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IN THIS ISSUE

News: Patong tunnel idea revived; Elections afoot. **Pages 2 & 3**

INSIDE STORY: The latest on Phuket's two new dams. **Pages 4 & 5**

AROUND THE SOUTH: Gambling man gets shot; Politics gets out of hand. **Page 8**

AROUND THE ISLAND: Island art is totally out there. **Page 9**

PEOPLE: Chef Pablo's cooks his way to Phuket. **Pages 14 & 15**

LIFESTYLE: Nick Davies gets oiled up essentially. **Page 19**

PERSPECTIVES: Governor Niran talks hotel security and vegetables. **Page 29**

FEATURE: Kids go bonkers for budo. **Page 33**

SPORTS: Beneath the surface; King's Cup regatta; ACYC; Patong darts league. **Pages 38 & 39**

PROPERTY: Design: Layan Tara villas; Home of the Week: Ayara Baan Thai; Construction Update: Phu-Ke-Ta serviced apartments Gardening: Bert reveals his top five bloomers. **Pages 40-43**

PLUS

QUEER NEWS, TRASHING PHUKET 6; AROUND THE NATION 7; ACROSS THE BAY 10; LETTER FROM LANTA 13; HAPPENINGS 16; LARGER THAN LIFE 17; RARE VINTAGE 18; AMBROSIA 20; THAILAND TRAVELER 21; TAKE A BREAK 23 & 24; EDITORIAL, LETTERS 28; BOOKS, PHUKET DIARY 27; PATTAYA, HOROSCOPES 30; KHUN WOODY 34; MONEY TALKS, BUSINESS 36 & 37; CLASSIFIEDS 44-55.

Landslide leaves Patong hanging

By Stephen Fein

PATONG: After a spate of heavy rains, Patong Municipality on October 30 set up a special committee to investigate how many homes are at risk of tumbling down the escarpment left behind by a recent landslide along Soi Veerakij [Nanai Rd Soi 9].

Phuket has experienced its wettest rainy season for three years, said Wiwat Intarapanich, chief of weather forecasting at the Meteorological Department office near the airport.

Scores of residents at the Beverly Hills complex off Nanai Rd Soi 9 were evacuated to safety early October 26 morning after heavy rains caused a landslide that left part of the foundations of a hillside villa and an apartment block hanging perilously in the air.

The landslide occurred around 1 am, when exposed earth suddenly slumped down onto a construction workers camp below. An 18-month-old Burmese child trapped in the camp was rescued a few hours later.

Patong Municipality Chief Administrator (*Palad*) Poonsak Naksena October 29 told the *Gazette* that the villa and five-story apartment block left partially suspended over the precipice in Patong remain in place.

"We can see that those two structures are at risk of falling, but only for one does the risk of collapse appear imminent. We will set up a special committee to survey the area and determine how many other structures are at risk," he said.

Most of the residents in the apartment block are foreigners; some long-stay tourists plan to



The landslide left the foundations of homes and a large apartment block exposed.

stay several months, said K. Poonsak.

Most of the people in the damaged workers' camp at the base of the escarpment were Thai, not Burmese as previously reported, he said.

"They have already moved to a new site opposite the damaged camp," he added.

"Not many of them were seriously injured; most were just scratched. We are consulting with engineers about better landslide-prevention strategies in order to ensure protection for the public," he said.

"Construction work on the hotel and bungalow project below has been suspended," he said.

The general consensus among local residents is that the landslide was caused by workers at the camp who began removing trees and other vegetation from the hillside, thus destabilizing the slope.

On October 27, one local

resident, who has lived in the area for nine years and whose home is opposite the landslide area, told the *Gazette* that he thought the slide was the result of deforestation.

An investor from Bangkok who is building an almost completed five-story hotel in the area recently began removing trees and other vegetation from the hillside and set up a camp for laborers there in order to build bungalows, he explained.

The removal of the vegetation that previously stabilized the soil and the resulting erosion from the current heavy rain was the likely cause of the slide, he said.

One European tourist staying at the Beverly Hills complex, who asked not to be identified, told the *Gazette* he was woken about 1 am by a sound "resembling a thunder clap", which was followed about 30 seconds later by a loud roar as the earth beneath the apartment rushed

Continued on page 2

Vote-buying Allegations under investigation

By Pathomporn Kaenkrachang

THALANG: Accusations of vote-buying in the presidential election in the Srisoonthorn Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*) council election on October 7 are being investigated, amid calls for a vote recount, after official complaints were filed with the Phuket Election Commission (PEC) on October 5.

Kraisri Kiewwan, chief administrator (*Palad*) of Srisoonthorn *OrBorTor*, told the *Gazette* that on October 5 a group of residents filed a complaint with the PEC in Phuket City about alleged vote-buying.

"Then, on October 8, more than 100 people descended on the Srisoonthorn *OrBorTor* office to lodge two separate complaints stating that PEC officials had failed to act on voter concerns and that a recount must be carried out," he said.

A fourth complaint was lodged on October 8 by a presidential candidate, who K. Kraisri said cannot be named for his own protection. The complaint alleged that many of the people who voted in the Srisoonthorn election did so illegally, he added.

"I was in charge monitoring the election. I worked with about 100 staff at the *OrBorTor* office," said K. Kraisri.

"At about midnight, I announced the result of the election to more than 100 people. Tamrong Tantiwiratkul was the winner with 3,733 votes, beating former president Taweesak Soderaksa, who won 2,435 votes. Many people were unhappy with the result," he added.

"I met with the three leaders of the group on October 8 and they showed me files related to

Continued on page 2

From page 1

Patong landslide

downslope onto the workers camp.

"I was sound asleep at the time. I just grabbed my passport, wallet and laptop and ran up to the safety of the parking lot with all the other residents," said the European, who is now staying in a hotel on Soi Sawatdirak in central Patong.

His second-floor apartment had an impressive view overlooking Patong Bay and units in the hillside apartment block ranged in price from about 25,000 baht to 55,000 baht a month, he said.

In August last year, Patong Deputy Mayor Chairat Sukkaban appeared on the state-run Andaman News with Dr Suttisak Sorolump, a geotechnical expert from Kasetsart University in Bangkok.

Both men concluded that there was a real danger of landslides during heavy rains in two areas: along Phra Barami Rd in Kalim and along parts of Nanai Rd.

K. Chairat noted that private-sector development in hillside areas was a prime contributor to the risk of landslides.

The town's main regulatory tool in preventing landslides is through enforcement of a ban on building permanent structures above 80 meters elevation.

From page 1

PEC probes vote-buying allegations

three accusations of wrongdoing during the election," said K. Kraisi, who said he was unable to reveal further details about any of the cases.

"Later, the group met with Phuket Vice-Governor Tri Augkaradacha and PEC Director Supap Akkam," he added.

K. Supap told the *Gazette*, "We received four complaints about the election and have been investigating those claims.

"So far we have sent the results of two of those investigation to the EC in Bangkok, while the other two cases are still being looked into locally," he said.

Police arrest 'serial thieves' in Phuket City

By Sompratch Saowakhon

KATHU: Two men have been arrested for a series of robberies after they were caught on video by CCTV breaking into an apartment, Pol Lt Col Thitirat Asakit of Tung Tong Police announced October 24.

On September 29 about 11 am, Tung Tong Police Station received a call from a female student who said her laptop computer and mobile phone had been stolen from her apartment in Kathu the night before. She was not at home when her apartment was robbed.

However, the two thieves were caught by CCTV installed in the apartment block clearly showing their faces.

After nearly a month of extensive investigation, Thung Thong police on October 22 arrested Phuket native Mutthayom "Yom"

Tuntipoonvina, 21, at his house in Phuket City.

Yom confessed to the robbery, Lt Col Thitirat said, and disclosed the identity and whereabouts of his accomplice, leading police to arrest Ekkachai "Daae" Kliengsong, 22, from Nakhon Sri Thammarat, at his family home in Srisoonthorn in Thalang.

Lt Col Thitirat said that both men confessed to four other robberies.

One night in early September they stole a CD player from an apartment in Soi Samakkee 4 in Phuket City. A few days later the pair robbed an apartment in Soi Taling Chan in Phuket City, where they stole Malaysian ringitt to the value of 6,600 baht and five gold-plated amulets, which they sold for 6,000 baht. They also stole a gold bracelet, which police have confiscated as evidence.

A few days later, also during the day,



Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Col Paween Pongsirin announces the arrests.

they robbed an apartment beside the Suzuki showroom opposite Supercheap on Thepkrasatri Rd and early this month, during daylight, they robbed an apartment in Soi Panieng.

The men were charged with gang-robbery and using a vehicle to escape.

PHUKET: Elections will be held on November 17 for Wichit, Rassada and Rawai municipalities, which have now been upgraded from tambon administration organization (*OrBorTor*) to tessaan tambon status, Phuket Election Commission (PEC) director Supap Akkam told the *Gazette* October 30.

In the run-up to the elections, 105 candidates will contest the 12 councilor seats per municipality and eight candidates have signed up to contest presidential positions.

K. Supap said there are currently 55,380 eligible voters in the six voting districts that the three municipalities cover. "The number of voters eligible to vote in the elections will be confirmed on November 6," he said.

Eligible voters must have lived in the constituencies for at least 100 days before election day, he added.

The two voting districts covered by Wichit Municipality include 25,757 eligible voters and will have 35 polling stations on election day.

Although 26 candidates will contest Wichit Municipality councilor seats, the only presidential candidate is Kreetar Saetan, the former president of Wichit *OrBorTor* and leader of the local Pattana Wichit (Wichit Development) party.

However, K. Supap explained that K. Kreetar must ob-

Island prepares for local elections

By Pathomporn Kaenkrachang

tain more than 20% of the total eligible votes to be declared president.

