and 19

THAI slashes its routes to Phuket

By Dhirarat Boonkongsan

PHUKET: Thai Airways - whose website announces "THAI's Full Support On Tsunami Aftermath" - confirmed on January 25 that it is making drastic cuts to both domestic and international routes serving Phuket, with effect from February 1.

However, the airline's District Sales Manager for Upper-Southern Thailand, Kalayapha Panich, told the Gazette that although the carrier would suspend all international flights serving the island until March 26, passengers booked on those flights would be well taken care of.

"THAI flies only a few international routes to Phuket," she said. "The two routes to Phuket from Australia will be adjusted so that they fly direct to Bangkok without stopping in Phuket," she explained.

The cuts will include the daily Sydney-Melbourne-Phuket-Bangkok route and the Perth-

Phuket-Bangkok route, which flies twice weekly on Fridays and Saturdays.

THAI's daily Taipei-Hong Kong-Phuket-Bangkok route will also give Phuket a miss, becoming a direct non-stop service between Hong Kong and Bangkok, she added.

Japanese will now also find it impossible to get direct scheduled flights to Phuket on THAI, as the Osaka-Phuket-Bangkok and Tokyo-Phuket-Bangkok routes will also drop Phuket as a stopover.

In addition, the national carrier has chopped two daily early-morning domestic flights between Bangkok and Phuket, TG201 and TG211.

Pattanapong Aikwanich, Chairman of the Phuket Tourist Association (PTA), criticized the cancellations. "They should keep at least one flight on main routes such as those from Japan, which we fought for many years to get.

"THAI is the national airline, the one everyone thinks of when they want to come to Thailand. It should consider this more carefully," he said. "I think it should only reduce the schedules, not cancel them. This may create a negative image."

Seafood and water 'are safe'

PATONG: An investigation by the Ministry of Public Health has found that food and water in Phuket - including drinking, well and sea water - is free of contamination following the tsunami.

The announcement was made by the Permanent Secretary for Public Health, Dr Wanchai Thienthaworn, during a visit to Patong Hospital.

The Director General of the Department of Medical Science (DMS), Dr Paijit Warachit, said that scientists from the DMS had conducted tests that confirmed

the waters around the island are not contaminated by nickel or other heavy metals, nor by bacteria. The salinity of the seawater was found to be normal.

DMS scientists also tested seafood caught from 10 different locations in the Andaman Sea, and found that these, too, were free of toxins.

Dr Paijit noted that rumors persisted that some sea creatures had been eating corpses. "Seafood is safe and people will not catch any diseases from eating it," he said. "The rumors should now end."

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PROMISES,

The Democrat Party candidate for Phuket District 1, which covers Phuket City and surrounding areas, is incumbent Suwit Sa-Ngiamkul. He told the *Gazette* that he and his supporters had made a tour of the damaged areas – including those in District 2 and Khao Lak – and that he was also involved in the initial effort to move survivors to aid stations at the Governor’s Office and Toh Sae Hill.

K. Suwit noted that election laws prohibited candidates from dispensing items directly to the public. Instead, he organized an effort among local community leaders to distribute food and other supplies donated to charities such as the Red Cross.

“This disaster had a severe impact on Phuket,” K. Suwit said. “Figures show that it caused over 30 billion baht in damages in the province, but [as of January 15] Phuket had received only 200 million baht in relief funding, which is too little when compared with the extent of the damage.

“The government should be doing more to help Phuket recover, especially because the province is a major source of its tax revenue. Bangkok has collected much in taxes from Phuket, so it should now be prepared to give something back. The government should give people a helping hand, lifting them up and putting them back on their feet by

providing them with the chance to resume earning a living.

“For this reason, the government should implement relief policies quickly, especially in terms of finance. The government should arrange for local business owners to have access to large, zero-interest loans. They could do this by arranging with financial institutions to provide loans, with the government paying the interest.

“The government should quickly rebuild public utility infrastructure, including roads, electrical power supply, communication networks and water distribution systems. The more rapidly they do this, the more quickly businesses can recover.

“After the tsunami, many workers found themselves jobless. The government should also help local businesses to continue to stay in operation, such as by providing tax exemptions for both individuals and businesses.”

K. Suwit added, “The government should also help provide the equipment needed by people to do their jobs, such as longtail boats for small-scale fishermen, many of whom had vessels destroyed or damaged by the tidal wave. The government must act swiftly in this regard, otherwise a bad situation could develop.

“As for the tourism industry, the government should restore confidence abroad by showing that Phuket is prepared to deal with any future tsunamis. It

With the February 6 general election just over a week away, the *Gazette* asked Phuket’s four parliamentary candidates what they would do, if elected, to help guide Phuket through the difficult period of recovery following the tsunami.

Remarkably, none of the would-

should also promote the fact that Phuket has returned to normal, and that, indeed, its beaches are more beautiful than ever.”

K Suwit’s opponent from Thai Rak Thai, Dr Sriyada Palimapan, Thai Rak Thai Party candidate for Phuket District 1, was trounced by former Democrat Party List MP Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr in her bid to win the Presidency of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) last March.

Formerly known simply as Yada, the dentist has since added the prefix Sri to her first name – for good luck. Not long after, she surprised the high-society set in Phuket by announcing her marriage to none other than Saravuth

be legislators mentioned any specific bills they planned to introduce if elected.

Instead, they all stuck firmly to their parties’ election platforms and talked about the need to acquire government funding to revive the ailing tourism economy.



Shinawatra, nephew of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Here she outlines her top three priorities if elected.

“First, I would help to promote PM Thaksin’s efforts to restore Phuket’s tourism industry as soon as possible. The first step



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PROMISES



Left: The Democrats outlined their cradle-to-grave platform with a set of eye-catching posters that read, from left: study free; graduate with work to do; get out of debt through work; free quality healthcare; retirement benefits at age 60.

Above: Thai Rak Thai's posters, in front of its Phuket offices, read "Success not through politics, but through eliminating poverty," and "Four years of fixing, four years of building."

would be to set up public hearings to find out the best strategy for luring tourists back to Phuket.

"Second, I would push to get special budgets approved for Phuket and to have our annual budget increased. I would expedite projects the government has planned for Phuket. These include establishing Phuket as an international information technology hub; building an international conference and exhibition

center; and expanding our road network.

"The problem of Phuket today is lack of funding, so I would like to help in bringing us bigger budgets.

"My third initiative would be to increase confidence abroad about Phuket as a tourist destination, letting everyone know that it is still the Pearl of the Andaman.

"People living in District 1

were not as badly affected by the tsunami as people in District 2 and I didn't get many complaints about it. However, I think they felt a great sense of loss, a loss so large it is difficult to put a number on it."

In District 2, which covers most of the island outside Phuket City, the Thai Rak Thai candidate, Wisut Santikul pointed out that his prospective constituents in Patong and Kamala were among those most badly affected by the tsunami in Phuket. K. Wisut, a former Democrat and *OrBorJor* Vice-President, sees those areas as a priority for him if he is elected.

"Most of those living in Kamala and Patong work either in agriculture or tourism, and the entire district has been affected by the current lack of tourists.

"Today, the TRT under the leadership of PM Thaksin has a very clear policy on how to restore confidence abroad and bring back tourists. It also has many methods to implement these policies, such as by getting tourism companies to come together to offer promotional rates.

"Our top priority is to restore Phuket's image among tourists, so PM Thaksin is taking steps to impose some order on vendors and other business operators along the beaches; we want to upgrade these areas and make Phuket an even better tour-

ist destination than it was [before the tsunami].

"It might take Phi Phi and Khao Lak two or three years, but Phuket is ready to welcome back tourists right now.

"The next step is getting the funding we need to improve and develop Phuket. I would like to see Phuket become a special economic zone, but we would still need [members of parliament] so that we can obtain appropriate provincial budgets - otherwise the next four years will be lost."

The Democrat Party candidate for District 2 is incumbent Chalermklak Kesub. The political heiress of a Patong-based family of wealthy landowners, she told the *Gazette* that her top priority is to adhere to the Democrat party platform, which includes social plans to improve healthcare, education and instituting a social security retirement fund.

"My top priority for Phuket is to establish the province as a special administrative zone so that we can live up to our full potential. Currently, a majority of Phuket residents favor this.

"There would be public hearings to determine what Phuket people think of this idea of making Phuket similar to Bangkok, with [an elected] governor ruling over a number of districts. Of course, in the end it would be up to the local people to decide for themselves what shape the government would take.

"The current government tries to confuse people and make them think that if there are no Thai Rak Thai Party representatives from Phuket, we won't get our fair share of the development budget pie.

"But if Phuket were to be-

come a province with special administration, we could develop using our own tax income, which currently goes to the central government.

"What Phuket gets back from the central government is only a small amount compared with the taxes generated here, and it is unfair for them not to do more to help us just because our representatives are not members of the ruling party.

"If people were allowed to govern themselves according to their own needs, the province would develop very well.

"We still see tourism as the primary development issue. The tsunami has affected everyone. As we are all connected like links in a chain, we have to help tourism recover as quickly as possible. The government will play the main public relations role in getting out the truth that only a few places in Phuket were badly affected by the tsunami.

"To make the many nice areas of the island more attractive to visitors, I agree with the [government's] plan to improve the scenery in beach areas and organize businesses in a more orderly fashion.

"However, this should be done while taking into account the need of local residents to earn a decent living. If they fail to do this, the course of development will be wrong.

"Another important issue in getting tourists to return is restoring their confidence in Phuket. This could be achieved by setting up a disaster information center and an early warning system.

"With such a system in place, the number of lives lost and assets destroyed would be minimized if there were another tsunami."



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By Anongnat Sartpisut

Furniture – apart from being comfortable and practical – should also be beautiful and bring elegance to a home.

Wood remains the most common choice of material for furniture because of its feel, warmth and availability. Its popularity has, however, come at a cost. Forests have been plundered while the common-sense concept of replanting for sustainability is a still rather a new idea.

But recycling wood, giving it a second lease of life, is an established practice. One has only to go to Tunk-Ka Hilltop Restaurant on Rang Hill in Phuket City to see old teak railway ties put to use as decking and staircases, a use common all over the world.

Saiyart Sema-ger, an artist and master carpenter from Ayudhya, has eschewed the normal preference for virgin wood for his furniture by using reclaimed wood, and has been doing so for 22 years.

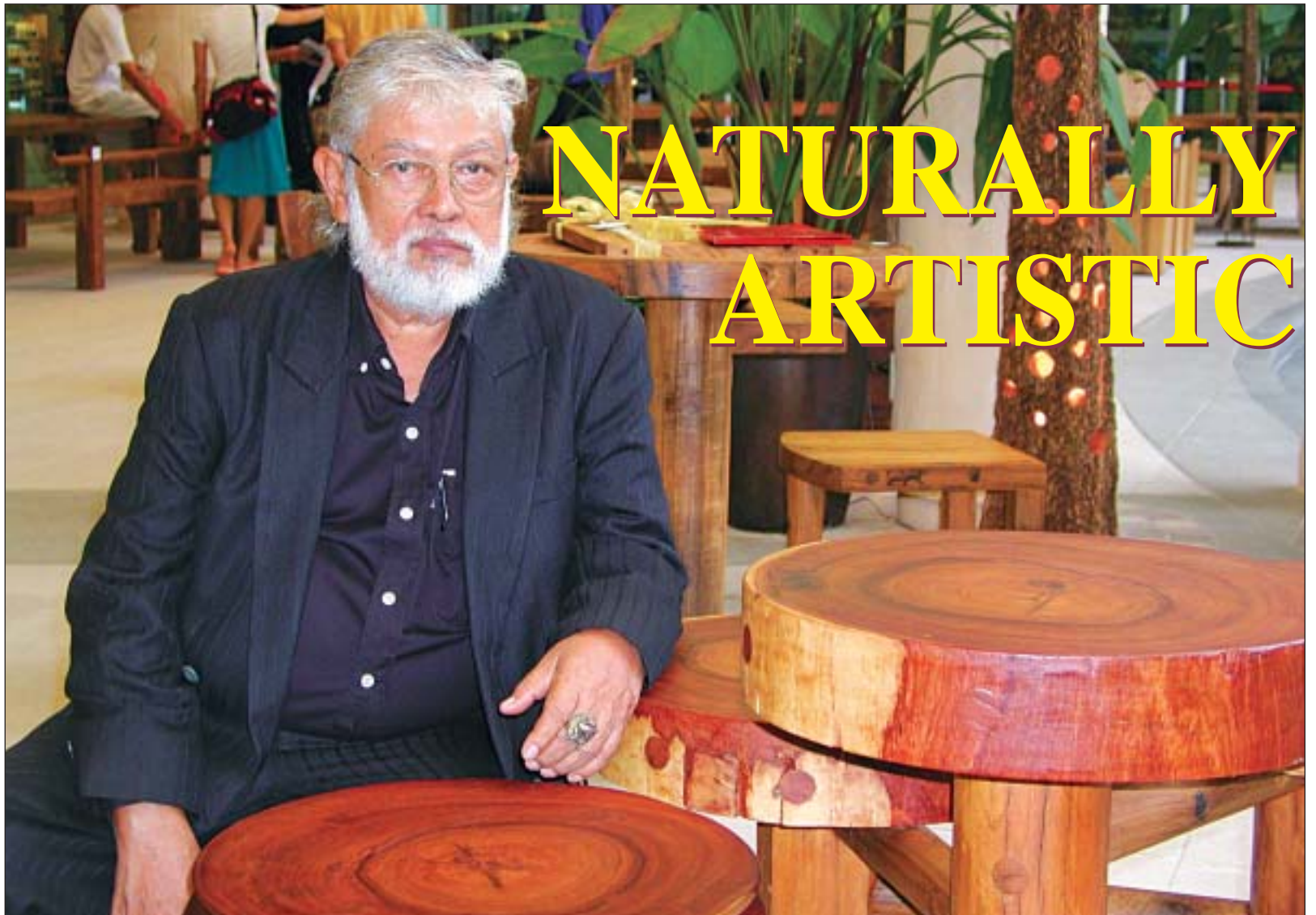
Born in 1945, he worked in a bank for 10 years after graduating but, as he says, “I saw that this was not my future. I wanted to do something for the public. I wanted to create.”

K. Saiyart uses wood reclaimed from decommissioned barges to create his pieces, many of which are currently on display at Central Festival Phuket in an exhibition titled, aptly, Reborn from Wooden Barges.

The exhibition – open until February 13 – is not K. Saiyart’s first; he also exhibited to acclaim in the Netherlands and the UAE.

His work can be separated into two distinct styles – classical Thai and contemporary – although some of the works feature a combination of the two.

K. Saiyart likes to introduce extra meaning into his work, beyond the purely functional. The Thinking Chair, with an abacus built into the back, is a prime example.



NATURALLY ARTISTIC

An almost supernormal bond between man and material: Saiyart Sema-ger with table and stools from his ‘Mushroom’ series.

The artist has spent many years learning the traditional folk art techniques of countries bordering Thailand – Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Malaysia – as well as from further afield, such as Australia.

He has also, in the process, developed his own philosophical approach to life and the origins of mankind.

“I think that Man was born from wood and soil; these materials are certainly a major part of our history,” he mused.

“Houses were always built from wood or earth,” he observed. “And although these two materials can be destroyed by the passage of time and nature, man’s

action is also capable of destroying them.

“I want to preserve and enhance the value of old wood by using it again, by bringing it to life anew,” he said.

K. Saiyart decides what to make from a piece of reclaimed wood by first studying its features. An almost supernormal bond seems to have developed between the man and his material, as if he can sense what the wood should really be.

It can take up to six months to conceive, design and produce a piece of furniture, he says, even with his team of five artisans and apprentices.

K. Saiyart says that he hap-

pily gives both his time and the benefit of his years of experience to his fellow craftsmen, and that it is a two-way process of exchanging ideas.

“I want to ensure that these skills – skills that can only really be learned from practical experience – are preserved for future generations of Thai artisans.”

Form must follow function, according to K. Saiyart. Although each piece is a work of art, bespoke items are designed around the user. “However striking or beautiful the piece is, it must still be comfortable. It all comes down to making it fit the human body, not the other way around,” he asserted.

When asked what his favorite piece of self-designed furniture is, his reply is simple: “All of them. When I see that my customer is happy with his or her order, then I am satisfied.

“Seeing that I have created something unique and made people happy gives me the impetus to do more.”

Prices range from 300 baht to 300,000 baht. For more information, contact K. Saiyart at Tel: 02-7293803 or 01-8402221. Email: info@saiyart.com or visit www.saiyart.com. Alternatively, contact Chantra Sangsriratanakul at Central Festival Phuket, at Tel: 076-258509 or 01-6931661.

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Quake may have made Ranong fault active

Geologists are conducting an undersea survey to determine if a steady stream of air bubbles surfacing in the ocean off Ranong indicates that a long-dormant fault in the area is becoming active.

Muang Ranong District Chief Chanat Kaewbamrung said he alerted the Mineral Resources Department to the phenomenon after local officials detected a crack in the ocean floor, seven centimeters wide and about one kilometer long, from which bubbles were emanating. The fault line is about seven meters underwater and 500 meters off Laem Son Bay, he said.

Lerdsin Raksasakulwong, director of the department's Geology Office, said the Ranong fault, which had been inactive for years, is located in the same area where the ocean floor appeared to have split open.

"It's possible that the December 26 earthquake has revived the dormant Ranong fault. When a fault becomes active, it releases bubbles," he said.

Meanwhile, academics at Chulalongkorn University said the December 26 quake may have moved Phuket 15 centimeters to the southwest, thereby complicating the on-going geographic survey of the country being conducted by the Army Map Department. Landforms on the surface of the planet usually move only about 1 millimeter a year, the researchers said.

Tsunami education: The Education Ministry has begun preparing material to teach students what they need to know about tsunamis, as well as what they can do to protect themselves in the event of future natural disasters.

The syllabuses are expected to be ready for the school semester starting in May 2005, said Pornipa Limpapayom, Secretary-General of the Basic Education Commission.

K. Pornipa said the lessons



ABSOLUTELY POTTY: Diew, a five-year-old bull elephant at the private elephant camp run by the Palaad Tawanrom Restaurant in Chiang Mai, demonstrates his ability to use a toilet designed especially for mammoth loads.

After positioning himself adroitly on the potty and doing his business, Diew then uses his trunk to pull a cord and flush. He is one of seven elephants being potty trained at the camp, which will soon add the spectacle to its regular show.

will cover tsunamis as well as other natural disasters and will focus on how students can protect themselves in such dangerous situations.

While existing syllabuses do mention tsunamis from a scientific perspective, they do not provide practical survival tips, such as telling people to seek higher ground in the event of one, she said.

The format of the material would differ according to grade level. At the elementary level, cartoons may be used, while at higher levels more intensive teaching may be required.

Death row cam scrapped: The Corrections Department has canceled a plan to broadcast on its website the lives of death-row inmates up until the moment be-

fore their executions, Director General Nathee Chitsawang said.

The department, which thought the broadcasts might serve as a deterrent against crime, decided to scrap the broadcasts, after objections from many quarters that they would violate inmates' rights, K. Nathee said in a press release posted on the website.

"However, the installation of closed-circuit TV cameras inside the prisons will proceed in order to establish a transparent working system," he said.

Slated to begin on February 25, the broadcasts will allow the public to view streamed images of guards and inmates at www.corrections.go.th.

The system will be installed in five of Thailand's largest jails: Bang Khen Central Women's

Prison, Klong Prem Central Prison, Bangkok Special Prison, the Central Correctional Institution and Bang Kwang Central Prison.

Museum opens doors: The first museum dedicated to the history of Thailand and its cultural heritage was officially opened in Bangkok by Deputy Prime Minister Chaturon Chaisang.

The opening of the National Discovery Museum is a sign of the government's attention to Thai cultural heritage, said K. Chaturon.

Approved by Cabinet last

year, the museum is the first stage of a complex that will eventually include another four stand-alone museums.

These will be The Museum of Natural History of Southeast Asia; The Museum of History of the People and the Land of Southeast Asia; The Museum of Thai History; and The Museum of Science and Technology.

About 80% of funding for the complex will come from the government and the rest from the private sector. It is expected that cost to the government will be 3.7 billion baht.

Going underground: The operator of the Bangkok subway is considering giving away free tickets for life to all 700 passengers who were aboard the train hit by another on January 17. The cause of the accident was determined to be "human error".

A source at Bangkok Metro Co Ltd said that the gesture might not be enough to restore confidence, but was better than doing nothing. The company wants to compensate its customers for the mistakes that led to more than 200 people being hurt.

"Like airline passengers who are entitled to lifetime free airfares in case of accidents, we are offering them that kind of compensation," said the source, who asked not to be named.

However, he added, this scheme will be officially announced only when the company can ensure that the tickets go only to the passengers who were actually on the train.

The problem will be identifying who they are, especially if they were uninjured, he said.

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

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Low season comes early to Krabi

Ao Nang Beach is back to normal and visitors comment that there is little, if any, evidence of the tsunami that hit on the morning of December 26. The long-tail boat and speedboats are back, the shops are open, and the restaurants are ready to serve a nice meal.

There is *one* big difference, however: no customers. Hotel occupancy rates have fallen to single digits, restaurant staff outnumber their customers and bars struggle to keep their doors open.

The long-tail boats, which were repaired with such energy and speed, sit empty by the shoreline. The popular island destinations of Koh Poda and Koh Gai (Chicken Island) look like a postcard of 15 years ago, with only one or two boats ashore at a time when there would normally be dozens.

The beautiful beaches at Railey and Phra Nang are deserted. It is eerily quiet, and business owners, staff and residents are experiencing a sinking feeling at the realization that the low season has arrived early.



Left: The elementary school on Phi Phi was wrecked by the tsunami but luckily was empty at the time.

Below: Streets once thronged with tourists became jammed with debris.



ACROSS THE BAY

By Gus Reynolds

There has been a lot of commentary on the misrepresentation from the mass media regarding the status of the tourist industry in southern Thailand.

As foreign governments panicked and slapped travel bans on the entire area, the international media created an image of total destruction at every tourist destination in southern Thailand.

During an interview by a New York television station I was asked, "What was the most upsetting thing you have seen?"

My answer, which clearly disappointed the interviewer, whose intent was to get a graphic description of death and destruction, was simply, "Seeing hard-working Thai people with families to support lose their jobs and livelihoods."

Many foreigners have taken



it upon themselves to contact their governments to complain about how their travel advisories were destroying the tourist industry in places that were minimally affected.

While it is true that Phi Phi Island suffered greatly, the other beach destinations in Krabi were relatively lucky. Klong Muang, Ao Nang, Railey and others are

fully operational. The tsunami was a natural disaster for many parts of this region, but the second man-made disaster will be the destruction of the healthy tourist areas because of misinformation.

Phi Phi Update: On Phi Phi, heavy equipment has been brought over, and backhoes,

plows and trucks are busy trying to clean the mind-boggling amount of debris.

Some areas of the island were hardly touched, while in others the destruction was total.

The main street of shops, cafés and banks is a jumble of broken glass, concrete, furniture and shop contents. Navigating through the debris is difficult – near-impossible at times.

We walked about 2 km to the Phi Phi Elementary School, which is about 100 meters from the beach front.

Luckily, the wave hit on a Sunday, when the school was closed, sparing the lives of many children and staff. But the parents of the children were not so lucky: of the 180 students in the school, 30 lost both parents.

The local government and central authorities in Bangkok are said to be discussing moving the school to another location, one with less exposure to the sea.

Some preliminary talk is to have one section of the island dedicated to the school, police and other government and administrative organizations. Obviously this takes time. Meanwhile the students are being placed in various schools in Krabi Province.

While the orphans are being registered for government aid, Sukdee Duaratwaree, the headmistress of the school, is coordinating with volunteer and donor groups to help these children and the other families who were severely affected.

The needs are many, but there are many helping hands too. For more information about the needs of the children and relief projects in Krabi Province, please refer to www.krabi relief.com or contact me directly at ltr@loxinfo.co.th

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This week



PRIME GUEST: Ian Taylor Woodward (right), General Manager of the Royal Phuket City Hotel, in Phuket City, welcomes Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of Norway, to the hotel on January 17.



FIN DE SIÛCLE: Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen (center) speaks to the press during his January 16 visit to Kho Lak, expressing his thanks to Thais for their outstanding contribution in caring for Finnish nationals in the aftermath of the tsunami.



MEDI-CARE: Dr Goran Wallin (right), the Swedish government representative responsible for helping coordinate medical care for tsunami victims in Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi, presents medical equipment to staff of the Wachira Phuket, Takuapa, Phang Nga, and Krabi government hospitals, at the Pearl Village Hotel, Nai Yang.



DOMICILE DONATION: Kata Group Managing Director Pamuke Archariyachai (2nd from right) hands Kata Beach Resort staffer Sutida Panraksa (2nd from left) 40,000 baht to go toward rebuilding her home, which was damaged by the tsunami. Kata Beach Resort and Karon Beach Resort General Manager Frank Dreist (left) and Kata Group Director Eam Thavornvongwongse look on.



SPA SURVIVAL: Some 100 spa owners attended a Phuket Spa Business Club (PSBC) seminar to brainstorm ideas on how to revitalize Phuket's spa industry, at the Club Andaman Beach Resort on January 19. Leading the proceedings were, from left, the resort's Managing Director, Opas Netraumpai; Ministry of Public Health Deputy Director General Dr Pennapa Subcharoen; PSBC Vice-President Wat Swangjang; and PSBC legal adviser Somboon Aiyarak.



TOUR TIME: Steve Huen (left), President of Hong Kong tour agency Evergloss Co Ltd, hands Sombat Atiset, Chief Executive Officer of the Katathani Phuket Beach Resort, a certificate of appreciation for the warm welcome given to the Hong Kong media and tour agencies during their visit to Phuket after the tsunami.

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Patong remembers

About 500 people attended an interdenominational memorial service held at Loma Park, Patong, on January 22, for the victims of the tsunami.

Clerics from the local Christian, Sikh (below), Muslim and Buddhist religious communities conducted religious rites starting at 8:30 am at Loma Park, where signs bearing the names, ages and nationalities of all known victims were placed in the beach sand nearby (above).

Participants in the ceremony laid flowers next to the signs (right).

The memorial service marked the beginning of a three-day series of evening concerts intended to cheer up tourists and residents alike.



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ON THE

UIf Palm opens the interview with the greeting, “Good to meet you,” before adding, “As good as it can be under the circumstances.”

He explains that he attended a ceremony at [Phuket International] airport the day before. “We were sending another Swedish victim home, the 14th so far. It was peaceful at the airport with the sun glinting off the sea. Very moving.”

Fourteen seems such a small figure. “Yes. Nevertheless the sorrow and the sadness is just the same,” he says.

“It’s funny – strange – that in the area where I work, just northwest of Stockholm, we have only 12 missing persons. *Only* 12, but 12 too many,”

Mr Palm arrived in Phuket on January 10, initially expecting to stay for around 10 days. “I’ll stay until the end of January, [when I’ll] be replaced by a colleague, and who knows, I may be back. I’ll miss my children’s birthdays, though – they are only four days apart,” he said.

“I called my family to let them know and my daughter said, ‘That’s OK. Just bring me back something big and expensive.’” He smiled. “But shopping ... It seems strange to go shopping at this time. I’m not even sure where the shops are.”

Mr Palm maintains links with many media organizations around the world via the Internet and commented that he first logged on to the *Phuket Gazette* website on December 27.

“It was there I saw the picture of the young boy, Hannes [Bergstrom], who was found and identified one hour after his picture was put online [by the *Gazette*] ... I have goose pimples just thinking about it,” he says.

He and his colleagues work long days, late into the night. “My main responsibility as spokesman is, obviously, to disseminate information, but part of my role is to protect the [police] investigators and DVI officers from being interrupted by ...,” he pauses.



“By people like me?”

“Yes,” he replies with another smile.

The quietly-spoken former journalist says that around 100 Swedes are based at the Pearl Village Hotel.

“Members of the Raddningsverket, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, are here along with representatives of the Swedish Church and, of course, the police.

“We know that we – if not us personally then colleagues replacing us – are going to be here for a very, very long time. We have so many victims – although the figures go up and down like

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SADDEST DUTY



Ulf Palm, 46, is the official spokesman for the Swedish Police team in Phuket. Originally a journalist by profession, he has been working with the Swedish Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) team for five years, including being involved in identifying the bodies of the 202 people who died in the 2002 Bali bombing.

Based at the Pearl Village Hotel, recently designated as the center of pan-Nordic operations, Mr Palm spoke with the *Gazette's* **Andy Johnstone**, explaining his role in the search for missing persons and identifying Nordic victims of the tsunami – probably the most severely affected group of foreigners to suffer from the disaster – and how it has affected him.

by the time this interview is published, a new morgue – built by a Norwegian firm – will be ready close to Tah Chat Chai. The working conditions will be far better there, and the traveling time will be much shorter,” he adds.

“It’s also a long journey from Sweden to Thailand. And it’s also a very long journey within ourselves.

“No one from the Swedish team – no one from any country coming here – will ever be the same when we return home.

“If this doesn’t change us, what could?”

Mr Palm explains how the Nordic DVI teams were working together. “We are coordinating with the other Nordic countries.

“So, if a search is carried out in one area on one day for a Swede, and the next day a report is received that a Finn was last

seen in the same location, we know that the area is ‘clean’, that it has been thoroughly searched. We can deploy our resources more effectively this way.”

This is his first visit to Phuket, Mr Palm says. “I have been longing to come here for years. Friends and colleagues of mine have told me, ‘It’s so lovely there. The food is so good, the people so friendly, the weather is marvelous and it is so cheap.’”

But the contrast between the beauty of Phuket and the team’s job makes the visit eerily strange. “Our hotel is good, we can see fantastic scenery, but about 30 of us are working at these morgues day after day after day...”

He breaks off to appreciate his cup of coffee; a way to draw a line under a sensitive issue.

“The Swedish team always travel to the ‘sites’ [where DVI is performed] – we call them Site 1A and Site 1B – as a group. Traveling together helps with debriefing, with dealing with it, which is very good,” said Mr Palm. “Our team also includes counselors or debriefers,” he adds.

Mr Palm has visited many disaster sites in the area, particularly in and around Khao Lak. “I had to see it for myself, to understand what had happened. It was completely different standing there on the beach, actually seeing all those markers in the sand,” he says.

“It was my first stop in Khao Lak but I also had a job to do. One of the DVI officers wanted up-to-date photos of the area so that he could re-orientate himself with the area although he had been there just a few days before. It is changing so much every day,” Mr Palm says.

Mr Palm says that returning home, to normality, is often the most difficult part of working under immense stress in a place where there has been great suffering.