In the Rassada municipality election, four candidates have been confirmed to run for president: Sutas Hongboot and Preecha Jai-ard as well as former *OrBorTor* councilor leader of the local Rak Rassada (Rassada Conservation) party Suratin Lianudom and well-known local businessman Somchai Duangkae.

Kosom Apichattrakoon was denied candidacy by the PEC because of "incomplete qualifications". However, K. Supap said that K. Kosom has three days to appeal to the Election Commission in Bangkok.

Fifty candidates will contest councilor seats. There are currently 22,080 eligible voters in the two voting districts, in which there will be 26 polling stations on the day.

Former Rawai *OrBorTor* president and leader of Pattana Rawai (Rawai Development) party Aroon Solos will run against



Phuket Election Commission director Supap Akkam.

Kraiwoot Koombaan, leader of Rawai Kao Mai (Rawai's Next Step) party, for the position of Rawai Municipality president.

Twenty-nine candidates will run for the 12 councilor seats.

The two Rawai voting districts include only 7,543 eligible voters and will have 14 polling stations on the day.

Speaking about the December 23 general election, K. Supap

said that Phuket currently has 300,737 eligible voters who can cast ballots directly for Phuket's two members of parliament and vote their preference for a third MP to represent the national election "Zone 8", which includes Phuket, in parliament.

"The Election Commission expects candidates will be able to register from November 12 to 16. Phuket candidates will be able to register at Phuket Community Hall," K. Supap said.

Eligible voters living in Phuket but who will not be in their registered constituencies at the time of the election will be able to register to lodge postal votes from October 22 to November 22.

"They will need to bring only their identity cards. Although the period for accepting postal votes has yet to be set, we think it will be on December 15 and 16," K. Supap added.

K. Supap reminded local businesses that it will be illegal to serve alcohol in the three constituencies from 6 pm November 16 to midnight November 17.

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Patong tunnel idea given fresh impetus

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

PATONG: The concept of building a tunnel between Kathu and Patong has been refloated and is being researched with an 80-million-baht feasibility study. Building the tunnel alone is already being estimated to cost as much as up to a billion baht.

Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit told the *Gazette* that the Phuket Provincial Office held a meeting with the Highways Department on October 11 to discuss how to improve traffic flow between Kathu and Patong.

Gov Niran said that a provincial committee has already been set up to look into traffic problems on the island.

"The committee has been told to maintain special focus on Patong with the aim of providing the resort town with some form of "short cut" connecting it with Phuket City.

"We plan to do something that is actually possible, will not take too long to implement and will not affect the environment negatively," said Gov Niran.

"It will cost about 80 million baht for the feasibility study, which will provide us with the information to help determine what needs to be done," he added.

"I recently discussed with Patong Mayor Pian Keesin how this project will have both people for and against it.

"The budget should be supported by the central government because it is responsible for providing basic infrastructures.



Another truck falls victim to Patong Hill, this little one realized it couldn't make it about 7 am October 30. Photo by Simon Rooke.

"Like the other mega-projects in Phuket, it will help to reduce the number of accidents especially on Patong Hill, which happen often," Gov Niran said.

"We might be able to help gather the budget by drawing money from Kathu Municipality, Patong Municipality, the Highways Office and the *OrBorJor* [Phuket Provincial Administration Organization] because it will benefit all of Phuket," he explained.

"If the central government has no money, we might need investors from the public sector," the governor added.

Pol Col Grissak Songmoonak, Superintendent of Kathu Police Station, told the *Gazette*,

"This project should have happened a long time ago because it might not have cost as much when the land on either side was not private property.

"I also think this project might not happen anytime soon, but it has to happen eventually because in the future the area will become even more developed – and then the traffic situation will have to be improved, too," he added.

In 2001, a 3-million-baht "pre-feasibility study" to investigate a Kathu-Patong tunnel estimated that a two-kilometer tunnel joining the two sides of the notorious hill would cost an estimated 2 billion baht.

Incinerator 'on hold' until after elections

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

PHUKET: Consideration of approval for funding to build a second garbage incinerator is likely to have to wait until a new government is elected in the national elections slated for December 23, Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit told the *Gazette* yesterday.

"Bearing in mind the current political situation as the government gears up for national elections at the end of this year, I think we will have to wait for the new government to be elected before approval for the budget to build a new incinerator can be considered," said Governor Niran.

If the central government does not approve funding for another incinerator, the private sector may be offered the chance to tackle the island's garbage-disposal issues instead. If this is the case, and the private sector is prepared to invest, then sections of the Public-Private Investment Act will have to be changed, said Governor Niran.

Private companies PTT and Ecco have already submitted plans for alternative garbage-disposal solutions and they are prepared to invest many millions of baht with some of the money borrowed from the BOI, which was outlined in the signing of an MOU between the Ministry of Energy, Phuket Province and British renewable energy company Sepco on October 5 at Sepco offices in Bangkok, he added.

Comprehensive studies have already been conducted regarding the necessary investment, but approval for any funding or changes in the rulings covering private investment will not be made until after the December elections, said Governor Niran.

Sepco has already surveyed the Phuket incinerator area and said that nowhere else in this world is there an incinerator located near a beach and that they will be able to dispose of the garbage in the 128 rai landfill, turning it into a green zone and public

Two tourists drown in heavy surf

KATA-KARON: Two foreign tourists who ignored red warning flags and entered heavy surf drowned in separate incidents on the afternoon of October 29 at Kata and Karon beaches.

Pol Lt Col Chana Suthimas, duty inspector of Chalong Police Station, identified the victim recovered at Karon Beach as 41-year-old Mesut Yetkin from Turkey. His death was reported about 6:40 pm.

A few hours earlier, about 3 pm, the body of a tall Caucasian man in black swim trunks was pulled from the water off at Kata Beach.

"I think he was between 45 and 50 years of age and about 180 to 190 centimeters tall," Col Chana said.

Citing confidentiality policy, staff at Patong Hospital declined to give the name or nationality of the the victim, who was identified on October 30 by police as Swedish national Olovson Karl Betil.

"There were red flags at the beaches, but both tourists ignored them. Their bodies are now at Patong Hospital waiting for relatives to come and claim them," Col Chana said.

– Natcha Yuttaworawit

Police call for Kata Viewpoint streetlights

By Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

RAWAI: Chalong Police have urged Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit to co-ordinate with the Kata-Karon and Rawai municipalities to have more streetlights installed along the dark stretches of road near Kata Viewpoint in order to make the streets safer for nighttime motorists.

Speaking at the Phuket Provincial Security Meeting on October 30, Lt Col Suwat Kaewprom, deputy superintendent of Chalong Police Station, said, "I need help from the governor to

co-ordinate with the Rawai and Kata municipalities to install more streetlights from Kata Viewpoint all the way to Rawai because it is too dark and there is the risk that more crimes will happen there."

Governor Niran agreed and said he that he would use what authority he had to ensure more streetlights are installed.

Reporting on the investigation into the murder of Norwegian Simen Knudsen, who died after being stabbed during a nighttime mugging just south of the Kata Viewpoint, Col Suwat explained to the Governor that po-

lice were waiting for test results to confirm whether or not blood found on Mr Knudsen's motorcycle at the scene matched that of the victim before the investigation can continue.

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Phuket Gazette

A tale of two dams: 'Double Indamny'

The island's chronic dry season water shortages may not seem to be the most relevant topic at the height of one of the wettest rainy seasons in years.

However, Phuket's reservoirs are already full, and most of the rain that fell last week simply will not help when the wells start running dry next April. While the rains are pouring, *Gazette* reporter **Sompratch Saowakhon** and News Editor **Stephen Fein** decided to look at the progress being made on the island's two new reservoirs still under construction.

Although Phuket's water supply sources are currently filled to overflowing with monsoon season rain, the island in recent years has faced worsening water shortages during the dry season – which happens to coincide with the high season for tourism, when demand for water reaches its peak.

The problem is one of storage, not supply. Phuket's location in the heart of the monsoon belt makes it among the rainiest places in the world.

Among provincial strategies to hold more of nature's bountiful supply over into the dry season are two dam and reservoir projects. The first, the 750-million-baht Bang Neaw Dum reservoir now nearing completion in Tambon Srisoonthorn in Thalang, will have a storage capacity of 7.2 million cubic meters.

Wit Wongkamonchoon, who heads the Royal Irrigation



Wit Wongkamonchoon, of the Royal Irrigation Department's regional office is overseeing the Bang Neaw Dum Dam project.

Department's regional office in Surat Thani, said the project is now about 75% complete.

Work building the earthen dam is now up to the spillway office level, an elevation of about 46 meters above sea level.



Although of questionable legality, a sign posted by the Irrigation Department at the Klong Krata project site threatening legal action against anyone removing soil seems to have worked in putting an end to 'soil smuggling' from the area.

They have fewer than three meters to reach the dam's maximum elevation of 48.5 meters, he said.

"The only thing holding us up now is the rain. We hope to finish by the scheduled date of May 17 next year and have the dam operational by June," he said.

While the Bang Neaw Dum project has gone mostly according to plan, work on its sister project in Chalong has not. The 5.7-million-cubic-meter reservoir, to be created behind a 25-meter-thick concrete and clay dam at

Klong Krata, has faced delays in the land-acquisition process.

Although of smaller capacity than Bang Neaw Dum Dam, the engineering is more difficult and land acquisition more expensive, resulting in an initial price tag of 960 million baht: about 300 million baht for land compensation and 660 million baht for construction.

Local landholders, some with title deeds and others with land usage rights or other valid claims, in 2006 and 2007 all agreed to sell their land to the

government to make way for the project. Indeed they have no other choice, as they are required under the law to accept the government-assessed compensation packages provided to them by the government.

However, delays by the Irrigation Department in coming up with the required funding to buy the land left some landholders wondering how they could maximize their use of the property before they are forced to sign it over.