He pauses for a moment before offering his conclusion: “I would very much like to come back here – on vacation.”

petrol prices – we have stopped publishing them.

“We still have families looking for their relatives, so we need to be here.”

Mr Palm explains that the Swedish DVI team, led by Stig Edqvist, was also involved in identifying the bodies of the 202 people who died in the 2002 Bali bombing. “That investigation took five months, so you can imagine

how long this one may take.

“I am struck by how vast the affected area [in Thailand] is, and how long it takes to travel from this hotel to the morgues. It takes two hours each way but,

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EAR CANDY

by Andy Johnstone

THE RHYTHM OF LIVE

A clear distinction between black and white, with no gray, is a rarity in life, but not so with live albums; they are either good or bad.

Live rock or pop albums tend to fall flat; the spontaneity of the moment is far more likely to be caught with, for example, classical or jazz.

Jazz – although a disciplined metier – is especially well suited to recording; its vitality is always palpable.

Reflections by the Ralph Reichert Quartet with Randy Sandke is a living gem.

It took 2½ years for this session to make it from performance – at the splendid Birdland Jazzclub in Hamburg in 2002 – to release; other recording and touring schedules “... just got in the way”, explained saxophonist and rising star Reichert.

The recording is crystal clear but warm, and, with a pair of decent speakers or headphones, the atmosphere, the applause, even – so it seems – the cigarette smoke comes through.

ARILD ANDERSEN SELECTED RECORDINGS ECM

:rarum

Track 3, the title track and a Thelonious Monk composition, shines, with Sandke making each note fit perfectly, matched by Reichert – a natural melody maker – and the rest of the quartet, giving the piece a relaxed edginess.

The bass solo by Andreas Henze on this track is worth repeated listenings on its own.

Reflections has that special accessible feel to it; a well-balanced set, with an impressive piano feature by Buggy Braune on the up-tempo *Nancy with the Laughing Face* and just plain fun.

This eight-track album concludes with stunning versions of two standards, *It Might As Well Be Spring* – Richard Rodgers – and *What Is That Thing Called Love?* – Cole Porter.

Both are masterclasses in how to interpret a piece of music. Stripped back and lean, the quartet-plus-one molds them into recognizable strangers. Just

when you think you know where they are taking it, it's wham! off in another direction.

Top marks all round. This is one of the best live recordings I've heard in years.

Reflections The Ralph Reichert Quartet with Randy Sandke. Playing time 77 minutes 10 seconds. Nagel Heyer Records CD 2050.

How is it that Norway produces so many top-class avant-garde jazz musicians? How can

so many be squeezed out of such a small population? Long winter nights, plenty of *akvavit* and a combination of Martin Luther and Odin, no doubt.

Arild Andersen has been acknowledged as one of Europe's most visionary bassists for almost 30 years – around half of his life. He first came to prominence in 1967 playing for

übersaxophonist and fellow Norwegian Jan Garbarek. Andersen's *Selected Recordings*, the latest release from the ECM trove, spans the years 1975 to 1999 and features pieces he wrote himself, interpretations of work by other musicians, and traditional Norwegian folk songs.

One of Andersen's best pieces – *Vanilje* (from his *Masqualero* album) is included on this collection.

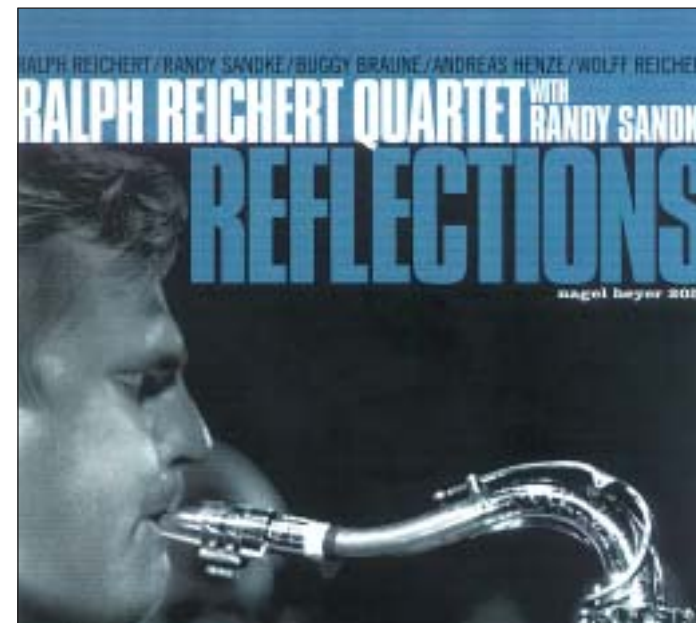
The piece centers around the rhythmic dynamism of Andersen, John Christensen (the subject of an earlier *Ear Candy* review) and Jon Balke creating melodic space and openings for trumpeter Nils Petter Molvær and saxophonist Tore Brunborg.

This approach also proves effective on *Gardsjenta*, a traditional song, and one of the standout tracks.

The beauty of the *Rarum* retrospective series is that the artists are given free reign to choose

any piece from their back catalogues, and who would deny Andersen the right to include tracks laid down with Bill Frisell or Ralph Towner?

Both of these tracks spotlight the artists' virtuosity and ability to be complementary and dynamic. Frisell's track is *Shorts*, from his 1982 recording *In Line*,



and Towner's piece, *For All We Know*, comes from Andersen's 1991 recording *If You Look Far Enough*.

Sagn, from the album of the same name, is the very acme of the works on this album, aided by silversmith-turned-folk singer Kirsten Bråten Berg's ethereal vocals.

A splendid choice for anyone pining for the fjords.

Rarum Arild Andersen. Playing time 74 minutes 54 seconds. ECM Records Rarum 8019.

For more information on the albums reviewed, or other recordings, visit <http://www.cdwarehouse-asia.com>

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Only for very special occasions: Clockwise from top left, antique Benjarong; brass soup tureen; and green jade soup bowl. All at the antiques booth opposite Texas Suki, in the Tesco-Lotus complex.

POTLUCK



Plates, cups and bowls may be primarily functional – they keep food and drink in one place – but if they are attractive as well as functional, the dining table looks far more complete.

Your choice of crockery will depend on the mood you want to set and, sometimes, the food you intend to serve.

Ceramic pottery is hardwearing and cheap, and, as such, is a popular choice for families and restaurants. Ceramics are often microwave-friendly too, which means they are practical as well. They are ideal for everyday use and for more casual entertaining.

Practical doesn't necessarily mean unattractive, though: the shops are full of nicely-shaped and patterned ceramic tableware.

Bone china or porcelain add

a touch of class to any table, but as these types of crockery are very delicate – not to mention expensive – they are perhaps best reserved for special occasions, and kept safe in a cabinet for the rest of the time.

Indeed, even when they are in a cabinet rather than on a table, they can serve a purpose – as eye-catching decorations.

There is also some crockery that is so delicate, old or rare that it should be kept exclusively for show, or for very, very special occasions

only.

Benjarong, for example, is the intricately-decorated and gilded porcelain that was originally made solely for the Thai Royal Court. While modern items are suitable for special occasion use, antique and rarer pieces should ideally be kept locked safely away in a cabinet.



There are many attractive modern crockery designs. This one is available from a shop opposite Phuket Tour on Phang Nga Rd, Phuket City.

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On the face of it, Singapore DUCKtours offers a novel way of seeing the Lion City's sights aboard an unusual mode of transport. However, a closer examination reveals a certain amount of – wait for it – quackery.

The hour-long jaunt aboard a converted 1960s US military LARC (Lighter, Amphibious Resupply, Cargo) vessel follows a figure eight around Padang and the *feng shui*-inspired Suntec City shopping mall, before daringly plunging into the water close to the Benjamin Sheares Bridge and chugging over to the eight-meter-high fishy feline, known as the Merlion, that has been co-opted as Singapore's symbol.

The 31-seater LARC was built for the Vietnam War, and has seven patched-up bullet holes to show for it. Its predecessor, the DUKW, was designed for use in World War II and also saw sterling service in the Korean War.

It's an open secret that the Singaporean economy did rather well out of these two Asian, er, difficulties, with a foot in both camps and a long tradition as an *entrepôt*; however the tour guides are noticeably reticent on the subject.

And, by the way, they are not called guides but "Ducktainers". And customers are "Duck-



Like a duck to water: the 10-ton DUCKtours LARC launches into Kallang Basin.

QUACKERS

ies". Twee appellations are the leitmotif of the entire 60 minutes aboard the red-and-yellow painted craft.

Take the following (which could very well be a health

warning) from the website, www.ducktours.com.sg: "First the captain will not waddle off until he gets what he wants. Next, the Ducktainers turn everyone into quacking Duckies.

It is hard not to roll off the seats with the wacky crew on board." Quite so.

It has to be said that the Duck Tour is very funny, though often in ways its organizers may have intended.

Riding at about the height of a double-decker bus, passengers – sorry, Duckies – get a low-flying mallard's eye view of the most striking parts of a city that has made a compulsory virtue of order, and civic-mindedness.

Duck whistles are handed

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters

out at the start of the trip so nearby drivers are given adequate warning of your approach. With a top speed of 50kmh, the Duck, powered by a modern Iveco 400 hp engine, makes its way round the catalog of Singaporean must-sees: Raffles (both the heritage hotel and the statue of colonial groundbreaker Sir Stamford), the Supreme Court building and City Hall, and both the cricket and recreation clubs.

Titter as you pass the Theatres on the Bay on The Esplanade, which are nicknamed The Durians because they resemble the fruit.

Then head into the park and down a beach to reach the climax of the journey when the 10-ton craft slides into the water like a hippo that's been crossed with a traction engine, before you head off around the Kallang Basin at five knots.

The Duck Tour could only be packaged like this in somewhere as over-regulated as Singapore, where nanny lets her children out of the playpen to go caper under benign but strict supervision.

A family of four touring aboard the Duck is going to find itself lighter by a little more than 2,000 baht for the 60-minute journey, which may strike some as a little pricey.

But then again, that's quite Singaporean too.

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KIDS THE FUN PAGE FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are the names of 25 planets and moons in the Solar System. The names 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: 10 or more, good; 15 or more, very good; 20 or more, excellent.

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

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



- Which Russian poet and playwright was killed in a duel on January 29, 1837?
- "Wrens eeriest pooh" is an anagram of which actress's name?
- Which Thackeray novel is subtitled *A Novel without a Hero*?
- By what name is the Asia Minor republic of Sakartvelo better known?
- Which body of water does it border on?
- Russians space explorers are called cosmonauts. Taikonauts are from which country?
- How many passengers can the Airbus A380 carry?
- The word catamaran is derived from which language?
- What is a luddite?
- Europa, Elan and Elise are models of which make of car?
- The abbreviation WMD stands for what?
- What are the Noble Gases?
- Which work is sometimes referred to as *The Scottish Play*?
- What was the diameter of the biggest pizza ever baked?
- Tony Hawk excels at which sport?
- Forth, Tyne, Dogger, Fisher and German Bight are what?
- Who, in 1838, coined the term "sociology"?
- Which was the world's shortest war?
- How long did it last, and who won?
- Which bird holds the record for the fastest dive? At what speed?

Answers next week

Never a Cross Word!

Across

- Land of the yodel.
- Beasts of burden.
- Beats with a better card.
- Not man-made.
- Big snake.
- Public transport.
- Popeye's pick-me-up.
- Glides across the ice.
- Was in debt.
- Not needed.

Down

- Product of 20 dn.
- Organ of taste.
- Additional.
- Musically, it's signified by "f".
- Little bite or sip.
- Original version of 13 ac.
- Hid the loot.
- Bars of metal.
- All the sheriff's men.
- Eye ailment.
- Relatives.
- It's on the side of your head.

Solution next week

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

Brain Buster!!

Jim is imprisoned in a cell with a dirt floor and stone walls. High up in the roof is a skylight. The only item in the cell is a mat to sleep on. Jim escapes through the skylight. How does he do this?

Answer: Jim digs a hole in the floor with his hands, then piles the dirt against the wall and climbs up it to the skylight.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S MONSTER QUIZ

- Croatia; 2, Leslie Phillips; 3, Gwyneth Paltrow; 4, Lord George Gordon Byron; 5, 395 tonnes; 6, A robotic dog, manufactured by Sony; 7, Siberia; 8, Madrilène; 9, A white, creamy fudge made with egg whites; 10, The Flying Tigers; 11, Madame Chiang Kai-shek; 12, Paul Nipkow; 13, The Nipkow Disk; 14, Porto Novo; 15, Dahomey; 16, A million elephants; 17, Ruth Handler; 18, The Atacama Desert, Chile; 19, 0.5mm; 20, Five. The dog was called Augie.

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In The Stars

by Isla Star

What the week holds in store

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Those Aquarians coming of age this week are most likely to enjoy a quiet dinner at home with close friends. There's no reason to throw the usual birthday bash that people have come to expect of you. Midweek, it will be impossible to pin down Virgo, no matter how much you want to. There are growing signs that this is one relationship that wasn't meant to be.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): The pace picks up for those Pisceans who are seeking a change of residence, as a vague plan has the potential to become reality in the near future. If you like what you see, there's no reason not to jump in at the deep end. Fresh scenery could bring new meaning into your life. Take care when dealing with bureaucracy early next week; misunderstandings are likely. The color terracotta encourages peace.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): You have the golden touch when it comes to business this week and auspicious conditions prevail until well into February. There is just one gray cloud on the horizon and that concerns someone who you thought could be trusted but is about to reveal the dark side of his or her character. Arians who are on the alert for snakes in the

undergrowth should spot this one coming.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Look out for a rare opportunity to prove yourself. Taureans who don't feel that their true worth has been recognized will receive appreciation from the highest level. As the month of February begins to unfold there are signs that finances will receive a welcome boost and you could soon be in a position to splash out on some new material possessions. Number 4 is lucky on Sunday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): If a job's worth doing, you must endeavor to do it well. Geminis who are inclined to cut corners are due to get a wake-up call. Monday is your best day to finalize a tricky business deal, but make sure to read all the fine print before signing on the dotted line. Where romance is concerned, someone needs to know just how much you care.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): A relationship that's as shaky as a house of cards is about to collapse. Don't waste time being upset; true love is about to surprise you. Those Cancerians who feel their image needs brightening up should wear turquoise and scarlet. Taking one step at a time is the recommended pace at work - aim for steady progress as opposed to quick gains. Number 3 brings luck on Monday.

LEO (July 24-August 22): A forgotten investment brings rewards for those born under the sign of Leo. This has nothing to do with money for the time being, but your reputation will be elevated and this bodes well for the future. Communication from a long-lost friend will arrive midweek, and the chances of an imminent get together are strong. Family matters are also strongly highlighted this weekend and you will be glad to have some peace once more by Monday.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Your dreamy frame of mind this weekend makes communication quite difficult. If someone wants to have a serious discussion and you really can't summon the concentration, make an appointment for Monday or Tuesday, when your senses will be more in tune. It's high time that Virgoans took a break from the hard work of recent months, so feel justified about chilling out. The color light amethyst will enhance meditation.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Your practicality is enhanced this week and you will have no trouble with tedious tasks that have been neglected since the beginning of the year. A neighborly dispute occupies your attention midweek; Librans should sit on the fence until tempers have cooled and the trivial matter has blown over. Stock up on refreshments this weekend as friends are likely to pay a surprise visit.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Deadlines are not going to disappear, no matter how many stars you wish upon. Scorpios must get cracking on commitments this week. Astral energy is ready to boost you until later next week, when spiritual matters will concern you more. Love is in the air regarding Taurus; this could be a match made in heaven.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): If affairs of the heart are still traveling on a rocky road, perhaps absence could make hearts grow fonder. Sagittarians who are beginning to wonder just which way to turn might want to head for the nearest travel agency. February heralds the start of a new romantic period, which means either a weak relationship will grow stronger or a new flame is about to flare.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): You will have to learn to live with a grievance for a while longer. The stars are not shining auspiciously on your work life at present, so smoothing over matters quickly won't bring any results. By the end of February you'll be in a better bargaining position and the odds are that Capricorns will then find themselves higher up the career ladder than they could ever have expected.



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Message from the Embassy of Australia, Bangkok

The Australian Embassy would like to extend its deepest sympathy to everyone who has suffered loss and injury due to the Tsunami on 26 December 2004.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the support of the Royal Thai Government, private businesses and the many thousands of volunteers who have worked tirelessly throughout the crisis. The Thai response, both official and private, has been overwhelming in its generosity and very effective.

Any Australian in Thailand who was in the country on or around 26 December who has not already done so, should contact the Bangkok Embassy or the Embassy's temporary office in Phuket as soon as possible to confirm their wellbeing. Anyone who may have information about the safety of an Australian person should also contact the Embassy.

Australian Embassy, Bangkok
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Australian Embassy, Phuket Office
Tel. 0-7633-8255

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Precious Prescience

It's strange to look back to how I ended my last article, published in the *Gazette* on December 25: "We don't know what the future has in store for us ... We should take full advantage of the time we have."

When it came to composing my article for this month, it was obvious what the topic would be, and yet I had no idea where to begin.

The early morning of December 26 was as beautiful as any other, the sun beaming down on the active beaches on a morning when most people were too full from the feasts of the previous day to leap out of bed.

It seemed like the perfect opportunity for holidaymakers and locals alike to dawdle on to the beach and lie basking in the sun while children frolicked and paddled in the sea's soft waves.

Without warning, the ocean pulled away from the shore. Everyone watched in disbelief as the first wave came. Suddenly, as if someone had finally pressed the "play" button on a VCR, everyone came to life and started to run.

To everyone involved, I'm sure the hours that followed seemed a blur. After all, an incomprehensible event had just occurred in a place that had not experienced anything like it in living memory.

Aid teams and volunteers flocked to hard-hit areas to help in any way they could, and the young people of the island were no exception. Without any direction, we organized ourselves in the hotspots where we felt help was necessary. Some traveled to Patong, despite desperate warnings from parents, while others went to the hospitals to help there.

The day after the tsunami, I went to Patong to try to find a family friend who had been staying at a beachfront hotel. When we got there, it was devastating to see a location we knew so well - a place where we'd spent many days lying on the beach, where once there had been beach chairs and umbrellas - covered in debris. Areas where we'd spent fun nights were now full of water.

Already, bulletin boards, with posters of the missing, had been set up. As I looked at the notices, mixed emotions overwhelming me. I stared in sorrow



Youth 'n ASIA
By Lauren Moorhouse

at the boards, but smiling, joyful faces looked back. Everyone seemed so happy, yet now... Such terrible contradictions.

Helicopters flew overhead and I could hear police and ambulance sirens in the streets behind me.

Residents started collections and appeals for money, and over the next few days, much time was spent helping survivors locate friends and family, supporting those who were left behind, acting as translators, and basically just being there to help in any way possible.

Dulwich International College became a tsunami aid center, opening its refectory, sports halls and boarding house and offering shelter to anyone who needed a place to stay.

From there, we were able to register the people's names and pass these on to others, so that loved ones would be able to find out they were safe and well.

At a time of crisis, everyone pulled together and it is that kind of strength that is going to get us through these troubled times.

Now that the tsunami has passed, we must move on. It was horrific, yes, and we shall never forget the damage caused or those who lost their lives that fateful morning, but we must look to the future and try to be optimistic about what has to be done.

We will start again, and rebuild and be stronger and surpass our previous achievements. Let's show the rest of the world that we can cope with anything, whether at the hands of man or Mother Nature.

Make the most of a dowry dilemma

Dear Momma Duck,

I just found out that my Thai girlfriend is pregnant. Although it is a planned pregnancy, we are not married yet. We were planning to get married in a few months' time, as soon as I could save up enough for the bride price. I have already made a considerable "down payment" on that.

I am very happy about the pregnancy, and so is my girlfriend, but she is afraid to tell her parents about it. Her parents are old fashioned. We don't know what to do. If I give them all the money for the bride price, I will have no money left to raise the baby when it comes in eight months' time.

What do you suggest? Is there such a thing as a "shotgun marriage" in Thailand?

Dazed and Confused

Dear Dazed and Confused,

This is nothing new; it has happened thousands of times. I think, even though your girlfriend's parents are old fashioned, they will be able to *tham jai* (accept what has happened and live with it), even though they might feel that they have lost some "face" with any similarly traditional family members or friends.

Her parents probably still believe in the classical morality of a woman only getting pregnant after marriage. But even though, in the past, this "tradition" was often broken, your girlfriend may find it hard to break this news to them. She is afraid her parents will be disappointed with her behavior but, given the Thai capacity to forgive and forget, I'm sure they will understand.

The best thing is to have



Momma DUCK

By Wanida Hongyok
momma@phuketgazette.net

both of you pay a visit to her parents and inform them of the urgency in getting married. Even if the parents are upset, she is their daughter so I'm sure they will see the need to be married before the birth of the baby.

Indeed, Thai film stars and supermodels have frequently found themselves in this situation, getting married five or six months before the baby arrives. When the news breaks everybody can guess what happened, but there is little moral censure of such occurrences in modern Thailand. Indeed, they are sometimes used as a source of

sly humor.

I would also suggest that you don't worry too much about the issue of a dowry, because

most things are negotiable in Thailand. For example, I know there have been many instances of post-marital dowries paid in "installments".

Also, please don't forget that there are two aspects of marriage, the cultural ceremony (no legal validity) and the technical registration of a marriage at the district office (the legal formality). The latter may be more important for the child whereas the former may be more important for the parents.

Discuss with her parents whether they want you to postpone the cultural ceremony, which is the part that costs the money and provides the "face", or to go ahead.

Foreigners often think of trying to save money with small weddings attended only by very close relatives and friends, but this doesn't usually work in Thailand.

I know many, many cases of a girl's parents making conditions for a marriage and voicing strong opinions of one sort or another, including being against the proposed marriage. However, in every case the family came to accept the marriage after the fact.

I'm also sure that, when the baby is born (under whatever marital conditions) the grandparents will be eager to pamper and hold the child.

In the meantime, since you've already made a considerable "down payment" for the dowry, I do not think the parents of your girlfriend will really worry about it.

Good luck.

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Uninspiring electoral thoughts offer little choice

If one theme runs through the comments made by the four candidates for parliamentary seats in the upcoming general election [see Inside Story, p 4-5], it's the fact that Phuket hasn't been getting its fair share of Government budgets.

All four candidates state, in rather vague terms, how they would fight to change this situation if elected. The two Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party candidates would appear more likely to be able to deliver on such promises.

It is this fact that leaves Democrat Party MP Chalermklak Kepsab's aim of having Phuket declared a "special administrative zone" stand out for its hollow lack of realism, even in the context of a political campaign.

Of course such an idea is fine in theory, but there is likely to be only one party in a position to make that dream a reality in the foreseeable future – and it isn't the Democrats.

Indeed, pushing the idea at this juncture could backfire, so dead set are the TRT against any initiatives put forward by the opposition.

In Phuket, at least, the upcoming election is more likely to be a sort of referendum on the government's handling of the tsunami disaster, weighed against the Democrat Party's considerable patronage system, which appears to be more thoroughly entrenched than ever now since they took firm hold of the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization.

Perhaps most dismaying is that, in all the comments made by the candidates, there were no specific references to any legislation any of them plans to introduce, even though this is the primary job of an MP – making laws and representing constituents in parliament.

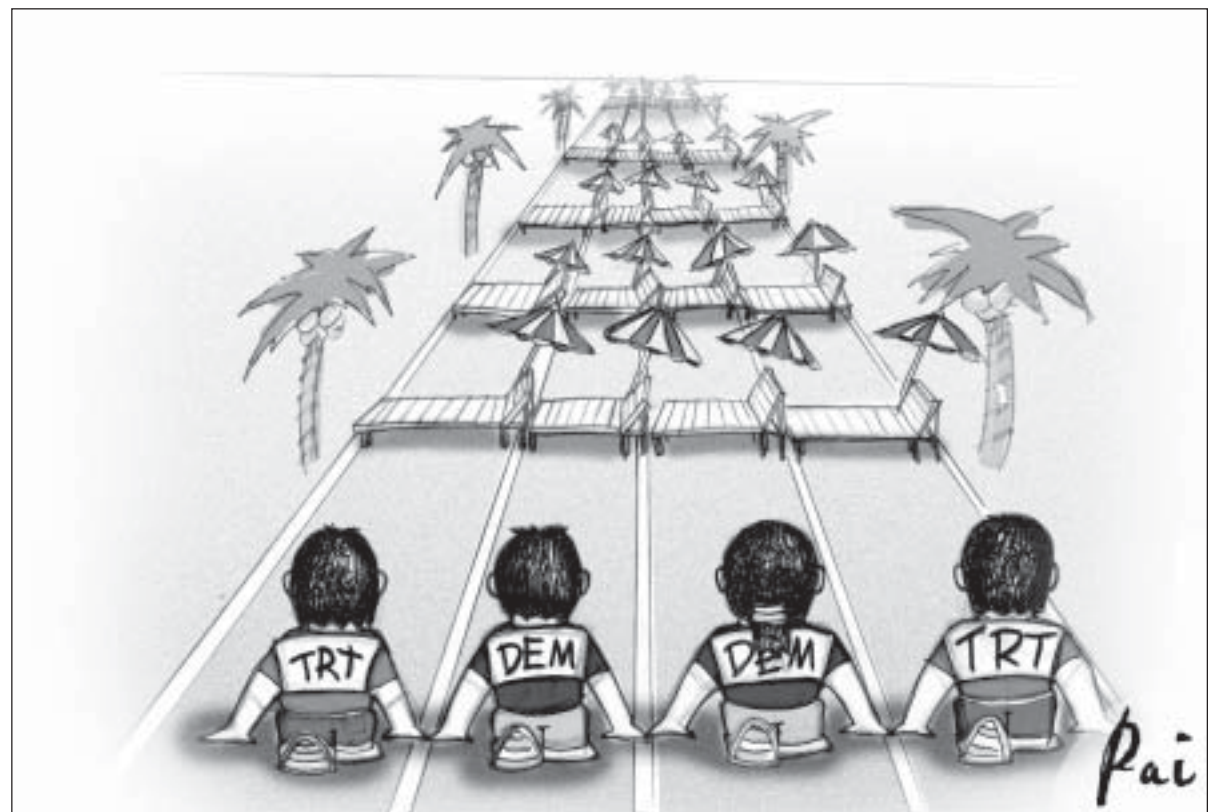
Instead, all the candidates seem to be focused on local issues, such as zoning laws for areas along the beaches, a responsibility which, in a functioning democracy, should fall squarely under the authority of local administrative bodies.

This is understandable perhaps, because the topic is fertile ground for winning votes, but it makes all the candidates come across more as lobbyists than legislators – and will make educated members of the electorate wonder if the candidates fully understand the job description of the office they are running for.

The current situation leaves voters with a difficult dilemma indeed: do we want to change to a top-down patronage system or do we want to stick with one that operates from the bottom up?

That's not much of an option.

– 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.

Please don't change Patong Beach

Regarding the proposed plan for Patong Beach, I would like to speak up on behalf of the vendors and operators who work on the beach.

I, my sister Marge and my brother-in-law Bill Jarvie have been coming to Patong Beach for many years. We spend from 8 am to 5 pm on the beach, sitting with all the lovely vendors and operators – they are our main reason for visiting Phuket because they make our holiday so special. Without these people there would no point in us coming.

We don't want Patong Beach to change. We love the beach and everything about it, so please let these lovely people get on with their lives, and try to restore Patong to the way it was.

I am sure that a great majority of people agree with me.

Mavis Castledine
England

Keep the umbrellas – or we go elsewhere

As a regular visitor to Phuket, I am both amazed and disappointed at the decision by the local government to reduce the number of beach chairs and umbrellas on Patong Beach.

My family has been to Phuket five or six times and one of the great attractions is lounging on the beach in comfort under the umbrellas – to avoid sunburn – and watching the world go by. It is a great opportunity to get to know the local people.

Why is it that the authorities did not ask the tourists what they want before making this decision?

This is the worst possible time to make these changes. My family has made a substantial donation to tsunami relief and were intending to come again to Phuket this year to spend some money as we believe this is the best way to get things back on track.

But if the beach is changed in the way suggested, we will probably look to another holiday destination instead.

This will be a great pity as we so much enjoy the company of the local people, the food and the beach.

I urge the government to reconsider and listen to the opinions of both the operators and the tourists.

Keith Sullivan
Perth, West Australia

Leave Patong Beach alone or else

My wife and I have spent the past three Christmas breaks in Patong and were there on December 26 when the tsunami struck.

To prohibit the sun loungers and reduce the number of umbrellas would be very damaging to the tourist trade in Patong.

Farang are not able to relax in the sun all day and need the shade provided by the umbrellas to be comfortable.

We come to Phuket because we love Patong Beach and the Thai people. To be able to unwind with a nice book on the beach and to be looked after so well by the sun lounger operators has given us very happy memories of our time there.

If we have to lie on "sun mats" and cannot get shade when required because there are no umbrellas, then we will not go there.

Having the local officials decide they want to "beautify" the beach and make everything "tsunami-proof" is a recipe for disaster.

The event on December 26 was terrible and sad, but it was a one-off and there is nothing to indicate it will happen again.

A warning system? Yes, by all means, but leave it at that. Patong Beach was loved as it was (other than maybe the jet-skis).

We will return to Phuket this year, but we will find a beach that has decent sun loungers and umbrellas.

We will be very disappointed if this won't be Patong.

Craig Miles
Australia

How Thailand can best be helped

We first visited Phuket seven years ago and immediately fell in love with the place and the Thai people. We have been every year since and are eagerly awaiting our next holiday in February.

We have made many friends among the local people and look forward to meeting them all again soon, both in Patong and Karon.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of the Thai people who have suffered from this terrible disaster. We hope that we can help in some small way when we arrive.

To tourists all over the world, I would like to say, "Please come back to Thailand."

The people need your support and help. You can give this simply by your presence.

Mick Gray
UK

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Editor: Rungtip Hongjakpet

Managing Editor: Alasdair Forbes

Deputy Editor: Chris Husted

Chief Reporter: Sangkhae Leelanaporn

Investigation Team: Dhirarat Boonkongsaen, Gategaeo Phetsawang,

Kamol Pirat, Anongnat Sartpisut, Siripansa Somboon

Desk Editors: Stephen Fein, Andy Johnstone, Alison Winward

Managing Director: Rungtip Hongjakpet

Marketing Manager: Oranee Pienprasertkul

Website Services Manager: Natthira Susangrat

Distribution Manager: Passara Kaewbumroong

Financial Controller: Benjawan Lukthan

Publisher: The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd

Contact us

Advertising Sales: adsales@phuketgazette.net

Classified Advertising: classads@phuketgazette.net

Website Services: anna@phuketgazette.net

Shopper Card inquiries: shopper@phuketgazette.net

Gazette Guide inquiries: guide@phuketgazette.net

Telephone: 076-236555 (10 lines) Fax: 076-213971

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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.