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The earthen dam that will create the island's second reservoir at Bang Neaw Dum in tambon Srisoothorn, Thalang, is now about 75% complete. The Irrigation Department hopes the reservoir will be ready to supply water by next June.

revealed when then-Project Manager Theerachart Sangkaha reported to Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit that large amounts of soil had gone missing from the project site, carted off and sold by some of the landowners who were still waiting to be paid under a fiscal 2008 budget.

The land, earmarked for use in the construction project, would need to be replaced at government expense, he said.

The Klong Krata Reservoir project covers about 430 rai of land. Of this area, a total of 57 rai are protected government forest or conservation land in the Nakkerd Range foothills administered by the Forestry Department.

Of the remaining land, about 360 rai in 44 titled plots

were held by some 20 different owners and about 69 rai covering 23 plots were claimed by individuals with valid land usage titles, tax payment certificates and other supporting documents. As was the case in expropriating land for the Bang Neaw Dum project, these would also need compensation.

An initial estimate by the Phuket Irrigation Office (PIO) put the total land acquisition cost at a whopping 305.8 million baht.

In 2007, the PIO budgeted 103.8 million baht for the project, of which 95 million baht was used to buy 17 plots with valid title deeds; the remainder was earmarked for project management and expenses.

With only about a third of the titled land bought in fiscal

2007 and the owners of the remaining 50 plots required to wait till fiscal 2008 and a new government for compensation, the owners began selling off their land – literally.

In a June 22 meeting on the topic on how to stop the continuing problem, Phuket Vice-Governor Smith Palawatvichai pointed out that until the landowners were paid the government had little leverage to stop them from selling the soil.

Chalong Police Superintendent Col Chalit Kaewyarat added that he had ordered his patrol officers to keep watch over the area but had not found any digging going on.

“But even if they did, we couldn't arrest them anyway if they hold valid titles,” he added.

In the end it was decided to post a large warning sign on Soi Luang Pusapha, where the project site is located, warning that anyone caught carting off soil will be prosecuted “for trespassing on a future government project site”.

Although of dubious legal grounds, the “soil smuggling” stopped after the sign was erected not long after the meeting.

With that problem behind them, the project managers' next vexing task was how to compensate the 14 people with non-title land claims on 23 plots covering about 69 rai.

In the end, the committee decided that they should be compensated at 90% of what the rate would have been had they had titles to the land, which works out to a total of 44.6 million baht to

be requested from the Irrigation Department under its 2008 budget. Rates paid for each plot were based on a formula based on its distance from the main road, Soi Pusapha, and other factors affecting land values in the area.

The 90% rate was higher than at Bang Neaw Dum, where non-title landholders were given 80%.

The committee justified the higher rate by the fact that the land in question was closer to Phuket City and “was of better quality”.

With the problems of soil smuggling and compensating all owners for their losses behind them, the final hurdles facing the Klong Krata project are budgetary – and that means political – in nature.

The Klong Krata project is temporarily without a director and being overseen by Operations Manager Prasit Chalittanont.

He told the *Gazette*, “Now we are waiting for the fiscal 2008 budget so we can put in a request to acquire all the remaining land needed to start building.

“Once we get approval we can move quickly. However, we will have to wait until fiscal 2009 to put in our next request for the construction budget.

“I really can't confirm anything at this point because all budget requests will need to wait until a new government is in place,” he said.

Over the past year the *Gazette* has asked several officials involved with the project for a volume and cost estimate of the soil removed from the project site, but without success.

K. Prasit downplayed the problem. “The soil stolen by the villagers will have no effect on the structural integrity of the dam. It was just topsoil and they did not excavate too deep,” he said.

At deeper levels are layers of thick clay and granite bedrock, both of which will be used in building the 730-meter-long dam at Klong Krata, he said.

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Queer News

Police baffled: Burglary or buggery?

NAKON SRI THAMMARAT: When villagers in Chawang District heard the abbot of a local temple shouting he was being assaulted by a thief on October 14, they naturally rushed to assist.

When police, led by Lt Samphan Wathanasong, arrived, they came upon a throng of more than 10 people happily beating the suspected thief and abbot assaulter.

Police put a stop to the fracas and wrested Thawatchai Chaonafai, 29, from the mob. Inside the temple was the abbot with a ripped robe and bleeding profusely from a cut on his forehead.

Police planned to take Thawatchai to Somdej Phrayupharach Chawang Hospital. Thawatchai, however, said that he would like to give his side of the story to the duty officer first.

Thawatchai told police that until recently he had lived happily with his wife in Nakhon Pathom. In September, however, he came to Nakhon Sri Thammarat to look for work and ended up staying at the temple.

All was well until one night, Thawatchai claimed, the abbot came into his room and demanded to have sex. Being a happily married man, Thawatchai refused the abbot's advances, he said.

The abbot, however, was not so easily dissuaded, said Thawatchai, and drew a gun from his robe and began to beat him until he agreed to let the monk have his way with him.

"The abbot kept me locked in a *kuti* (monk's cell). He wouldn't let me go anywhere. He also took my ID card and my wallet.

"I tried to explain to him that I had come [to Nakhon Sri Thammarat] to earn money to send back to my wife and child, but the monk said that I should live with him and that if I let him

have sex with me, he would give me money," Thawatchai said.

"While I've been here, the abbot has given me about 10,000 baht in total, but every night he has sexually violated me. I've had to try to take the pain. I was thinking of ways to escape but there was no way out. Whenever the abbot went out, he locked the door," Thawatchai told police.

"On the night of the incident," Thawatchai continued, "the abbot came and demanded sex again, but I refused as I couldn't stand it any more. My bottom hurt too much.

"This made the abbot angry and he began to beat me, refusing to listen to my pleas. This time I grabbed the fan off the table and hit the abbot on the head. The abbot screamed for help, saying there was a thief trying to steal temple belongings."

Lt Samphan said that a detailed record of Thawatchai's complaint had been logged, but police had yet to charge anyone over the incident.

They will invite the abbot to the station to answer Thawatchai's allegations and investigate the case thoroughly, he added.

Somchok Bunyathikan, a Nakhon Sri Thammarat Crime Suppression Volunteer who accompanied police to the scene of Thawatchai's beating, said that as police were tearing the villagers off their prey, the abbot came out carrying Thawatchai's ID card. This made Somchok suspicious, he said, as there was more to the attack than meets the eye. If Thawatchai had been a thief, why would the abbot have his ID card?

After the beating, Thawatchai requested to meet the duty officer rather than being taken to hospital, adding to his suspicions, Somchok said.

Source: *Kom Chad Luek*



Rawai Progressive International School students clean up the beach in front of their school, south of Chalong, after a presentation on the importance of caring for marine environments. Greg Holmes, of Phi Phi Barakuda, enlisted students to join the efforts of Project Aware (www.projectaware.org), a non-profit PADI organization that promotes conservation of underwater environments through education, advocacy and action.

**TRASHING
Phuket**

Dim bikers shown the light, literally

PHUKET CITY: In a bid to improve road-safety, Phuket Community Foundation (PCF) is launching a project to replace substandard tail lights on motorcycles from November 8 to 10.

The project will provide 1,200 tail lights and brake lights for a wide range of the most common small-engine scooters and motorcycles made by Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki and Kawazaki.

The tail lights will be given out and installed free of charge from 9 am until 3 pm on Wichit Songkhram Rd in front of Surakul Stadium.

On the first day of the project, traffic police will set up a checkpoint between 9 am and 12 pm and ask drivers with tail lights in need of replacement to utilize the free service.

At other times over the three days, drivers will be able to get their tail lights replaced at a



Phuket City Traffic Inspector Pol Lt Col Teerawat Leamsuwan.

tent set up on Wichit Songkhram Rd.

Students from Phuket Technology College have been asked to assist in replacing the tail lights.

Phuket City Traffic Inspector Pol Lt Col Teerawat Leamsuwan said in a press release, "In Phuket, we must work to decrease the number of road accidents and this project is a good way to help achieve that."

Blood donations needed

PHUKET CITY: The blood bank at Vachira Phuket Hospital is in need of islanders to donate blood before the high season gets underway and the forthcoming influx of tourists as blood stocks are running low.

Supplies of blood-type A, AB and O negative are particularly low, although donations of any blood type are always welcome.

First-time and regular donors with at least three months since their last donations can call in to the blood bank, which is on the fourth floor of Vachira Phuket Hospital on weekdays between 8:30 am and 8 pm, weekends between 8:30 am and 3 pm.

For more information call the blood bank at 076-361234 ext 1285 or the Phuket Red Cross office at 076-211766.



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Corruption costs B2.6bn a year

Local administrative organizations topped the list of state agencies with the most corruption and conflicts of interest, according to the latest report compiled by the Office of the Auditor-General.

The 2007 report, submitted to the National Legislative Assembly on October 15, showed that the country lost 2.6 billion baht in damages, lost opportunities, low-quality and over-priced equipment, leaks and incorrect income collection by state agencies.

The report indicated that 738 government agencies made purchases worth six billion baht without transparency. The office instructed 219 state agencies to correct and pay the state for damages worth 51.4 million baht.

Out of 464 complaints of irregularity filed by anonymous notes and reported in the media, 131 were believed to be incidents of corruption and malfeasance that cost the state more than 100 million baht. Another 45 complaints were projects which broke state directives, resulting in 30 million baht in damages.

Revamping rescue response. Emergency medical services will be improved to reach road-accident victims within 10 minutes, a move expected to save up to 18,000 lives a year, said Bureau of Emergency Medical Services Director Surachet Satitniramai.

Part of the plan is to train the 45,020 rescue volunteers nationwide registered with the ministry. They will receive training at least once a month to improve their life-saving skills, including checking breathing, dealing with serious bleeding and fitting neck braces.

Those who fail evaluations will not have their registrations renewed, he said.

The ministry will work with local and provincial administrations to extend the network of emergency medical services at the local level, he added.

According to the ministry,



A male jockey races his buffalo to the finish line in Chonburi on October 26. Buffalo racing is a long-standing tradition in the coastal province. The event has been held 136 times.

60,000 people die in emergencies and road accidents each year. The ministry expects that if rescue teams reach victims within an hour, 6,000 to 18,000 lives could be saved.

Public Health Minister Mongkol na Songkhla has proposed a national emergency-response center with an easy-to-remember hotline number.

Phones will be manned by trained staff who will ask callers about the condition of the victims before dispatching a rescue team to reach the accident site within 10 minutes. The ministry also plans to install a rapid communication network at 9,000 primary health-care units nationwide.

The National Health Security Office has allocated 558 million baht for the project.

Aids ignorance. Nearly 77% of Thai teenagers have little knowledge about HIV/Aids, according

to a recent report by the Public Health Ministry.

Dr Paijit Warachit, permanent secretary for Public Health, said October 24 that this problem partly explained why about half of 321,650 Aids patients in the country were now between 25 and 34 years old.

"Such a ratio reflects that so many of these patients have been infected with Aids during their teens," he said at a forum in Nakhon Pathom.

Citing the findings from his ministry's recent report on the Aids situation as of September 30 this year, Dr Paijit said the condom-use rate among teenagers during casual sex was less than 50%.

Pedophile list. The Thai police will soon publicly release a list of 50 indicted Western pedophiles and their photographs that was prepared by a network of Euro-

pean police forces and Interpol, Maj Gen Wimol Pao-in said on October 26.

Canadian Christopher Paul Neil, who was arrested in Nakhon Ratchasima after a global manhunt, is ranked 13th on the list, said Gen Wimol, commander of the Roayl Thai Police Children, Juveniles and Women Division.

All 50 people on the list are men. Most are accused of sexually abusing underage boys, though some are alleged to have targeted young girls. Most of them recorded their sex acts with children and distributed the images on the Internet.

Gen Wimol gave details of four men on the list who have already been arrested by his divi-

sion, all in Chonburi province.

They are German Andreas Hueinger, 55, who was arrested in December 2006; Italian Enrigo Dellea, 48, in February 2006; Australian Jason Jenkins, whose arrest date is unknown; and German Jorg Rudolph Fiedler, 43, in March 2006.

Other men on the list on the run in Thailand, and for whom warrants have been issued, are American Grant Richard, 61; Briton Stephen James Allison, 55; and Finn Ilkka Ylikojola, 55. All three were also based in Chonburi and were last seen there.

Hard times for Aussie. Australian tourist Trevor John Harrigan, 38, was rescued early on October 25 after he swam out to sea, saying he wanted to swim back to his homeland.

Police said Harrigan damaged a motorcycle, then stripped off and ran into the sea in front of Imperial Residence Hotel in Bang Lamung district, Pattaya, at 2:30 am.

Rescuers spent over an hour searching the sea for Harrigan, who was later spotted hanging on to a passenger ferry anchored off the beach.

Seeing rescuers, Harrigan swam away from the boat, shouting he wanted to swim back to Australia. It took rescuers several minutes to convince him to be helped out of the water. The man was charged with causing a disturbance while drunk.

A bar girl reportedly told police that Harrigan told her that he had been pickpocketed and when he filed a complaint with the police, he was beaten up for allegedly telling lies.

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

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Gambler gunned down in Khok Kloy

Well-known businessman and gambler Wirot "Ko Khai" Wilarat, 53, was shot dead in his pickup truck as he waited at a red light in Khok Kloy, Phang Nga, on October 22.

Witnesses reported that K. Wirot was waiting for the lights to change when a metallic-colored pickup with no registration plates pulled up alongside him.

The driver of the truck then got out and walked round to K. Wirot's window, where he pulled out a pistol and shot K. Wirot five times. The assailant then ran back to his truck and sped away.

Witnesses described the gunman as tall and well-built, with a light complexion.

K. Wirot was rushed south to Bangkok Hospital Phuket, but died on route.

A native of Nakhon Sri Thammarat province, K. Wirot had become a well-known and influential figure in Khok Kloy, where he owned both a shrimp farm and cockfighting stadium.

He also worked as a campaigner for a political party and was known for his outspokenness and prowess in games of chance.

After being informed of the killing, Phang Nga Provincial Police Commander Maj Gen Preecha Samutpaoraya ordered his deputy, Col Samnao Khruchaiyan, to oversee the investigation.

Col Samnao told reporters that he was pushing his investigators to solve the case quickly. As Khok Kloy has been the site of a recent crime wave, officers from Khok Kloy Police Station are now being assisted by officers from a Phang Nga Provincial Police Special Task Force.

Atthaphol Trisri, deputy president of Phang Nga Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*), said that police must



Southern Blaze

A firefighter cleans up after helping to put out a blaze in Pattani's Sai Buri district on October 26. Six gunmen opened fire on the house, killing the couple living inside, before setting the home alight.

put a stop to the surge of violent crimes in the province. The night before K. Wirot's killing, another man was shot dead in the area, he added. As the general election draws near, police should introduce extra measures to control violence, he concluded.

Local politics. The chief of Tambon Sai Ra Village 1 in Nakhon Sri Thammarat's Chawang District was shot dead October 24 in what police believe was a politically motivated killing.

Morakot Thepphaya, 43, known as "Phu Yai Eung", was found dead by the side of the road on Thung Lat bridge on the Jandee-Chawang road. He had been shot five times with a .357 pistol. The victim's .38 pistol, which he carried with him for

protection, had been stolen from its holster.

Before the shooting, on the evening of October 23, K. Morakot had been drinking with friends at his home.

Shortly before midnight he received a telephone call and told his friends that he had to visit someone who lived near Chawang Market, about three kilometers away.

While talking with his friend, he received a call asking him to return home urgently. He set off on his motorcycle but was intercepted by a pickup truck carrying at least three people, according to police. One of the truck's passengers opened fire on K. Morakot, hitting him in the back and head. He died at the scene.

Lt Col Athiwut Waiyakan, duty inspector at Chawang District Police Station, said the only possible motive for the killing police had uncovered was local politics. Police are now examining K. Morakot's mobile-phone records

to try and trace who called him before he died, Col Athiwut added.

People who knew K. Morakot said that before his death he had switched his backing from one local politician to a rival politician in a local election held last month.

This could be a motive for his murder, police said.

Customs crackdown. Customs officials along the Thai-Malaysian border are ramping up measures to prevent petrol smuggling following the 0.4-baht-per-liter increase on October 23.

Leading to fears of an increase in smuggling is that average petrol prices in Malaysian gas stations are now about 10 baht per liter lower than in Thailand.

Customs Region 4 Director Rakhop Srisupha-at said that he had ordered all the customs posts in his jurisdiction to be especially strict with vehicles crossing the border. New measures intro-

duced to crack down on smuggling include limiting Thai vehicles to filling their tank in Malaysia only once a day, he explained.

People caught crossing the border to fill up more than once a day or with enlarged fuel tanks face having the excess fuel confiscated as well as prosecution, he said.

Maximum punishment for smuggling is a fine equivalent to four times the value of the petrol, a prison sentence of up to 10 years, or both.

A public relations campaign to warn people entering and leaving Thailand of the punishment for smuggling is also being launched, K. Rakhop added.

Malaysian authorities, who are also cracking down on Thais buying government-subsidized Malaysian petrol, have instructed gas stations near the Thai border to sell no more than 300 baht worth of petrol a time to drivers of non-Malaysian vehicles.

Deep South violence. A woman was killed and 12 others injured when a bomb exploded at a food shop in Narathiwat October 27.

The explosion occurred at a shop in Tambon Tanyongmus, Rangae district, just minutes before the 8 am sound check.

The bomb was inside a fire extinguisher, which was placed under a cupboard beside the shop, police said.

Thirteen people were caught in the blast. One of the injured, Prang Phranoeng, died later in hospital.

On the same day in Pattani, a deputy village chief was killed and beheaded.

Pattani police identified the headless body, found on a road in Nong Chik district about 6 am, as that of Phiromua Limuatae, 50, from a village in Yala's Yaha district.

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

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Absolutely abstract sculptures and paintings with the theme, "Don't think just feel" are on display at Vichen Gallery until January 2008.

Hands together for Rawai abstracts

By Natcha Yuttaworawit
& Pathomporn Keankrachang

Artists entertained art enthusiasts at Vichen Gallery in Rawai with their own concoction of contemporary folk music to introduce a new collection of abstract paintings and sculptures on October 19.

Bangkok-based artists Ajarn Chalit Nakpawan and Chanida Metanayanonda along with local sculpture artist Manit Kuwattanasilp are among the artists whose abstract creations are on display at the gallery under the theme, "Do not think, just feel".

Ajarn Chalit's work celebrates his love of the sea and southern culture at a time of personal development. "I feel that this work reflects a time of more concentration than before for me, and an exploration and development of new ideas," he said.

His current collection is characterized by the power of color, movement and texture, and reflects the inner struggle for awareness and personal improvement. "I want to show that social issues can be overcome if each one of us acts with the best intentions," he said.

Ajarn Chalit also teaches art in Bangkok and says he enjoys working with art students as their fresh ideas inspire his own work.

"The concept of this abstract art is to look beyond what the eyes can see; not only physical objects but the feelings associated with them to define the art's meaning," Ajarn Chalit added.

Sculpture artist K. Manit thinks big but creates small abstract sculptures to put his messages across. "My art shows the relationship between the earth, sun, moon and all the stars in the galaxy. I want to demonstrate our universal unity with these heavenly bodies," K. Manit said.

Female Bangkok artist Chanida Metanayanonda studies

under Ajarn Chalit. This is the first time her work has been featured in Phuket. "I am inspired by my teacher's ideology and he encouraged me to bring my work to Phuket. As this is the first time my work has been shown here, I was unsure about the kind of reaction I would receive but feedback has been very positive from the other artists and the public," K. Chanida said.