A multi-point plan for regeneration

I read of the new zoning and reconstruction plans for Patong (*Gazette*, January 22) with great interest. I hope that the interests of tourists are not sacrificed for those of business, which could happen.

Businesses in Phuket will not survive without tourists, yet the views of tourists are never solicited; my perception of how Patong should be rebuilt is strictly personal and is that of a tourist.

A promenade should be built along the entire length of the beach, with a sea wall similar to that found at Ao Nang. The Ao Nang sea wall was instrumental in limiting the effect of the tsunami in that area.

There should also be family-friendly facilities, such as parks and recreational areas for picnics. These areas should have even surfaces, making them suitable for buggies, pushchairs and wheelchairs.

The entire area needs to be well-lit for safe and relaxing strolling after dark. This might encourage street entertainers, as well as vendors, to maximize the potential of the promenade.

The facilities for bathers need to be improved. The sunbeds and food stalls offer excellent value although there should be plenty of restrooms – including shower facilities – along the beach.

These plans, if implemented, would bring a standard of excellence that Phuket deserves. The capital outlay would be recouped from tourists.

Many tourists initially come to Thailand for culture yet evidence of culture is difficult to find in Patong due to excessive use of concrete building blocks.

Priority should, of course, be given to improved safety standards in rebuilding the town, but why not build wooden Thai façades for the properties? People would then feel that they are on a beautiful island and not in a town center.

I hope that the rebuilding and renovation of Patong will be considered carefully, not rushed for a fast financial return.

Although it may be controversial, something must be done about the traffic in Patong.

Did anyone notice how popular Soi Bangla was when it was made a “walking street” for the November full-moon party? It was great for tourists and families because they could walk without fear of being run over.

I hope that vehicles will be banned along Soi Bangla so that Patong can have its own permanent walking street.

The really tough task – the one that no one wishes to tackle – is the tuk-tuk problem. We all know that there are too many on the streets and, before the tsunami, they caused congestion along the beach road and Soi Bangla.

The prices charged by their drivers are ridiculous, with the fare for a journey of a few hun-

ded meters beginning at 100 baht – and that’s just to turn the engine over.

Why can’t we have a baht bus service like Pattaya has, or metered taxis to prevent tourists from being ripped off?

It is little things like this that tourists often remember.

I love Phuket and the Thai people. I have great respect for the vast majority of Thais who work very hard every day just to get by. Many have exhibited great kindness while I have been here; I want them to thrive and have a better future.

I hope that the authorities find the right balance so that local businesses and tourism can survive because they are so dependent on one another.

Best wishes to all for a better 2005.

MB
Phuket

The consequences of no tourists

What does Thailand need now? The answer is tourists, brave and clever tourists, with independent minds.

You have to be brave to switch off CNN and come here to see for yourself. To see that most of the jobs being lost every day are being lost not because of destruction caused by the tsunami, but because of canceled bookings for hotels, tours and related services.

And has anyone asked themselves how girls who can no longer work as waitresses, cooks and salespeople support their families? The answer is unfortunately evident.

You have to be clever to see the beauty [of the beaches] that used to be hidden under by crowds of people, speedboats and beach chairs. The restaurants are there, willing and happy to demonstrate that distinctive Thai hospitality, and at incredibly reasonable prices, as they seek to win back lost custom.

I’m not a representative of the hotel association or any tour operator, but the project manager of a small, local NGO, living in Phuket and involved for the past five years in social development in Thailand.

This letter reflects my personal opinion, not that of the NGO I lead, Life Home Project Foundation or the board members.

I swam today in the sea, and yesterday I ate at a wonderful seafood restaurant, 10 meters from a beautiful beach, run by a local family who buy fish from local fishermen.

If you want to help, come to Thailand, not as a volunteer for one of the many NGOs here now, but as a simple tourist. Your money will go directly to those who most need it, people who only want to recover their lives with dignity, stand on their feet and support their families.

The beaches have never been cleaner, the service better or the prices lower. What are you waiting for?

Jose L Gay Cano
Phuket

Environmental issues have been ignored

As a long-term resident of Phuket, I have observed with increasing trepidation the complete disregard of beauty and environmental concerns by property developers, politicians and government officials alike in their rush to make money.

Monks, fisherfolk and Burmese immigrants suffered huge losses in the cruel waves of December’s tsunami, but the biggest preventable loss of life of both Thais and foreigners was among those involved in tourism.

We should take the destruction as an opportunity for a new beginning, where Phuket and the surrounding provinces can return to the natural beauty that brought tourists here in the first place.

At least 4,000 died in Khao Lak. It was clear three or so years ago that the tourist infrastructure there was being developed in a way that was courting disaster.

The beachfront was bulldozed, the natural forest burned, and what was once a pristine area with a few fishing hamlets was turned into a battle zone.

Resort after resort was jammed into 20-or-so kilometers of seafront. Bungalows, restaurants and other properties were built within a few feet of the beach, and shops and restaurants lined the main road on either side. Now there is hardly a resort that is standing and most roadside buildings are badly damaged.

The second greatest loss of life was on the Phi Phi islands. When we first visited those islands 30 years ago, they were some of the most beautiful places on this planet: lush vegetation, abundant fish, and the most beautiful coral I had ever seen.

More than a decade ago, this jewel in Thailand’s natural heritage had been turned into a concrete jungle, where speedboats fought with each other for mooring spaces and the garbage piled up.

Now it looks as if an atomic bomb has struck, and at least 1,000 Thais and foreigners are mourned.

The third highest loss of life was at Patong. For the first time in two decades, I can see the incredibly beautiful beach we used to know, without rows of beach chairs, vehicle rental businesses, beach bars or ugly buildings lining the beach road.

The uglification took place extremely rapidly, as land speculators and businessmen rushed to make their fortunes from the tourist business with absolutely no consideration of the environment or the fickleness of the ocean.

No one could have stopped the waves, but if no building had been allowed within 50 meters of the high-tide mark, then perhaps the loss of life would have been lower.

We should take the terrible loss of life from the tsunamis as an opportunity to correct past mistakes. We should also study some of the more successful ex-

amples of the management of mass tourism in other countries.

For example, in Spain, the number of visitors to historical monuments is restricted to a level that would not damage the monument. Tourists have to book the day and time of their visit in advance, and if there is no room when they want to go, they cannot go.

In Bhutan, tourists have to spend a minimum (quite high) amount of money a day to be allowed into the country. This ensures that relatively good quality accommodation is built, but also limits the number of tourists, without reducing revenues.

In many nations, tourist infrastructure is only allowed 50 or even 100m from the ocean, and then only for tourists on foot.

Nicholas Bennett
Phuket

Prejudice apparent in Thai press

Burmese people in Thailand – Khao Lak in particular – have recently been referred to by the *Khao Sod* newspaper as *maung* (a pejorative Thai term) and looters.

Burmese people – as well as Thai, Indonesian, Sri Lankan and many others – are all suffering because of the tsunami.

Henry Thein

Swedish PM ‘shifting criticism’

I read the article in the January 22 edition of the *Gazette* in which the Swedish Prime Minister, Goran Persson, demanded an investigation into why no tsunami warning was issued in Thailand.

In Sweden, however, criticism is aimed mainly at the Swedish government for its delay – more than two days – in responding to the crisis.

Questions have also been asked as to why the Swedish Foreign Minister, Laila Freivalds, visited the theater on the evening of December 26 instead of going to her office.

Many people in Sweden feel that PM Persson is trying to shift the focus of criticism from himself and his ministers onto the Thai authorities.

However, many Swedes feel ashamed of his speech demanding an inquiry, and the opposition parties in Sweden have attacked the PM vigorously.

Their main reason for attacking the government is that this is a time to be saying “thank you” to the Thai government, not blaming it. Everyone knows that Thailand will investigate the matter anyway.

Southern Sweden was hit by a large storm recently, resulting in a number of deaths and leaving 100,000 people without electricity.

It is winter and the temperatures are very low, and the military and police were mobilized to evacuate people from remote areas.

Our prime minister couldn’t prevent the storm but he was

aware that it is likely to happen almost every year. There is a feeling that he has done little to help these people either.

I have been to Thailand many times, generally Pattaya and areas around there.

I felt that I should try to help the affected areas at this time of crisis and offered my assistance to the Swedish government. They said, “No thanks”.

Swedish people admire the Thais for the help they gave to Swedish tourists in distress after the tsunami. Give it some time and I am sure that most of the Swedish tourists will return to Phuket.

I think the Thais are wonderful people and I look forward to moving to Thailand when I retire.

I wish you all the best at this time.

Erik
Stockholm

Forgive ‘dreaming’ Swedish PM

I would like to apologize to Thailand on behalf of the Swedish people for the pronouncements made by the Swedish Prime Minister, Goran Persson, during his recent visit to Phuket.

I was in Patong when the tsunami hit and I know what the Thai people did for all the tourists – myself included – so we are very ashamed of our prime minister.

Many people in our government and in the Swedish media are also talking about what he said.

Please forgive Prime Minister Persson; I think he will wake up soon.

Kent Sundell
Sweden

Praise for heroic jet-ski operators

I recently returned to the UK after spending a month in Phuket with my family. Our trip spanned Christmas and New Year and we stayed in Kata.

The issue of jet-skis had already been debated long and hard, but while I watched the seas swirling violently, I was struck by how bravely the jet-ski operators were acting.

They were busy helping people immediately after the second wave hit with such force. These brave men were putting their own lives at considerable risk – there was a clear chance of further, and even larger, waves arriving and there was dangerous debris everywhere – to rescue people who were in the water and to look for others.

Countless exhausted tourists caught by the tsunamis on Kata and Karon beaches probably owe their lives to the jet-ski men. Their heroism should be recognized.

For me, they encapsulate the saying *khon Thai jai dee*; Thai people really do have good hearts.

Nigel Grimshaw
Cambridge, UK

Don't get burned

Q I recently had some digital photos downloaded from my camera and burned to a CD that already had some photos on it. When I got home, I put the CD in my computer and went to view my photo collection, and although the photos I had just had burned onto the CD were all there, all the photos that were previously burned onto the CD were gone. The photos that disappeared were simply irreplaceable.

The CD is a "write-once" type, and not a rewritable type. I thought that once files were burned onto a single-write CD, they could not be saved over, or even deleted. What can I do? Are my photos gone forever?

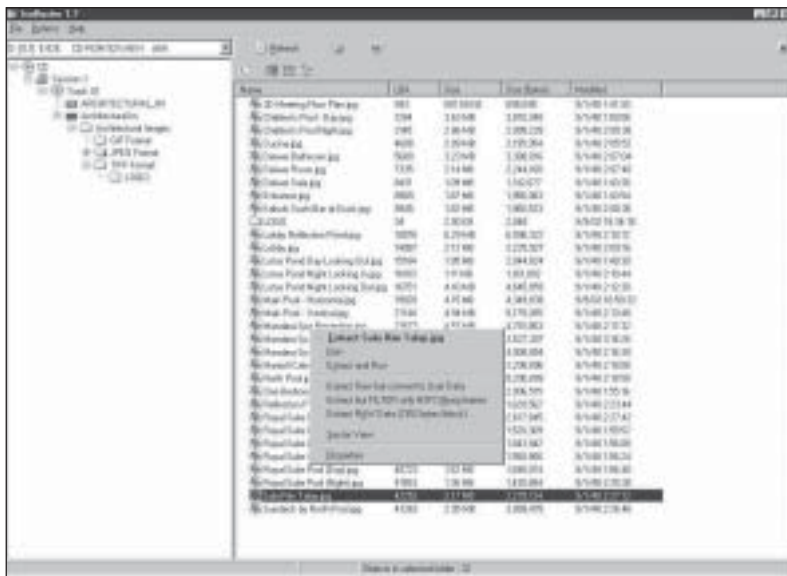
A If your CD is indeed a write-once format, then you are quite right in that once files are burned onto it, they cannot be altered or deleted, and should still be on the CD regardless of whether you can see them in Explorer or not.

When files are burned onto a CD, an index of all the files is created and also burned onto the disk. So when you put the CD into your computer to view the files, instead of searching the entire CD and compiling a list, your computer simply looks up this index file and shows you what the index file says is on the CD.

Files can be burned onto a CD in two ways: using a "single" or "multi-session" burn.

When files are burned onto a CD, the CD-burning software, usually asks whether you would like the files to be added and then for the CD to be "closed", which means that no more files may be burned onto that CD.

This is the "single session burn", and the index file showing a complete list of all the files burned will be automatically added to the CD.



ISO Buster software will tell you exactly what's on your CD.

To be able to add files to the CD sometime later, you can opt for the CD-burning software to burn the files using what is called a "multi-session burn", which seems to be what happened in your case.

Now here comes the important bit. When files are added using a multi-session burn, an index file is burned to the CD showing the files that were added during that session.

As files are added in later "sessions", the index file on the CD is not updated, as that is not possible on a write-once CD. Instead, a new index file is created showing a list of all the files.

What may have happened when you had your most recent collection of photos burned onto your CD is that they were added using a single-session burn.

In this case, the existing index file would have been replaced with a new one listing only the files added in the most recent session.

The good news is that all your old photos should still be on the CD. To find out for sure, download a copy of ISO Buster (www.smart-projects.net/

isobuster/). What this nifty program does is show a list of all files added to the CD and the index file for each session when files were burned.

ISO Buster works on nearly all CD and DVD formats, and can resurrect images burned to a CD or DVD using any of a wide range of softwares.

After downloading ISO Buster, install it and then run it by double-clicking the Batman-like logo on the desktop. Once ISO Buster is running, put your CD in your drive and ISO Buster will automatically show you a list of all the files that are on that CD.

If indeed your CD is write-once, then you should see, at the top left of ISO Buster's window, a number of "Tracks" with a plus sign beside them. Click on the plus signs, keeping an eye out for the file names of your old photos in the right-hand side of the window. If you find your old photos, simply right click on one and select "Extract", and then navigate to where you would like that file saved. That's it.

ISO Buster can resurrect many different types of files, not just images. If a CD starts acting strangely, use ISO Buster to resurrect them and save them to your hard drive. You can then burn them onto a new CD from there.

Sexual politics in art and life

British publishers are no slouches. Within a week of the announcement that Alan Hollinghurst had won the 2004 Man Booker Prize for *The Line of Beauty* (Picador, London, 2004, 501pp), a freshly-minted paperback emblazoned with the news was perched on the bestseller bookcase of Asia Books.

"Write about what you know," was Hemingway's famous advice to writers, and according to numerous articles about Mr Hollinghurst after he won the prize, the author's interests are art, antiques, Henry James, classical music and sex with black men.

His first novel, *The Swimming Pool Library*, was primarily about the homosexual lifestyle of a British aesthete, but was so beautifully written it transcended the narrow category of "gay fiction".

His fourth novel, *The Line of Beauty*, is broader in scope, a grand swipe at all the excesses of London in the 1980s, from Thatcherism to cocaine, from adultery in high places to the gay bar scene.

The novel opens in 1983. After graduating from Oxford, Nick Guest has come to occupy an attic bedroom in the plush Notting Hill home of his college friend Toby Fedden.

Toby's father is Gerald, an ambitious new Tory MP, his mother Rachel is fabulously rich and his sister Catherine quite mad, given to excessive mood swings and the occasional self-mutilation.

Small, slight, bookish, only recently out of the closet, Nick Guest winds up staying for four years, the awed observer of a great, charming, intelligent—and doomed—family.

Where Hollinghurst excels is in his meticulous attention to shades of feeling combined with a gleefully satirical touch. Here is the scene at Toby's 21st birthday party at the palatial country home of his uncle, Lord Kessler:

"The boys, most of them Nick's Oxford contemporaries, all in their black and white, glanced across at politicians and people on the telly, and caught a glimpse of themselves as high-achieving adults too—they had

that canny glint of self-discovery that comes with putting on a disguise. They didn't mingle unnecessarily with the girls. It was almost as if the High Victorian codes of the house, with its smoking room and bachelors' wing, still guided and restrained them. But the girls, in a shimmer of velvet and silk, and brilliantly made up, like smaller children who had raided their mothers'

dressings tables, had new power and authority too. As the sunlight lowered, it grew more searching and theatrical, and cast intriguing shadows."

Nick Guest discovers the first great love of his life through an ad placed by Leo, a lowly black civil service clerk. Their first meeting in a bar and subsequent sexual tryst in the private park overlooked by the Fadden manse is described in 20 pages of Proustian intensity.

His second great love is Antoine Ouradi, his former Oxford classmate and the son of a Lebanese multi-millionaire. The affair is secret and played out with multiple cocaine-fueled threesomes with casual pickups. It's an era of excess, after all, which comes crashing down with the plague of Aids.

The Fadden family comes crashing down too, in financial and sexual scandals, as the Thatcher era comes to an end. The ending is the novel's strongest suit, with human pathos taking the place of satirical sting.

The Line of Beauty is magnificent, both in scope and execution, and Hollinghurst deserves the popularity he is certain to garner after winning the Booker Prize. But did he deserve the prize itself?

Not when he was up against David Mitchell's highly-favored *Cloud Atlas*, the most exhilarating and exalting novel I've read in years.

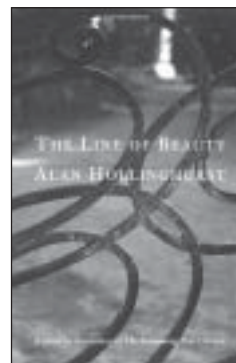
The openly gay chairman of the Booker committee stated that sexual orientation had nothing to do his selection. But you have to wonder.

The Line of Beauty is like a perfectly-constructed thatched cottage compared to the soaring stone cathedral of *Cloud Atlas*. We wuz robbed.



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt



COMPUTER Q&A

By Chris Husted

SUNNAV 20/4 Moo 2 Thepkrasatri Rd., Koh Kaew, Muang Phuket 83000
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Auto sales fall in wake of tsunami

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

PHUKET: Phuket car dealers are reporting a significant fall in sales, but say it won't be until first-quarter figures are released in March that a clear picture of the effects of the tsunami will emerge.

Watchara Kasamanont, Chief of Phuket Provincial Insurance Office, estimated the total number of cars damaged in Phuket to be close to 2,000.

Sudarat Sae-Eaw, Sales Manager of the Anuphas Vividhikarn Honda dealership, said that about 50% of the showroom's early-January sales were from customers seeking replacements for vehicles damaged or destroyed by the tsunami.

"Sales have slowed, and about 30% of customers who reserved cars in December have since canceled. Some suffered damage to their homes and businesses, and a few died in the disaster. We understood

their reasons for having to cancel, so we returned their deposits," she said.

K. Sudarat said that Anuphas Vividhikarn sells about 130 cars a month, but expects to sell about 100 units this month. She added that January was usually a slow month, and that many owners of damaged vehicles would have to wait for insurance companies to pay out on claims before they could finance new vehicle purchases.

"I think that in March we will have a clearer picture of the trend," she said.

Longer term, she said, prospects would depend on the government's efforts to help the tourism industry recover. "Most of our customers are hotel staff, work for tour companies or are otherwise involved in the tourism industry. If we don't see an improvement there, I think car sales will continue to fall," she said.

Vitton Leethanasak, Sales Manager of Toyota Pearl Co Ltd, reported similar

results. About 10% of new vehicle bookings in December were canceled, he said, but added that these losses had been partially compensated for by people seeking replacement vehicles.

There had been a strong demand for pickups by rescue teams after the tsunami, K. Vitton said, and Toyota Pearl had sold its entire inventory of five pickups.

"We sell 250-300 cars a month, including pickups. It was extremely quiet in the first week after the tsunami, but now sales are improving.

"We expected to sell about 250 vehicles this month, but I don't think we will reach that number now. We are getting back to normal, with sales being led by people who were unaffected by the tsunami and are looking for new vehicles as usual," he said.

"I don't think the car market will still be affected in the second quarter, espe-

cially after we launch the new model, the Fortuner, this month," he said, adding that about 150 customers have already placed orders for the new SUV, priced from 999,000 baht upward.

K. Vitton agreed that sales are likely to pick up after buyers are compensated for damages by their insurance companies.

"If the government moves quickly to turn around the losses in the tourism industry, I think sales will soon return to the strong levels we enjoyed in 2004, when we exceeded our sales targets," he added.

Samran Nidkijsonboon, Manager of Jor Charoenyanyon used car dealership in Phuket City, said that the number of his customers fell by about 10% in the weeks after the tsunami.

However, he said he expects everything to return to normal within four months, as people would need new vehicles to help their businesses recover.

The latest US trade figures showed an appalling deficit of US\$60.3 billion. These figures, although released in the second week of January, were for November. Even acknowledging that oil prices in November were peaking, the deficit still causes some concern. US exports were also down more than 2% for the month.

It appears to be no coincidence that the American trade representative arrived in Beijing for talks with the Chinese minister of trade on the day the deficit was announced.

A significant portion of the US trade deficit is with China. Normally, when one economic bloc has a trade imbalance with another, currency exchange rates will alter. This allows the country with the deficit to make its exports more competitive and imports more expensive, in time reducing or eliminating the trade balance. This is a simplistic explanation but it illustrates the role currencies have in balancing out trade movement.

However, the Chinese government has fixed the value of its external currency, the yuan, to the US dollar.

While the US dollar has de-

China unlikely to revalue yuan

preciated against most other major currencies, the formal linkage to the yuan is stopping any improvement in the terms of trade between China and the US.

The "Euro Zone" and other economies are also feeling the strain caused by a weakening US dollar – it has already fallen below anything resembling "fair value" – while China is playing a game that suits it, at the expense of many other countries.

If the yuan were a "free" currency, it would automatically revalue against the dollar and thereby maintain its value against other trading partners.

This is not happening because China has linked its currency to the US dollar. Most other Asian countries, except Japan, are trying to keep their currencies in line with the dollar. Not only does this keep exports to the US competitive, but it also keeps them competitive with China.

Some countries – Thailand is one – have allowed a modest appreciation of their currencies, but they are the exceptions to the general rule.



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

Malaysia and Hong Kong, have well-established fixed exchange rates with the US. India and Singapore have moved upward slightly against the dollar but with their eyes firmly on US markets.

Media reports suggest that the meeting between the Chinese and US trade officials was not easy-going. The Chinese minister reportedly felt confident enough to lecture the American visitor about his job performance, which he rated at only 70% since taking on the position.

Why is China so arrogant in its trade dealings with the US? First, intelligence reports suggest that North Korea now has missiles capable of reaching the west coast of the US, while some analysts say its missiles can reach anywhere in the US.

America needs China's help to act as a go-between and, without China's assistance, the US would have to negotiate directly with North Korea.

Second, China is recycling much of her trade surplus with the US by buying US government bonds. China feels that it is now – in its relationship with the US – the creditor. We all know that in discussions between creditors and debtors the former holds the higher ground.

It is also not simply a matter of the US imposing tariffs on Chinese exports to the US. The US has substantial amounts of private capital invested in China and, if China retaliated by selling its holdings in US bonds, US interest rates would rise.

The US Federal Reserve has also made its presence felt.

It recently announced that it may abandon the "measured pace" of raising short-term interest rates in favor of a more rapid acceleration in rate rises.

This gave some temporary support to the dollar, but actions will speak louder than words. The "Fed" must be careful not to raise interest rates too high.

It is possible that China will revalue its currency later this year – 3% to 5% is the market assessment – but a free-floating yuan still seems a long way off.

China remains a communist dictatorship, no matter how much free enterprise its authorities may espouse.

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: 01-081-4611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th.

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Goosen among top golfers to play in 'skins' fundraiser in Phuket in April

PHUKET: Retief Goosen, currently ranked as the world's No 4 golfer, and three-time major championship winner Se Ri Pak, from Korea, have confirmed they will play in the 2005 Tiger Skins tournament, which will be held at the Blue Canyon Country Club on April 16 and 17.

South African Goosen, winner of the US Open last year, will be defending his Tiger Skins championship title for the second consecutive time.

Pak, from South Korea, is a 21-time LPGA tournament champion and among the best players in the history of women's golf.

She finished 11th on the

LPGA money list in 2004, earning US\$680,000, and made golfing history by finishing 10th at the SBS Super Tournament on the men's Korean Tour, becoming the first woman to make the 36-hole cut in a men's event since 1945.

Spain's Ryder Cup star, Sergio Garcia, is also expected to join the tourney. The Spaniard is currently ranked No 6 in the world.

Chris Kidd, Director, Group Commercial, Asia Pacific Breweries Ltd (APB), said, "It has always been our intention to make the Tiger Skins a regional event in Asia. After the tsunami disaster, APB and its partners all

agreed that we should hold the event in Phuket.

The Tiger Skins has a global broadcast footprint, and we feel this is the best way we can show that Phuket is very much 'open for business'."

The total prize money of more than US\$180,000 will be donated toward the tsunami relief effort in Thailand in response to a request by Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop.

In its first two years, the Tiger Skins, which was held in Singapore in 2002 and 2003, attracted some of the world's top golfers, including Vijay Singh, Annika Sorenstam, Jesper Parnevik and Pdraig Harrington.



The Phuket 8s, including *Vino* (pictured) will be out in force for the Langkawi regatta.

Langkawi regatta pulls solid roster of entrants

LANGKAWI: Some 30 yachts have already registered to race in the BMW Royal Langkawi International Regatta 2005, which will be held from February 27 to March 5, and many more are expected to sign up as yachts set sail from Singapore, after competing in the Singapore Straits Regatta.

While Peter Ahern's *Yo!* and Stuart Harrison's *Panic*, which finished first and second, respectively, in the Premier Racing class last year, have yet to

enter, John and Fran Thornton on *Mahligai*, which came third in the class last year, have confirmed they will be back.

Amir Zohri Rahim's speedy *Malaysian Airlines Gotcha Lagi!*, winner of the Premier Cruising class last year, has also confirmed entry, as has David Lindahl's Phuket-based *La Samudra*.

The Phuket 8s of the Ao Chalong Yacht Club will be well represented in the Sports Boat class, with Scott Duncanson's *Securicor Somtam Express*, Josh Lee's *Vino by Watermark*, Mark Horwood's *Attitude 8* and Keith Moore's *Pla Loma* all registered.

Duncanson will be looking to improve on his second place overall in the class last year against Malaysian speedsters Malik Sulaiman on *KDP I* and Fauzi Mustafa on *KDP II*, both of whom have confirmed entry again this year. *KDP I* won the class last year, while *KDP II* came third.

In the Multihull class, Brent McInnes's *No Fixed Address* will be back in action after a lengthy break for repairs, with strong competition expected from Bob Mott on *Chameleon*.

Entry to the regatta costs RM450 (about 4,500 baht) per yacht, including entry for the skipper and one crew member. The fee for additional crew members will be RM200 apiece.

As a prelude to the Langkawi regatta, the Rebak Champagne Run – the traditional non-stop dash from Phuket to Langkawi – is expected to start from Chalong on February 26.

Entry to the Rebak Run costs 1,500 baht, or 150 ringgit. For more information call Scott Duncanson at Tel: 01-8924992 or by email to: sth_phkt@phuket.ksc.co.th

For more information or to enter the Royal Langkawi International Regatta, see the website at www.langkawiregatta.com.

New Patong Darts season underway

PATONG: At the well-attended champions' party at their bar in Soi Nanai 2 on January 18, the boys of OffShore Bar celebrated their first league victory after just two seasons in the league.

To keep everyone's wrists in good working order during the one-week layover before the start of the new league, a lucky draw pitting players chosen randomly from different bars was organized, with gift vouchers or sets of darts going to winners.

There was also a vote taken as to how many new venues should be allowed to join the league, if any. Three bars applied for entry, but some bar owners

were worried that too many teams could dilute the, er, talent pool.

In the end, league organizer Terry at Amigos Bar told the *Gazette*, the league will retain its current roster of 12 teams, (with one new side stepping in to replace drop-outs Fat Boy Saloon) and will also play to the same schedule as was used in the previous league, with Week 1 getting underway on January 25.

February 1 fixtures (home teams first): Two Black Sheep v Champs; Piccadilly v OffShore; Shakers v Didi's; In-Between v Valhalla; Happy Days vs Nag's Head; TBA vs Amigos.



In only their second year in the league, OffShore won the Patong Darts League by just two points over last season's champs Happy Days. The new champs, from left, are: Jimmy, Ian, Shaun, Billy, Gary, Mike and Bill.

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Golfers raise B300k for tsunami relief funds

By Dhirarat Boonkongaen

KATHU: Phuket Golf Association (PGA) President Surin Bamrungphol has announced that the Tsunami Relief Donation Golf Tournament, held at Phuket Country Club on January 22, raised some 300,000 baht for victims of the December 26 disaster.

K. Surin told the *Gazette* that he had expected the tournament, with over 200 players from countries around the world, to raise about 200,000 baht in relief aid, but that donations after play swelled the total to more than 300,000 baht.

"There were more people who wanted to donate money after the tournament, including RADI Medical Systems President and CEO Thomas Engström, who made a 100,000-baht donation. When I saw the total approaching 300,000 baht, I made my own donation to put it over the top," said K. Surin.

During the awards ceremony, Shin Tsai-Yuan, playing with a four handicap, was awarded the President's Cup for an overall low gross of 71, while the President's Cup for overall low net went to Nipon Sammakul, who shot 79 playing with a 14 handicap for a low score of 65.

Winning the team competition were homeboys Phuket Country Club (Somboon Nakchaineramit, Amnart Somrak, Rewat Korpul and Sati Hongyok), with a score of 333.5. Second place went to the Chinese Tour Club 1 team, who scored 339.5.

Following play in the tournament's four flights, which were based on handicap, trophies were awarded to the players with the low gross, along with the top two low net finishers.

In Flight A (0-9 handicap), Jong Hwan Cho (2 handicap) won the low gross with a score of 72 (36, 36). The low net winner was Ariya Sriprasom with a 68 (77 score, 9 handicap), followed by Opas Karawapong with a 69 (76 score, 7 handicap).

In Flight B (10-16 handicap), Rewat Gawpon (13 handicap) won the low gross with a score of 80.

The low gross winner was Alain Cipolat with a 68 (82 score, 14 handicap) followed by Wassana Sharp with 69 (85 score, 16 handicap).

In Flight C (17-24 handicap), Jareerat Knights (17 handicap) won with a low gross of 86. The low net winners were Somchai Sakulthap with a 70 (88 score, 18 handicap) and Kenneth Abday, also with 70 (88 score, 18 handicap).