Commenting on her style, K. Chanida said, "I always add phrases and words by famous people to my paintings to present life issues. I choose colors and words that both complement and oppose each other to put across feelings," she said.

K. Chanida paints in her free time from work as an air hostess and is already planning her next collection. "Painting is my second job and I spend several days a week working on my art. Painting makes me happy so I don't want to push myself too hard but my next collection will be based on some of life's contradictions," she said.

The artists and musician friends have also formed a band called "Rawai artists" and composed contemporary folk music for the themed collection, which they played live during the launch event. Southern-style food and drink was also available for all the guests to complete the southern culture theme.

About 40 paintings and sculptures comprise the Absolutely Abstract collection at Vichen Gallery and will be on display for public viewing until early January 2008. Vichen Gallery is located in Bzenter boutique mall next to Red Gallery and Bar on the road to Nai Harn. Parking is available behind the mall.

For more information, call gallery owner Somnuek Huangthanapan at Tel: 089-7936366 or K. Somkid Huangthanapan at Tel: 081-5387778. Alternatively, email: vichengallery@gmail.com

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More convenience is on the way! Krabi is already home to such notable eateries as KFC, McDonald's, Dunkin' Donuts and all the fast-food restaurants at the newly opened Tesco-Lotus. But we aren't going to rest on our laurels here – for the onslaught of convenience stores and Western restaurant chains is just beginning.

October 24 saw the opening of the Makro, to be followed later by Big C, Burger King, The Pizza Company and Black Canyon Coffee are already under construction in Ao Nang. So you can have breakfast, lunch and dinner all without any Thai food or drink...

If you need a Singha to go, just drop in on any of the five, sorry, now six 7-Elevens in Ao Nang. In Krabi Town you can find the green-and-red convenience stores every 50 meters. Now if that isn't progress, I don't know what is.

Hi-de-High Season. Low season is coming to an end, and quicker than many people anticipated. The holiday periods are fully booked at the local hotels, with reports of some tour operators having to book in Krabi Town.

Not only are the peak periods booked, but November bookings are the strongest in recent memory. Hoteliers and business operators are scrambling to accelerate their renovation and maintenance schedules to take advantage of the early start of the season.

The latter part of the high season looks promising too. One hotelier said they were surprised at the number of inquiries they are already receiving for next March

Move over Ao Nang, here comes the West



ACROSS THE BAY
By Gus Reynolds

and April – six months away. Barring any unforeseen calamity, this season looks to be a record setting year.

Hardhat. The new motorcycle helmet law went into effect in Ao Nang in mid-October. Motorcycle riders are now required by law to wear a helmet, or anything resembling a helmet.

The Ao Nang traffic police have made a very visible presence on the beach road and have caught many an unsuspecting, lawless, irresponsible driver without a helmet, imposing a 200-baht fine.

I, too, was caught in their web while innocently on my way to buy the morning paper when I was pulled to the roadside just 500



HELMETS ON: Police in Ao Nang are now ensuring motorcyclists wear helmets – well, in the daytime, anyway.

Kanchit Taepun finishes rattling off a riff in one of the music practice rooms at his Smart Music store.



meters from my home, along with 30 others.

Not only was I not wearing a helmet, I didn't even own one. But, being the loyal, upstanding, responsible citizen that I am, I bought myself a replica Thai police helmet, which I proudly wear when I drive past the Ao Nang traffic police box each day.

No one seems to follow the helmet laws in the evenings though, as the police are no longer present to enforce the law. The more I think about it, if there were a time helmets should be worn more than others, it would be at night.

For those about to rock. For any of you who enjoyed the movie *The School of Rock*, featuring Jack Black as the school teacher explaining the meaning of life to school kids through rock 'n' roll music, or for those of you who just like live music, a trip down to Smart Music in Krabi Town is in order.

Kanchit Taepun, or Kwan

as he is known, is the proprietor of Smart Music which opened in Krabi Town in 2004. Kwan is a talented and versatile bass player, grounded in jazz, but has been playing classic rock for years.

Kwan originally ran a family restaurant by the old pier in town, but when the Phi Phi ferry moved to the new pier at Klong Chilat, he closed shop and opened a new business devoted to his true love – music.

When Kwan opened Smart Music, he was selling musical instruments and gear, but as the demands by the local youth for places to play music grew, he installed practice rooms.

Kwan and his fellow musicians offer music lessons on guitar, piano and keyboards and drums and percussion. A visit to Smart Music will reveal children from eight to 18, practicing their instruments, jamming and playing in groups.

Smart Music's popularity has made it necessary to expand, and Kwan will be building additional practice rooms and a recording studio.

In addition, Kwan takes selected students and groups to competitions throughout Thailand, to some of the same cities he has himself won awards in.

For those who are stuck back in the era of classic rock, nothing is better than to see a group of Thai 12 year olds crank out their version of *Smoke on the Water*.

Smart Music is at 1/5 Ta Reua Rd, Krabi Town, on the corner of the traffic-light intersection to the Klong Chilat pier and the Labor office.

You can see Kwan play classic rock and blues with the Siam 60s Band at Encore Café in Ao Nang on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during high season.

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Month of festivals draws to a close

Lanta Old Town is the jewel of Koh Lanta where time often stands still – this past month has been one of those times. Si Raya, the official name of the town that once served as one of Thailand’s busiest merchant hubs, is a wonderful place to study cultural diversity with its three distinct ethnic groups having co-existed in harmony for over 200 years.

This month, the town hosted three major celebrations, starting with the Muslim Ramadan, followed by the Thai-Chinese Vegetarian Festival and finishing with the Loy Rua Festival, or Boat Releasing Ceremony, of the local Urak Lawoi sea gypsies.

I’m sure local foreigners find it hard to keep track of what they should or shouldn’t be eating, which god or spirit to pray to and whether they should be dancing on hot coals or with cold whiskey and soda.

One of my favorite celebrations is the Loy Rua Festival, during which village men build a symbolic boat and place wooden statues of themselves in it along with nail parings, hair and popped rice and send it out to sea asking for forgiveness from the sea gods. It’s a festival of food, spirits, music and dance where foreigners seldom attend but are warmly welcomed.

I find the contrast between the old ways and young habits most fascinating. Elders gather around a sacred shrine to perform traditional chanting and dance rituals, while across the field the sea gypsy teenagers – the cultural lifeline of the Urak Lawoi – dance to the boom-boom of popular Thai music, ignoring the important ceremony.

New arrival. Langham Hotels International, a Hong Kong-based hotel management group, is expanding into Thailand, starting with the Rawi Warin Resort and Spa on Klong Tob Beach on Koh Lanta.

According to company officials, the agreement marks a significant first step for Langham in Thailand and a milestone for



The Boat Floating Ceremony by Koh Lanta’s sea gypsies sees the elders celebrating with traditional dances (above, photo by James Welsh) while (right) the youngsters get on with some more modern partying (photo by John Carnaje).



the group’s expansion in South-east Asia. The property will eventually be re-branded as the Langham Place Eco Resort and Spa.

“This is the first step for Langham in creating a presence in Thailand,” said Dr KS Lo, chairman of Langham Hotels International.

Pramote Titayangkurn, president of Rawi Warin Resort & Spa, said, “Langham has proven itself to be a successful international luxury hotel management company and we are very confident that under their management, the resort will be brought to new heights.”

This is a welcome announcement to the other hotels on the island as the resort wasn’t living up to its five-star status, bringing the overall star-rating system on the island into question.

Old school. What helps make writing about important day-to-day issues in Thailand easier is acknowledging that the developed Western world, where

many foreigners refuse to move back to, is still dealing with the same problems as countries such as Thailand. Take corruption, for example. If corruption wasn’t invented – or at least perfected – in the West, I’ll eat my head gear.

As mentioned in previous Letters from Koh Lanta, a reoccurring observation about the island is that despite its billing as one of Southeast Asia’s hottest tourist destinations, it’s still a living version of Thailand’s wild, wild west.

Koh Lanta’s infrastructure is steadily improving at the speed of a grazing water buffalo, but that hasn’t stopped an influx of small, foreign property developers starting hotel and villa projects.

Of course, the sudden influx of foreign money and property developments means “positioned” locals are lining up for just rewards. This comes as no surprise to anyone who has had anything to do with property development in Thailand – or anywhere else in the world.

However, the problem on Lanta, according to several local lawyers, is that the political hierarchy on the island has yet to be

worked out between the powers that be.

It’s a tangled web of provincial, municipal and local politics that starts in Bangkok and winds through Krabi’s provincial land and revenue departments and ends with local families and village leaders.

According to the lawyers, it’s much like it was on Phuket and Koh Samui 30 years ago when big money started arriving on those islands. Developers, with “fixed” costs changing on a daily basis and supplies and labor

changing by 10% to 30% or more, have to be extremely naive or very clever to develop on Lanta.

There are obvious benefits for pioneers who survive, but there are also casualties.

Most projects on the island are now dealing with these problems, but they do not seem to be affecting sales.

Double entendre. A few years ago islanders couldn’t figure out why so many French tourists were visiting Koh Lanta. They quickly caught on that the popular French version of the Survivor TV series was actually called Koh Lanta. But that was seven years ago when they filmed the series near the island.

Now the French reality show, which has nine million viewers, continues to move to greener pastures, according to show producer Thierry Graf. The show changes location every year and this year was filmed in Palawan in the Philippines.

In an article flogged by Philippines tourism officials, Graff said, “Palawan, by far, is more scenic than Koh Lanta, a resort island in southern Thailand, from which the show got its name.”

That’s like telling your second wife she’s more beautiful than your first. I guess you have to love the one you’re with...

Duane Lennie is an international marketing consultant based in Lanta who owns www.bestofkolanta.com, www.kolanta-realestate.com and the *Mango House Boutique Resort*. You can contact him at info@bestofkolanta.com

LETTER FROM KOH LANTA

By Duane Lennie

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Happily Ever After

Recent weddings in Phuket



Worrasiri Pohngern and Wisitsak Khongka were married at Pra Pitak Grand Ballroom of The Metropole Hotel on October 20.



Watcharin Keadsap and Natapong Pankerd were married at the Phuket Ballroom of the Royal Phuket City Hotel on August 26.

Fate serves

The menu at Latino's Restaurant in Nai Harn has taken on a new lease of life with the recent addition of Pablo Lopez as both chef and restaurant manager, who seems at home in a vibrant restaurant half the globe away from his South American birthplace.

At just 26, Pablo's passion for culinary adventure has taken him to Peru to Europe and back to the Aztec and Mayan roots of his culture. Along the way his dedication and love for culinary arts has earned him approval from his mentors and respect from his fellow scholars.

Pablo, who was born in Guatemala, spent nine years in the US after moving there with his mother and brothers when he was two years old. It wasn't all hot dogs and hamburgers for this family though, who maintained their culture and especially the traditional Guatemalan way of cooking and eating.

While his mother held down two jobs, Pablo and his brothers had to look after themselves and he began experimenting with food at an early age, adding herbs and spices to simple dishes such as scrambled eggs, and in his early teens learning traditional culinary secrets from his Mayan house helpers.

"Even though I was the youngest of three brothers, I was the one who ended up cooking for them as my mother was always busy with her two jobs. My older brothers could see that I enjoyed cooking so they took advantage of my passion for cooking and experimenting with food," Pablo reminisced.

"My brothers were always saying I should become a chef

The amiable chef Pablo Lopez was born in Guatemala City and grew up living between the US and Guatemala. He attended the Vatel hotel school in Nimes, in the South of France.

Having completed internships in the Caribbean and the Middle East, Pablo was eager to broaden his outlook still further, so after a period as a culinary consultant in Guatemala City, he was enticed by Jorge De la Torre to join the Latino's team and bring some traditional South American flavors to the restaurant.

Here Pablo tells the *Gazette's* Nick Davies about his culinary journey across four continents, from South America to South Thailand.

and although they bullied me into cooking for them, I was glad to have brutally honest people to test my creations on," he added.

A passion for food runs in Pablo's family. Through dedication and hard work, his father is now the owner of a successful cheese-producing company and Pablo has fond memories of spending time after school helping make - and sample - the handmade cheeses.

"My father's cheeses are certainly something I miss very much from my homeland, and they cannot easily be imported here. It would be great to make them here but of course the first thing you need for good cheese, is good milk!" Pablo laughed.

Perched on comfortable bar stools at the Latino's bar lined with colorful bottles of spirits, many of which also ended in "o", Pablo continued to elaborate on how he ended up in Phuket, while the syncopated beats of Latin music plink-plonked away in the background.

"It's my first time in Thai-

land and until recently I had never imagined I would be here. Before this, I had grand plans for working in China or Japan as I love those countries' cuisines. I'd tried making Thai food before but didn't know there was actually so much variety in the regional dishes," he said.

"My way of discovering a culture is to meet the locals and sample the local food. To me, the food is the essence of the culture and it's wonderful to experience the explosive flavors of Thai food," he added.

In his quest for traditional local ingredients, Pablo soon discovered the market stalls near Rawai pier. "I love going to the market and seeing what the locals have caught. It's always very fresh. Of course, I do have to go to the supermarket for some of the imported ingredients for my Mexican dishes though."

Traveling has always been part of Pablo's life and he began to explore other parts of South America when he was 20 years old. By this time, he was also

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Phuket a Latin twist



Pablo Lopez, after starting his culinary career in his native Guatemala and working in France, Dubai and the Caribbean, has now made Phuket his home – at just 26 years of age.

learning about food at a culinary arts institute in Guatemala City, attending theory classes once a week and spending the rest of the time as an intern at the Quintareal Hotel.

“After six months as an intern there, I became a Chef de Partis and Banquet Chef. Although this meant I should have received wages for this position, I was still an unpaid intern, but I figured it was definitely a worthwhile experience and continued as a trainee until I had completed my two years there and obtained my Intecap diploma,” he said.

“After that I was able to do freelance banqueting events, catering for between 30 to 50 people, and I was loving working in the kitchen and managing a business at the same time,” he added.

Pablo didn't see much of his father during his early childhood

in the US, but when he moved back to Guatemala and began pursuing a culinary career he spent more time with his father, who became more influential and challenged Pablo to think about the direction of his life and love of food.

“After completing my first internship, my father asked me to seriously consider whether I wanted to stay in Guatemala or explore a more international career path. He suggested that I go to France, I agreed and he helped me enroll in Vatel hotel management school in Nimes, France. I spent the next three years there,” Pablo said.

The semesters were five months each and the rest of the time was spent doing internships, which I did as kitchen trainee commis chef at the Mercure Hotel in Grasse, the city of perfumes.

“I was lucky to be working under a two Michelin star chef and learned a lot about kitchen management with the hands on experience of the job, which I wouldn't have learned in school,” Pablo explained.

For his next internship, Pablo went to Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa in Dubai and was initially positioned in the revenue department, which he enjoyed, but his passion for learning about food led Pablo to persuade his bosses to allow him to work in the kitchen – they let him do both.

“Through this experience, I found that I enjoyed all aspects of the food and beverage industry, both working in the kitchen and on the administrative side.

“This helped me learn more about Mediterranean food and gave me insight and experience in hotel management as well,” Pablo said.

At this point, Pablo tried to solidify his plans for living and working in China and applied for an internship at the Marriott hotel in Shanghai.

Even though he was accepted by the hotel, fate held different plans and delays with his visa application meant that he never made it to China.

Instead, St Bart's in the sunnier destination of the Caribbean became Pablo's home for six months, giving him more valuable resort management and culinary experience.

Returning home to Guatemala again with a plan to stay just a couple of months, knowing that it would be tough to find a job in the country's less than favorable job market, he ended up staying over a year as he and a friend opened Guatemala's first sushi bar, complete with a genuine Japanese sushi chef. The raw fish restaurant has since been branded the best in downtown Guatemala City.

Fate now had a firm grip on Pablo's future and it was through a Moroccan friend that he'd met in France that the opportunity to work in Phuket appeared on the horizon.

Pablo's friend Omar was working at the Le Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club in Phuket and knew that Jorge De la Torre, was actively looking for a manager to breathe new life into Latino's restaurant, so he put Pablo and Jorge in contact.

At first, everything proceeded in “Thai time”. Pablo sent his resume and had to find ways of filling in the two months that he waited for a reply. Eventually, Jorge wrote to Pablo, asking him if he knew anything about Mexican food. “Of course,” replied Pablo and a flurry of emails and text messages ensued as Pablo and Jorge began a new allegiance that would bring authentic South American cuisine to Phuket.

“Finding the ingredients for

traditional Spanish, Mexican and Guatemalan dishes here in Phuket is not too difficult as most of the necessary ingredients, such as bell peppers, tomatoes, coriander, parsley and other green herbs either grow here or are imported. I've had to adapt some things though.

“Cornflour made in the traditional way is about the only thing I can't get here, which needs a large pestle made of pitted volcanic rock and a good dose of patience to make it authentically,” Pablo said.

Though young, Pablo is a traditionalist, preserving his own culture's ancient Mayan and Aztec roots and tries to create dishes that are as authentic as possible, but he is also greatly influenced by the foods of the cultures he has experienced on his travels, making him and his dishes quite unique. He speaks four languages – English, French, Spanish and his native Guatemalan dialect of Spanish – plus has six months' worth of market-haggling Thai.

Pablo's culinary plans for Latino's Restaurant will woo guests with artistic creations, which come as close as possible to traditional Guatemalan and Mexican cuisine, with a twist of Thai and doses of Peruvian and Chilean culinary culture thrown in.

By the end of our two-hour conversation, I must admit that I'd had my fill of the Latin music that was still plink-plonking away in the background, but I could easily have stayed for the rest of the night dipping crispy nachos into Pablo's exquisite salsa sauce.

To see Pablo in action and experience some of his fine food creations, pop down to Latino's at the three-way junction on Saiyuan Rd. For more information, check out www.latinos-restaurant.com or call 076-388180.



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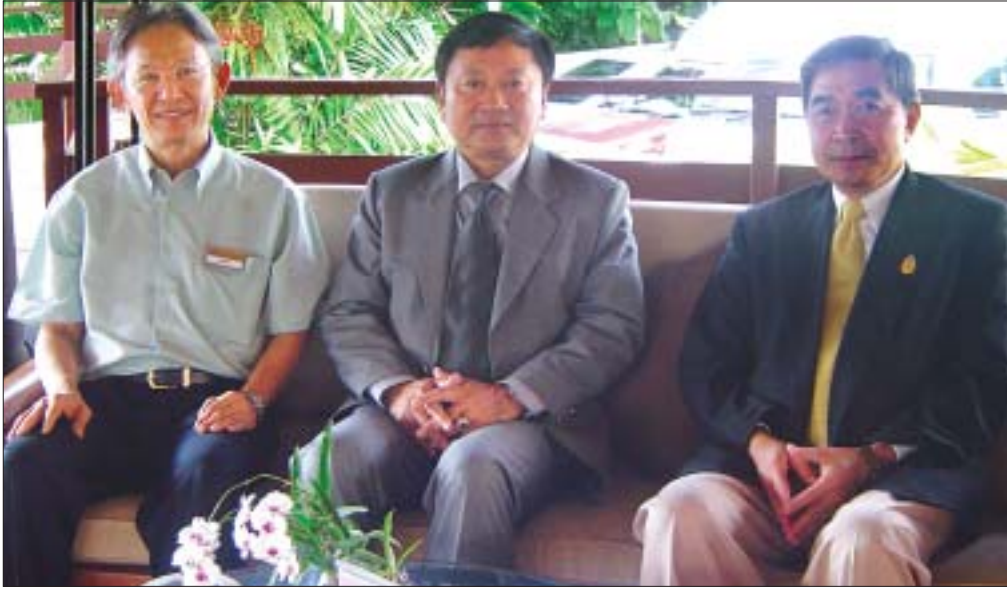
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This week



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Phuket Vice-Governor Tri Augkaradacha (center) and guest former Cape Panwa Hotel General Manager Serm Pisitkasem (left) welcome Pinit Korsriporn (right), government inspector for the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, to the hotel, where he chaired a meeting between the ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board and representatives of 13 countries on October 4 and 5.