In Flight D (25-36 handicap), Chae Eun Tae (25 handicap) won with a low gross score of 93. The low net winner was Chomsri Gate-aroon with 67 (102 score, 35 handicap), followed by Samniang Poomkliang with a 70 (97 score, 27 handicap).

Nearest-to-the-pin awards were presented to Shin Tsai-Yuan, who came within 60 centimeters on the 5th hole; Pongpan Klabkhun (94cm, 17th hole), Manot Manajira (1.25 meters, 14th hole), and Soon-eiaw Sae-heng (1.52m, 2nd hole).



RADI Medical Systems President and CEO Thomas Engström (center) was a major contributor to tsunami relief, even though he failed to make it into the winners' circle.

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A leaf from Dr Olmo's book

My old University of California faculty adviser, Dr Harold Olmo, Professor of Viticulture Emeritus at UC Davis, used to say, "Give me enough time and I'll grow great grapes on the moon!"

A renowned scientist and researcher, Dr Olmo can still occasionally be seen wandering around the university where he once taught; tall, self-effacing, and usually dressed in blue jeans and a plaid work shirt. One could be forgiven for not guessing he is a renowned plant geneticist and a Guggenheim Fellow and Fulbright scholar.

He devoted his career to plant breeding and developed numerous improved grape varieties, including most of the seedless table grape varieties found in supermarkets today.

In the 1940s, long before the advent of biotechnology and genetic engineering, he successfully used selective breed-

ing to produce grapes resistant to viruses and bacterial disease.

Dr Olmo was one of the world's foremost ampelographers, (ampelography is the obscure science of identifying grape varieties from the shape of their leaves and seeds). He correctly identified Petite Sirah in California and Merlot in Chile as other grape varieties, years before DNA testing established that he was right.

Students used to joke that he could probably identify grape varieties from the window of an airplane. In fact, he once correctly identified a newly-planted vineyard he had never seen before as containing Chardonnay ... from the window of a passing car. I know, because I later checked with the vineyard's owner.



By Steven Roberto

From Texas to Tehran, Harold Olmo has walked almost every grape-growing region of the world. He single-handedly discovered the potential of Western Australia for making wine.

While researching the effects of climate on grapes growing in South America during World War II, he was briefly kidnapped and interrogated by Nazi sympathizers after being mistaken for a spy.

His knowledge of the practical was astonishing for an academic. He experimented with and rejected machine harvesting of grapes as being deleterious to wine quality 20 years before it was first tried in Australia.

He knew what kinds of birds liked which varieties of grapes most, and fooled around with falconry as a natural means

of control. He disliked excessive use of chemicals, so developed improved species of vines naturally resistant to disease.

Now in his 70s, Dr Olmo is about to pack his bags for a new assignment. He will lead a UC Davis agricultural team to Afghanistan, where it will repatriate native grape species to that country, from vines he collected almost five decades earlier.

The privilege of having briefly studied and worked with such a great scientist is an honor I will never forget. Dr Olmo continues to be an inspiration to all who enjoy wine.

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: stevenroberto@lycos.com

Thalang Rd is like many other thoroughfares in the old part of Phuket City. Although a thriving little commercial area with many well-kept shophouses, it is a little on the tatty side.

This is a pity. Thalang Rd as it is an area ripe for restoration. Some owners have made great efforts to restore their properties to their former glory, and Noi Promchan, owner of antique dealer China House, has worked wonders with her restaurant, China Inn Café.

As one walks along Thalang Rd on a cool, breezy evening, the doorway to this fine refuge in the city simply draws one in. An elegant salon replete with opium tables – I seem to be drawn to such furniture – and near-antique photos of the Chinese quarter of Phuket entice us with the promise of something rather special.

The original tiles and stone flags still grace the floors. The woodwork, stairs and balustrade are still here. One steps back in time, so it feels, by being here.

Speaking of time, it took K. Noi almost three years to restore the building. Photo albums provide snapshots of the work in progress, and the piles of rubble and debris that littered the house.

I must admit to loving this

Chinese whispers

place and tonight's meal is perhaps the eighth time I have dined here – breakfast, lunch and dinner – in six weeks. Everyone I bring here ends up saying that they will return – soon.

The interior is unmistakably Chinese in character but, when one steps into the dining courtyard, a shift takes place.

"This is just like Singapore," ventured one of my dining companions recently. "I feel like we're Vietnam," said another. "The whitewashed walls remind me of the Mediterranean," said a third. It's all places to all people, as if subconscious happy memories are set free – without the aid of poppy products.

A shot glass of salsa and homemade bread sticks arrive with our wine and, saving the Thai dishes for another day, we plump for a salad and pasta each. However, having enjoyed a splendid *massaman gai* – prepared by K. Noi's mother – on my first visit, I know that I will indulge again.

The salads – grilled chicken for me and mozzarella for my companion – fill the huge serving plates and are a panoply of ripe



Even the entrance to China Inn Café invites refuge from the city.

cherry tomatoes, various leaves and delicate, edible indigo flowers, or *dok anchan*. My companion looks at the *anchan* askance until I pop one of the peppery little blooms into my mouth and she follows suit.

Flowers, much salad and even more olive oil later – the top fell off the bottle as I attempted to drizzle a little over mine – the main courses arrive.

A veritable mountain of pasta and a rich prawn and tomato sauce arrives for me and I begin merrily chomping away. My

companion – on my recommendation – has ordered pasta with chili, garlic and tomatoes. K. Noi has used spicy fresh *prik kee nu* (politely translated as "mouse-dropping chilies") instead of the subtler dried larger ones I have experienced before.

My companion eats one of the little devils, which is cunningly hidden within a cherry tomato. The effect is not dissimilar to someone getting a faceful of pepper spray. Tears are streaming down our faces, mine in laughter.

We recover and finish our pasta without further incident except, that is, sheer enjoyment.

History has repeated itself at China Inn. The building had once housed visiting Thai diplomats and, more recently, has been the venue for private dining parties for foreign dignitaries. K. Noi is naturally coy about allowing me to print the names, but they were some Very Important Persons indeed.

China Inn is a splendid location for a private party of up to 60 people. It's spacious, cool – in terms of temperature and ambience – and just so damn interesting a place.

The second story has two rooms, the front one of which overlooks Thalang Rd. Although kitted out as a guest room, it is currently a treasure trove of antiques from K. Noi's shop. The rear room – overlooking the courtyard – is available to rent as a pied-à-terre.

Walking into this room is like walking onto the set of Jean-Jacques Annaud's *The Lover*. Teak flooring and ceilings, wooden fans, opulent furnishings and a vast bed with a muslin mosquito net counterpointed by a TV and DVD player, it seems to whisper – delicately – one thing...

China Inn Café is perhaps all one could want for a night out – and a night in.

China Inn Café, 20 Thalang Rd, Phuket City. Open 9 am-11 pm, closed Mondays. Tel: 076-356239 or 01-9798258. Prices range from 95 baht to 190 baht for starters and 120 baht to 190 baht for main courses.

On the menu with Andy Johnstone

China Inn Café

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Room to breathe at Chalong

A spacious home on one rai in a popular area near Chalong, where large plots are a rarity, has come onto the market.

The property features three double bedrooms, including a master bedroom with an en-suite bathroom, and a second bathroom which has both a bath and a shower. Both bathrooms have hot water.

There is a large Western-style kitchen, with a gas cooker, high- and low-level timber cupboards and a stainless-steel double sink, roomy dining and living rooms and a fourth bedroom or study.

Air conditioning is installed in the main bedroom and living room. The floors feature ceramic tiles, and wood skirting boards, doors and trims, as well as timber detailing on the raked cathedral ceilings.

The building is of double-brick construction, and has an insulated tiled roof, and covered terraces front and side.

There is cable TV, telephone, well water, septic tank, three-phase electricity, a double garage and concrete road access. The garden, which can accommodate a swimming pool, is walled and the house has mosquito screens on all windows.

The property is close to Chalong and the main road to Big C, Tesco-Lotus and Phuket International Airport, but is on a quiet street.

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To get ahead, get a hat

LARGER THAN LIFE
By Graham Doven

While members of the foreign media are still running around Phuket in ever-diminishing circles looking for little piles of rubble to describe as "devastation", other organizations, such as London's Metropolitan Police, are forming what will surely be long-lasting friendships with their Thai counterparts.

One of these friendships was strengthened recently when Detective Ian Stewart of SO13 – the Metropolitan Police's Anti-Terrorist Branch – presented a genuine English "bobby's" helmet to Pol Sen Sgt Maj Wisaruth Udomjit of Cherng Talay Police Station.

The helmet, worn by the majority of male uniformed police officers in the English and Welsh police forces, is probably the most famous and recognizable police helmet in the world.



Just call us Bobby: Pol Sen Sgt Maj Wisaruth Udomjit and Detective Ian Stewart exchange headgear.

It is synonymous with the British "bobby", as they are often quaintly referred to, and instantly conjures up images of a policeman with his hands clasped behind his back coming out with "Ello, 'ello, 'ello. What's goin' on 'ere then?"

When Greater Manchester Police became the first force in England to drop the famous head-

gear, it made national, even international headlines and prompted the following story in 1996 by Karin Davies of AP, which I thought I'd share with you:

"Made for an age when the constable walked his beat and never got into a car, the British

bobby's tall, pointed helmet is being doffed for good in one major English city.

"Manchester's decision to discard a symbol of law and order dating back to Victorian times is shocking police chiefs across England.

"The helmet provides stature, height, authority and protection," said Brian Mackenzie, [the then] president of the Police Superintendents' Association, which urged police forces across England and Wales not to follow Manchester's lead.

The helmet ... instantly conjures up images of a policeman with his hands clasped behind his back coming out with "Ello, 'ello, 'ello. What's goin' on 'ere then?"

"'Impractical,'" scoffed Manchester's Chief Constable David Wilmot. 'Officers want hats that will fit inside a police car, and that won't fall off during a foot chase.'

"The switch became official yesterday [July 1, 1996], when the Greater Manchester Police became the first in England and Wales to replace the conical helmets introduced in 1870 with flat-topped, American-style police caps already worn in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

"Officers have worn just three styles of hats in the 167-year history of London's Metropolitan Police. Today's helmet was inspired by a dragoon military-style helmet. Police-women wear reinforced bowler [hats]."

The traditional helmets costs around £300 – more than 20,000 baht – each and are much-prized by helmet collectors such as Sgt Maj Wisaruth, who reciprocated by presenting Det Stewart with a Thai police hat.

I asked Det Stewart for his thoughts about Phuket and he replied, "It would be inappropriate to say that I have had a good time.

"However, one of the first things that I'll do when I get back to the UK is talk to my wife and then book a holiday here," he said.

"We'll be back as soon as possible."

Construction Update



CAPE PANWA: Expatriates living in Singapore or Hong Kong, and residents of the US or Russia looking for a second home or investment property are the main target markets for an exclusive development of just seven homes at Cape Panwa.

Work on the 100-million-baht Tamarind Phuket development, off Soi Santisuk, started at the end of 2003, and should be completed during 2006.

The Balinese-inspired sea-view villas offer living space of between 945 square meters and 2,185sqm, and have between two and four bedrooms, along with a living room, dining room, maid's room and kitchen.

Each property comes fully equipped, and each has a 12.5m by 4m pool. Prices range between 25 million baht and 45 million baht.

Some of the villas are single-story, others are on two floors, although all include a split-level ground floor. Walkways and terraces also feature in the designs, and customers can ask for special features – such as the substantial dog kennel already requested by one buyer – to be included during construction.

The development is served by deep well water, as well as a standard water supply, and the electricity cables will be run underground. Each villa will have two telephone lines.

The contractor for the project is Lee Fong Co, while the structural engineers are Warnes Associates. Waterby Developments is contracted to handle the rental management of each villa, along with maintaining the common area, which includes a pool and a garden.



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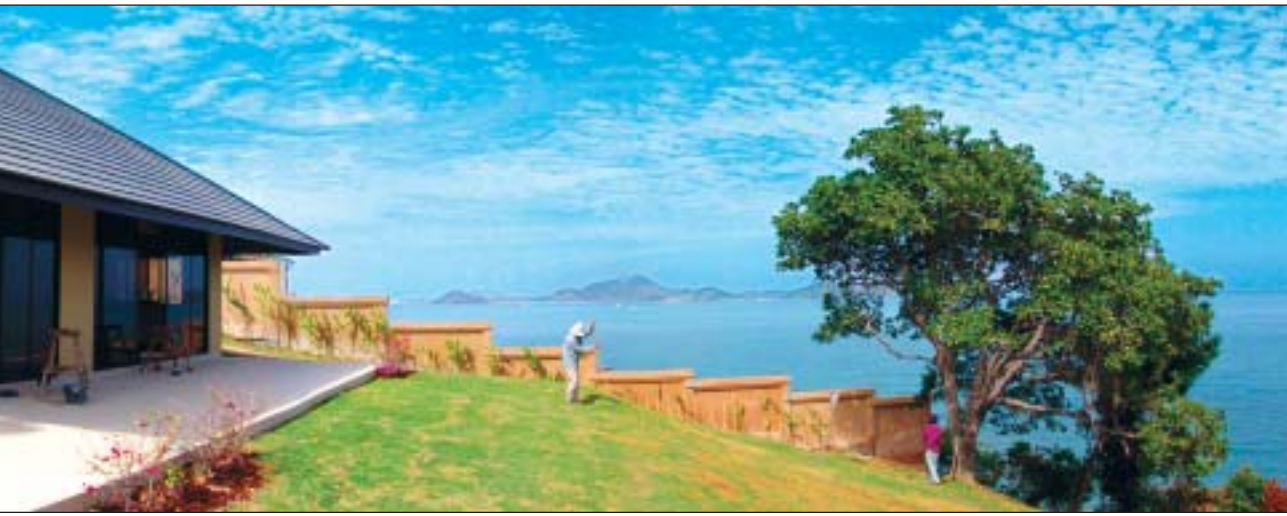


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by Anongnat Sartpisut



High above the water

Tamarind Phuket Project Manager Stefan Preese said, "The development is close to the Conrad Hotel, but it's easy to go shopping in Phuket City." "About 25% of the construction has been completed, so customers get to see more than a site – they can see what we have already built. We have had good feedback; three of the seven villas are already sold."

Above: The views from The Tamarind are spectacular. Below, Trees have been preserved, giving instant privacy.



More information is available from the developer, at 22/6 Soi Nai Ya, Rawai, Phuket, or from Stefan Preese at Tel: 09-873-4159, Website: <http://www.tamarindphuket.com>; email: info@tamarindphuket.com.

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The sheer will to survive

Enough has been written about the events in Phuket of the past few weeks to fill several volumes. Some of the "facts" reported have been more accurate than others. During this time, we've had journalists and reporters swarming all over the island offering numerous perspectives and points of view.

But I don't recall anything being written about beach plant life and how it's been affected. This week, I decided that it was time to change that. I got on my bike and, unleashing 110cc of raw power, had a scoot round the southern end of the island.

I knew what to expect, or so I thought. I imagined there would be widespread uprootings; that the plants along the beaches would simply have been washed away with the tailors' shops and the beach umbrellas.

That was my first surprise. I was amazed at how much seemed totally untouched. Sure, there were a few piles of sad-looking brush and plant detritus here and there, but generally things looked very much as they had before.

One of the main problems up and down the coast was fairly visible - saltwater damage. Some plants were never designed to come into contact with seawater. Those that did, such as

fan palms, and even humble grass, suffered as a result, and had turned brown.