ALPINA OPENS: Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit (3rd from left) joins Alpina Nalina Resort & Spa executives Chairman – CEO Maj Pansuang Xumsai Na Ayudhya (2nd from right) and hotel Manager Pisit Rojanamonkol (left) and guests at the resort's grand opening on October 13.



ARRIBA! (Above) Garry McDermott (left) and Sean Scott Getchell (right), owners of the new Dos Gringo's Mexican bar and restaurant in Chalong, don sombreros with staff at the restaurant's opening day October 12.



UPPER CRUST: (Right) Gazette columnist and computer guru Woody Leonhard and his wife Duangkhae "Add" Tongthueng cut a six-foot 'sub' instead of a ribbon at the grand opening of their new Sandwich Shoppe at the entrance to Laguna on October 20.



SEARA SUPPORT: (From left) Sports Engineering and Recreation Asia (SEARA) Sales and Operation Supervisor for Southern Thailand Saipin "Boom" Treechai and General Manager Phuket CJ Prieur join Thaitanics Director Tony Pope and volunteers Emma Philips and Sophie Cox at the treadmill marathon fundraiser to celebrate SEARA's seventh birthday at the International Business Association of Phuket (IBAP) Business Fair at Jungceylon on October 20.



SANDVERKS: Sand artist Peter Donnelly (center) is welcomed to the German pub and restaurant Deutsche Kneipe at Jungceylon during the restaurant's Oktober Fest celebrations on October 20. With him are Deutsche Kneipe Managing Director Thavorn Onksathrakul (2nd from left) and Business Development Manager Dennis Hage (2nd from right).

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My friend Jenny just gave birth to twin girls. They are identical twins and, like most babies, as cute as a button. They were born in Bangkok on Monday, October 15, 2007.

When I took this photograph, they were two days old. Not much is happening when you are two days old – your day is spent sleeping, eating, squawking and you know what.

I was there, my friends from Phuket were there, but the father was not there. He ran away when he was told that his girlfriend was pregnant. He's somewhere in Europe, I guess he's complaining that some girl spoiled his adventure holiday.

When a few of us who patronize BB's, our local pub in Phuket where Jenny used to work, heard that she was pregnant with no money and no husband, we decided that something must be done. After all, twins are a twice the trouble, and not in the least so financially. There's two of everything: hospital fees, bed's, prams, clothes, nappies, poo-poops and bottles... all are doubled.

So we did the math, threw in some money and in the fullness of time along came Mok and Moo, or as their mother has named them, Jessica and Sandra.

Jessica was born first. You can tell them apart quite easily because Jessica has a tag that reads, "Jessica". If she loses the tag there could be problems, that

Meet the Tinlay Twins



Identical twins Sandra (left) and Jessica with mum, Jenny (right), when they are just two days new.

is until they are old enough to say their own names.

I can't tell them apart, but Jenny says she can. I suppose if anybody can it would be the mother. They say that identical twins do everything together. So far this is true with Mok and Moo, although at this stage all they do together is squawk, eat, sleep... and diaper change!

Their arrival was pretty exciting, except that in this particular hospital you can see the babies only from behind a big glass panel. No visitors are allowed in

the room with the mother. I hadn't seen this since my mother had my young sister, 40 years ago.

Coincidentally, while I am writing this I'm in Hong Kong and today I picked up the local paper here and there was a story by Kelly Chan about babies in glass cases. A captioned photo of the parents looking through the glass at their baby reads, "Its like being in zoo," he says. "We feel detached."

The hospital said that the babies were kept separate because of cross infection and se-

curity concerns. I guess that explains the glass cases in hundreds of other types of therapeutic establishments across Thailand, such as Christin Massage.

Anyway, the twins are back in Phuket now and are about to be presented to the surrogate family, the patrons of BB's and their village, Tinlay Place in Cherg Talay. The village twins. All very exciting, especially as they are

beautiful little girls, half-Thai and half-European, or *look kreung* as they are known in Thai.

Look kreung girls are very popular in the modeling and television industry in Thailand, but identical twins? I sense fame and fortune in the near future, I shall consider negotiating management rights.

But for now, we've got to make sure that Jessica and Sandra get a good chance at life. The novelty will wear off and it can be easy to forget that they, like thousands of children growing up in Thailand without fathers, might find themselves without the education to start on the career ladder.

However, now they're here and while their father will one day regret his absence, we have something a bit novel in the local pub, resident twins. That's right, some pubs have a resident cat or a resident parrot, at BB's we have a diaper-wearing pair of resident twins.

We wish all the best to Sandra and Jessica and mum, Jenny. We will follow your progress with interest. Good luck and may the gods go with you.

LARGER THAN LIFE
By Graham Doven

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Gravitas delivers wines of 'great stature'

Powerful, brain-shivering caffeine is one way to get yourself in the mood for pondering weighty matters; another means is wine. William Pitt the Younger, England's first prime minister, felt so. He drank heavily and died young, but had he supported Catholic Emancipation with more verve, we needn't have waited 170 years to drink good wine from New Zealand.

Wine-making in new Zealand didn't begin until Dalmatian immigrants from Catholic Croatia planted the first vineyards in the 1890s. Theirs were mostly cheap, fortified wines, which started a production trend that might have continued had Britain not joined the European Common Market in 1973. Suddenly severed from their main market, New Zealand agriculturalists searched for ways to survive.

Wine-making was one. The first of New Zealand's fine wines came from Marlborough, the northeastern district of South Island. Among Marlborough's contenders for top honors is newcomer Gravitas, whose operators proudly assert that the name derives from a euphemism applied by Baroness Philippine de

Rothschild to the growth of owner Martyn Nicholls' gut while he was in France pursuing an International Wine Master of Business certificate.

Nicholls complained that he had fattened eating French food. The Baroness, demurring, said he had acquired *gravitas* – Latin being preferable in this case to the truth.

From this exchange was born the company slogan "wines of great stature", which Nicholls insists is the correct meaning of the word *gravitas*. Lexicographers may quibble with his etymology, but no one takes exception to his wine.

In addition to its Sauvignon Blanc, the 14-year-old winery also produces two Chardonnays and a Pinot Noir – the first vintage of which, the 2004, sold out within three days. New Zealand Pinot Noir has quickly achieved cult status and is the islands' first notable red wine.

To introduce New Zealand's hottest brand of the moment, Black Forest Distribution Co Ltd's Hans-Peter Blumer organized a winemaker's dinner at Banyan Tree Tre restaurant.

Nicholls sent winemaker Chris Young, who was friendly,



Gravitas wine maker Chris Young (right), who hunts wild boar and deer in his free time, explains some of the finer points of his craft to Patong tourism pioneer Narin Sethichaiyen.

frank and well-informed, having been head of the Winemaking and Viticultural Department at Marlborough's agricultural institute for seven years. He practiced wine-making in Australia, where he graduated in oenology, and France.

Explaining what gives Gravitas its edge, Young was gratifyingly specific: "Low PH soil." Another edge might be Nicholls' love of French tech-

niques and French wine. Nicholls, however, leaves nothing to chance: after sifting through some 100 sites in Italy, California, Australia and elsewhere, he bought the rectangular 40-hectare plot in Marlborough for his vineyard.

A cohesive plot facilitates harvesting at the peak of ripeness, typically done by hand eight times per vintage. Despite all the care, Young often declassifies half his wines – selling them off in bulk – in order to maintain quality.

Gravitas' flagship wine, sauvignon blanc – the 2005 is a remarkable deal at 1,160 baht – is more restrained, has less alcohol and is more concentrated than most of New Zealand's highly-acidic fruit bombs.

It is made without oak barrels, although it tastes faintly thereof – a peculiar feature of Gravitas wines. Its oak taste, long finish and unctuous texture, to quote Young, result from several months fermenting on the skins. The complex nose is reminiscent of gooseberries and citrus.

At Banyan Tree's Tre, we munched an oyster amuse bouche then foie gras trio with Gravitas' not-oaked 2005 Chardonnay, the winery's most popular wine in several markets. It was a fine combination, as the straw-colored, fruit-driven chardonnay is crisp and tangy in chablis style, with mineral notes and notable

creaminess.

To ensure that it never tastes of cork, the chardonnay bears instead a screw cap. "A good cork is still my favorite closure," said Young. Fair enough, but wines not intended for laying down need only screw-caps.

Next, accompanied by seared Atlantic scallops and beetroot risotto, came the 2005 Reserve Chardonnay (1,320 baht), which lives up to the winery's name. Its textured fullness, deep golden color, and subtle oak flavors result from barrel fermentation using wild yeast and spending a year in oak.

About half the vintage was separated and put through a second, or malo-lactic fermentation, to increase the richness. It is an amazing production, with a distinct and lingering citrus character – perfect for our scallops and for the caramelized white cod and pencil asparagus that followed.

New Zealand pinot noir is all the rage lately, and Gravitas' 2005 Pinot has emerged a star, in deeply-hued ruby red.

Rare vintage

By Marque Rome

Aromas of ripe cherry, oak and earthy

animal notes leaped from the glass. Aged in small, French-oak barriques up to a year after warm fermentation for 20 days, it was superb from every angle. The unfiltered Pinot (1,980 baht), harvested from vines just five years old, is a runaway success in world markets.