I started the field trip at Kata Noi. The spider lilies in front of the hotel at the far end of the beach looked as if they were suffering a bit, as the saltwater obviously hadn't agreed with them. Nestling alongside were hundreds of mother-in-law's tongues, which, predictably, seemed totally oblivious to what had been going on. They didn't care.

The diggers had obviously been in during the previous week, as there were piles of displaced sea beans that had been dragged up along with the wreckage from the beach.

Naturally, since they'd been uprooted, most had turned the usual brown color of plants that have no food or water. But - and I have no idea how it was possible - within these tangles of displaced plants, there were signs of life.

Many of them just refused to give up, and were still a vibrant green, despite having no means of sustaining themselves. Now that's serious staying power.

Next was Kata Beach. The predominant plant on the beach, by far, is the pandanus, or screw pine, known as *toei-hom* in Thai. It's actually more a palm than a pine, with leaves that are ar-



While many plants along Phuket's coast suffered from the recent inundation of seawater, screw pines on beaches around the island weathered the wave with minimal damage.

ranged in a kind of corkscrew shape at the top. To survive the experiences it went through must rank it as one of the toughest plants around.

All along the beach, the shade of the numerous pandanus trees used to be home to drinks vendors and massage ladies. The stalls, along with everything else that was man-made on the beach, were all gone, but the plants had simply stood there and taken the beating. The stilt roots must have helped them stay put.

Even very young coconut trees survived. This is even more amazing when you consider that, initially, the coconut from which the shoot appears puts out only a single root. But those single roots

of the tiny coconut saplings at Kata certainly did their job.

Moving on to Karon, it was difficult to see any change, as there wasn't a great deal of dramatic plant life there in the first place. The sea beans that decorate the dunes had held firm and proved a point - plants are incredible engineers. Without those little sea beans, the dunes behind Karon Beach would probably be somewhere in the grounds of the Hilton Arcadia. The root system was probably solely responsible for the dunes staying put.

There were a few areas where the top layer of sand had exposed roots. For the first time, I could see how long and widely spread they were, and how essen-

tial sea beans, and plants like them, are on the shoreline.

I had always assumed that the roots grew straight down, toward a damper, richer source of nutrients, but it would appear that that's not the case. They don't look as if they bury themselves more than six inches down - they can find all the moisture they need in the apparently dry sand near the surface.

Next week I'll be going further up the coast, to Patong and Karon. I can't help feeling that I'm going to find similar "staying power" there, too. The plant life of Phuket doesn't seem to give in easily.

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Property Gazette

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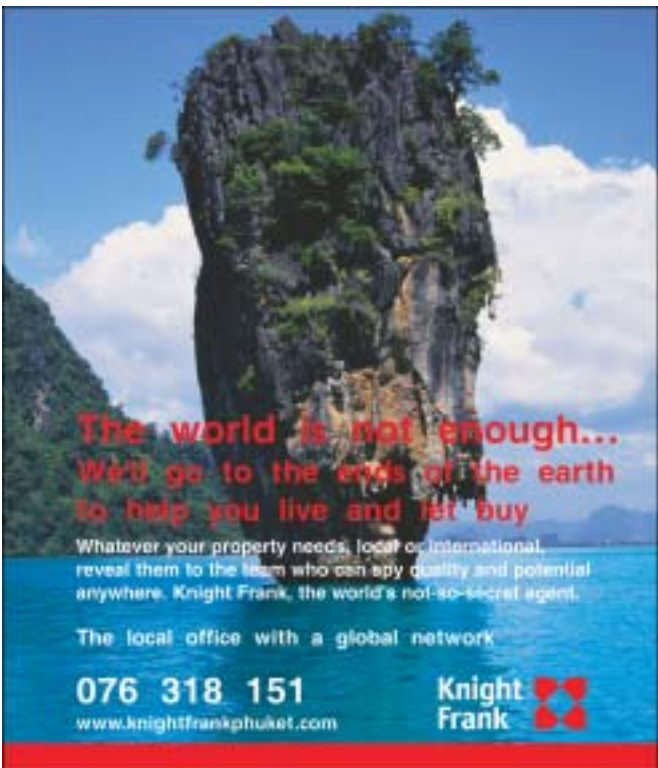
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11. Refractionist	5 Positions
12. Medical Engineering Officer	2 Positions
13. Business Development Specialist	3 Positions
14. HR Coordinator	2 Positions
15. Housekeeper	2 Positions

Qualifications:

- For positions 1-14 require Bachelor's degree or higher in related fields.
- For position 1 require at least 5-7 years' experience in direct or related fields, computer literacy, fluent written and spoken English.
- For positions 1-5 (Manager level) require at least 3-5 years' experience in direct or related fields, computer literacy, fluent written and spoken English.
- For position 6 require at least 1-2 years' work experience, computer literacy, fluent written and spoken Japanese.
- For positions 7-14 require at least 1-2 years' work experience, computer literacy, good written and spoken English.
- Experience in the hotel, hospital or service industries is an advantage.
- Possessing good human relations, enthusiasm, willingness to work hard, and strong customer service orientation and pleasant personality.
- Must not wear glasses.

We offer a long-term and challenging career to the successful candidates. Interested applicants are invited to submit your resume to: chakkapan@lasikthai.com

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Qualifications:

- Female, outgoing and pleasant personality
- Fluency in English is a must (other languages a plus)
- Bachelor degree or relevant qualifications with experience
- Excellent computer and presentation skills
- Excellent interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills, with ability to build business relationships
- Ability to work independently, self-confident, with good judgment and discretion

We offer exceptional compensation package for the right candidate, including highly competitive salary, company car and accommodation (for out-of-Phuket residents).

Interested candidates may apply by submitting full resume and recent photo by mail/fax/e-mail to:

G4 Business Development Manager
G4 Security Services Ltd.
41/5 Maeuan Road, Taladnuu, Amphur Muang, Phuket 8300
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F&B Department

- Waitresses
- Bartendy

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Tel: (076) 333 033 Fax: (076) 333 035
e-mail: HR@aspasiaphuket.com or info@aspasiaphuket.com

The Aspasia Phuket
10 Laem Sai Road, Kata Beach, Karon Sub-District, Muang, Phuket 83100

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We offer an attractive salary and high commission. Interested persons, please submit your full resume, a recent photo, transcript and expected salary to:

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2nd, Floor room no. 209A Central Festival Phuket no.74 Moo5
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SALES EXECUTIVE

Invited to apply for a challenging position in Phuket. Franke (Thailand) will soon open in Phuket and we need a colleague to handle and expand our business. Requirements include: at least 1 year of sales experience, preferably in kitchen equipment or sanitary ware, Thai nationals only, bachelor's degree, aged up to 40 years, and have a good command of written and spoken English. Please email resumethai@franke.com and cover letter to:

FTH-info@franke.com
www.franke.co.th

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Looking for attractive, sophisticated young ladies with good language skills to entertain foreign guests on week-long yacht trips. Top salaries, great tips and good contacts. Send a picture and brief description of yourself and phone number to P.O. Box 24, Koh Kaew, Phuket 83002 or by email to: thai_year@yahoo.com

CHARTER MANAGER

Fluent written and spoken English. Second language would be an advantage. Experience in yacht-charter industry is a must. Computer literate & able to handle on-line booking program. Experience in managing staff, and in running back & front office. Contact for full details. Tel: 076-273321. Fax: 076-238974. Email: marine@thaimarine.com

STAFF WANTED

Club Coconut Resort urgently needs waitresses, laundry lady, nanny. Good salary, room, food provided. Must speak English. Please contact. Tel: 076-292907. Fax: 076-344608. Email: hst123hst@hotmail.com

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4. Sales Representative
5. Receptionist
6. Restaurant Manager
7. Executive Secretary
8. Villa Manager
9. Operations System Supervisor
10. Gardener Supervisor
11. Store Officer
12. Maids

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or higher in related field (positions 1-8)
- 2-10 years' experience in related field
- Good command of English
- Computer literate (positions 1-8)

Please email or call for an interview. Contact: Dannie Piensakul. Tel: 076-271650-5, 01-8945726. Fax: 076-271657. Email: info@richmondth.com

For more information, please see our website at: www.richmondth.com

REAL JOB IN EUROPE

British manager of Black Sea Coast property & publishing company wants to employ a Thai person for many different jobs. Visa will be arranged for 3 months - if happy, extended. Pay is 200 euros plus expenses all paid. Accommodation arranged. Meeting in Thailand. Ed Vaan. Please contact by email to: champagne@worldemail.com

LIFE HOME PROJECT

A local NGO urgently requires a secretary. We require computer literacy - Office 2, Excel, Word - and Internet competence, good command of written and spoken English, and available immediately. Email: lifehome@loxinfo.co.th

MAID NEEDED

Foreign couple is looking for a live-in or full-time maid. Basic English required; location is Rawai, close to Chalong circle. Tel: 09-4744083 or 01-9872821 (in English).

WESTERN CHEFS NEEDED

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Laguna Resorts & Hotels Public Co., Ltd.
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Accountant. Our client, a boutique hotel, is looking for staff with at least 5 years' experience for the following positions:

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3. Assistant Chief Accountant: 15-25 K

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CORAL RESORT
Koh Chang urgently requires hotel & restaurant manager, receptionist, cashier, bartender, chef, cook and waiters. Experience a must. Please contact for more info. Tel: 09-9112284. Email: marc@coral-resort.com

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Tout, Trader & Trumpet

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Bulletin

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Interested latent Robin Hoods, with or without experience, should contact . . .

archery@lagunaphuket.com
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Alcoholics Anonymous

is holding meetings in English at the following places:

Phuket City Mission Hospital
on Wed and Sun at 7 pm

Bangkok Phuket Hospital
on Fri at 7 pm

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on Mon, Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun at 7 pm and on Fri at 8 pm

For more info, please call 01 895 4763 and 01 891 2895.

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your problems and be a part of your successful business. Accounting and auditing, business system design, tax planning, financial planning, professional solutions by a professional consultant. Contact Kriangsak Prateepvisut at Tel: 01-6424280 or by Email at: prateepvisut@hotmail.com

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4 x 4s

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SUZUKI VITARA

1996, 5-door wagon 4x4, rain shield, dark green. 199,000km. Excellent condition. 380,000 baht. Tel: 076-289346, 01-676-9336. Fax: 076-289348. Email: pkeowan@e-mail.in.th

2004 FORD EVEREST

7-passenger, leather, CD, aircon, diesel engine, 7 months old, 22,000km. Excellent condition. 940,000 baht. Tel: 076-383177, 06-7786338. Email: glennearnold@yahoo.com

ISUZU RODEO

3.0 turbo, 4-door 4WD, leather, private use only, 47,000km, with full Isuzu service history. Top condition, 500,000 baht – fixed. Tel: 06-0592404. Fax: 07-2725433.

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CHEVROLET 4 SALE

2 years old, one owner, used by housewife. Very good condition. Price: negotiable. Tel: 076-248502, 06-9539209. Fax: 076-248509. Email: waruana@yahoo.com

Motorbikes

SUZUKI SMASH 110cc

18 months old, tax/ins till Aug, 14,500 clicks, 15,000 baht Tel: 07-8947406.

CHOPPER

1992 Honda Steed, 600cc, in excellent condition. Bike available mid-March. Email: robhalden@hotmail.com

WAVE 125R

with electric starter and disc brakes. Brand new, 450km. 5-year or 50,000-km warranty. Moving from Khao Lak for obvious reasons. 37,000 baht. Tel: 06-2788323. Email: travisns@yahoo.com

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600cc. Good Condition, black with new chrome. 120,000 baht. Tel: 07-8946438. Email: simoncree@hotmail.com

YAMAHA MOTORBIKES

Nuovo: 6 months old, 4,800 km, 41,500 baht. Mio: 5 months old, 2,800km, 30,000 baht. Mio: 1 month old, 500km, 35,000 baht. Tel: 09-5885692.

DIRT BIKE FOR SALE

Yamaha WR200DT- Excellent condition, new tires, tubes, brake pads, piston and rings. Fully serviced, full set of spare parts imported from US plus spare engine. Green book. Private bike – never rented and well maintained. First to see will buy. 80,000 baht. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-7973924. Email: chris@aqua-vision.net

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Fat Boy. 1,550cc, twin Mikuni carbs, Branch heads, Jim's 6-speed, Nology coil, high-performance clutch, perfect brakes and mags, 150 rear. Full service record at Jammer HD. 850,000 baht ono. Tel: 01-5321297, 01-7274046. Email: ajahnlau@yahoo.com

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Suzuki Caribbean jeep, power steering, with insurance, for rent 10,900 baht a month or 3,900 baht a week. Tel: 01-5371050.

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Toyota Altis 1.8G for rent, 25,000 baht per month. Tel: 09-8314703. Email: thailarry@myway.com

A1 CAR RENTALS

Toyota cars & pickups for rent. Special prices for long-term rental. Includes first-class insurance. Prices range from 13,000 to 28,000 baht a month. Call Tel: 09-8314703.

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WANTED: HONDA STEED 600

Honda Steed 600 wanted. Must be in good condition, please. Call Tel: 09-651-0871 with details.

ISUZU D-MAX

wanted. Manual, any condition. Tel: 07-8866283. Email: ra_klaus@yahoo.com

MINI COOPER

Mini Cooper MK II motor and gearbox wanted, should be in ok condition. Offers with pictures, please. Tel: 01-879-9811. Email: marcohaajanen@hotmail.com

WANTED...

Experienced driver wants to buy a good, big bike (400cc up) with monthly payments. Small down payment is possible. Only serious offers, please. Tel: 06-2749915. Fax: 076-342237. Email: khun_erwin@hotmail.com

WANTED

Small motorbike wanted. Tel: 04-8404059, 04-8404059. Email: shaun634@hotmail.com

VOLUNTEERS WANT

pickup. A large group of Australian volunteers arriving here to help rebuilding on Phuket need a cheap but reliable pickup for the lowest price. Buy or long-term rent. Please email your lowest price. Tel: 076-294363, 01-2705374. Fax: 076-294363. Email: orcella@phuket.ksc.co.th

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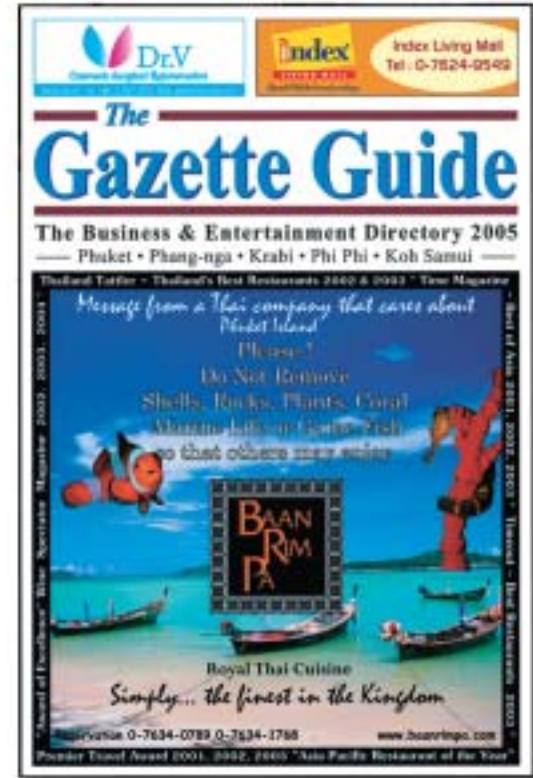
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