Among its merits, sauvignon blanc develops a delicious flavor when subjected to the Botrytis fruit mold and is thus the great grape of Sauternes, the world's premier dessert wine. So what does Gravitas make its dessert wine from? Riesling.

It is excellent, however: the nose is redolent of citrus, mixed nuts and apricots, while the flavor is tangy – and rich beyond belief, loaded with 95 grams of residual sugar per liter. The 2005 Late Harvest Riesling, alas, is available only in limited quantities.

The prices listed above exclude VAT and are from Phuket distributor Black Forest (204/42 Rat-U-Thit 200 Pi Rd, Patong. Tel. 076-344705).

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By Nick Davies

Essential oils are a gift from nature that should be an essential addition to the home.

Oils extracted from plants and flowers through crushing and distillation have been used for thousands of years, not only for their delicious individual and combined scents but also for their therapeutic properties, hence the term "aromatherapy".

The history of extracting essential oils from plants to use for relaxation and to cure ills dates back to at least 4,000 BC.

It wasn't until in the 1920s that the term "aromatherapy" was first used by the French chemist Rene Maurice Gattefosse. He discovered that lavender oil relieves pain and assists in healing the skin when he put his hand in a vat of lavender oil after accidentally burning it.

Some say essential oils are elixirs that contain a plant's "life force". Not only do the oils smell pleasant, but they can be used in a variety of ways, in everything from air fresheners, purifiers and foot baths, to environmentally-friendly household cleaners, cosmetic and therapeutic ingredients for massage therapy.

Essential oils can enhance the living environment, stimulate the senses, alter moods and kill bacteria that cause illnesses and odors. As they are natural plant extracts, essential oils are environmentally friendly and can be used as substitutes for most of the chemicals in our homes, as well as cosmetics.

Aromatherapy, probably the most common term associated with essential oils, is as simple as adding a few drops of your favorite oil to a diffuser heated with a candle or by putting a few drops on a pillow or even in the laundry.

Scented oils can be found in most markets and shopping centers, but it is important to differentiate between genuine and artificial oils.

The difference is often reflected in the price; genuine essential oils are more expensive than their artificial imitations because extracting essential oils from plants is a complex process.

Obtaining a plant's essential oil involves selecting plants at the correct time, crushing the stems, petals or leaves and distilling the pulp to separate the oil from the rest of the plant matter.

For example, it takes over 8,000 individual blossoms of delicate jasmine flowers to produce just one gram of jasmine essential oil. Each blossom must be carefully harvested at the height of its potency by hand so the flower is not bruised when picked.

One gram of essential oil can go a long way as it is a highly concentrated substance. Only a few drops ever need to be used at a time; these are usually diluted in water or a carrier oil for use.

Because of their concentration, essential oils should never be directly applied to the skin. Carrier oils such as olive, coco-

Enjoying the essence

nut, almond, sunflower and other vegetable or nut oils that can safely be applied to the skin should be used to dilute essential oils for massage.

Using essential oils for massage stimulates circulation while the warmth from the skin-on-skin friction of the massage makes the oils smell stronger, bringing quick therapeutic benefits to the mind and body.

If there's no one to massage you, then essential oils added to a hot bath will soften the skin as their scent rises from the water as the oil evaporates with the steam.

Vaporizers or diffusers use a candle to heat a few drops of oil in a bowl of water. Only a few drops of one or a combination of oils are needed to enhance the ambiance of a large room.

It's easy to overdo it when first experimenting with a diffuser by adding too many drops of oil to the water, but with a little practice a blend of oils can be used to create a pleasant balance of scents.

Some essential oils can be used as ingredients for homemade beauty treatments to help rejuvenate or smooth the skin; Mix essential oils with rich carrier oils such as apricot, jojoba or peach.

A cheaper alternative is to add your choice of essential oil to a simple moisturizing body lotion. Rose oil is said to be one of the skin's favorites.

After a hard day's work on your feet, a foot bath with a few drops of essential oil added is a nice treat. Peppermint oil, often used as a foot bath ingredient, is well known for its ability to relieve aches and deodorize.

The antiseptic qualities of certain essential oils make them great natural household cleaners



Essential Guide

Essential oils fall into groups depending on their characteristics. They can be used individually or blended depending on the intended purpose.

Stress busters: Basil, bergamot, chamomile, geranium, jasmine, lavender, marjoram, mimosa, neroli, patchouli, petitgrain, rose, rosewood, sage, sandalwood, spruce, valerian, yarrow, ylang ylang.

Fatigue fighters: Ambrette seed, basil, bergamot, eucalyptus, geranium, ginger, jasmine, lavender, lemongrass, orange, patchouli, peppermint, pine, rosemary, sage, thyme.

Uplifting: Bergamot, frankincense, geranium, jasmine, lemon, mimosa, myrrh, neroli, rose, rosewood, sage, sandalwood, violet, ylang ylang.

Household cleansers: Bergamot, chamomile, citronella, eucalyptus, geranium, lavender, lemon, lemongrass, lime, peppermint, pine, tea tree, thyme.

instead of environmentally damaging chemical cleaners.

To clean kitchen surfaces, add a few drops of essential oil to a bucket or bowl of warm water and wipe the surface with a cloth. Oils recommended for use on kitchen surfaces include orange or a blend of lemon and geranium.

A few drops of geranium and lavender can be added to the washing up water to sterilize dishes and cutlery.

Tea tree and pine oils are natural disinfectants for the toilet area, while lemon and lavender are recommended for basins, baths and sinks.

Oils that will naturally deodorize rooms are bergamot, peppermint, lavender, lemongrass

and thyme. Eucalyptus, common in Thailand, can be used to deodorize and purify a room where someone is sick.

These cleansing qualities also mean essential oils can be used as air purifiers. Lavender oil is attributed as one of the reasons for wartime nurse Annie Nightingale's success in treating her patients. She is said to have used lavender oil in her wards to kill airborne bacteria that could lead to new infections.

There are some essential

oils that insects absolutely hate, making them a great natural insect repellent to diffuse in the air or apply to the skin. Most flying insects will change direction when they come across the scent of lemongrass and mosquitoes are particularly adverse to citronella, another common oil in Thailand. Ants and fleas despise tea tree oil, which will also keep ticks off your pets. Thyme will make most hopping and crawling insects scuttle away as well.

Essential oils can care for your hair too. Add a few drops of oil to fragrance-free shampoo or mix with olive oil and rub through the scalp as a weekly deep conditioning treatment.

Tea tree, lemon, lavender and geranium oils are recognized as astringent oil regulators, whereas chamomile can put life back into dry hair. Bergamot is said to help combat dandruff.

When shopping for oils, it is important not to sample too many different oils as the nose tires quickly.


A good homemade essential oil starter kit would include jasmine, lavender, neroli, peppermint, rose and sandalwood.

This article is intended only as a guide and the information has been compiled from a variety of sources. People react to oils in different ways, and in some cases may cause allergic reactions in some individuals. Some essential oils are not recommended for pregnant women and additional research on suitable oils is advised.

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'Step-wives' club filling the relationship gap

When you are young and daydreaming about your future, the love and marriage part of the fantasy probably doesn't include becoming someone else's second wife. It's also unlikely that being a stepmother features in such dreams either.

But for many of us, this could be exactly what the future holds. We now live in an age when the concept of togetherness has taken on an entirely new meaning. In some countries two-thirds of marriages end in divorce. With the average marriage in Britain lasting just eight years, trend forecasters predict that "serial marriage" will soon become the norm there.

Meanwhile, remarriage is now so common in the US that they even have a name for the relationship between current and former wife – "step-wives". Succeeding a wife – or even a long-term partner – is much more daunting than just replacing a girlfriend. There's often a very real fear that the man might change his mind and go back to his ex.

A quick mental poll among all "step-wives" I spoke to revealed that at some point all of them had wondered, "Was she prettier, thinner or better in bed than me?"

It's important to bring these feelings under control – before they begin to control you.

"It's easy to invest huge amounts of power in an ex-wife, but the key word in that equation is 'ex'," says psychologist and relationship expert Dr Petra

Boynton from University College London.

"If you are in doubt, ask him outright what's going on. Discuss what he wants from his relationship with both of you, and remember: even if he gets on well with her, it doesn't mean you need to feel threatened. He has the right to have had a happy relationship in the past, but he's with you now."

Wise words indeed, but often easier said than experienced – especially if your partner insists on maintaining a friendship with his ex. This happened to some friends of mine. Having been friends for two years before they started dating, it was my friend who counseled her boyfriend through the end of his 20-year marriage.

"I felt I had to accept that their relationship was part of the package," Bella recalls. "I even had his ex-wife over for dinner a couple of times. But then I realized I must be mad. She seemed to delight in the fact that she still had some sort of hold over him, and she basically ignored me."

The situation came to a head when Bella gave him an ultima-

tum. "I said that if he wanted to be with me he couldn't see her anymore, because it felt so destructive." It worked. Bella married last year and now has a baby. "In a way, I feel he was grateful to be forced into cutting ties because she had caused him so much misery over the years," she says.

I have yet to meet anyone who has tried to have a decent relationship with her ex-husband or his new partner and succeeded, even for their children's sake. Mediterranean people tend to look upon divorce or separation as something worse than death.

Things do get complicated when there are children involved, however. The past is part of the present, which suggests a lifelong bond. This can compound the fear that they may some day get back together – and jealousy and hostility between his exes and current partners may well increase.

But since two women in this situation are more or less forced into a relationship, they can also end up being friends. The book *Step-Wives* (Simon & Schuster)

is the result of two American women, Lynne Oxhorn-Ringwood and Louise Oxhorn, having the same man and a child in common. After a frosty hostility between them for 10 years, they decided to set their differences aside for the sake of the child.

It's a practical guide to "ending the struggle and putting the kids first". Communication, empathy and acceptance of the situation are their suggested starting points for turning a cold war into co-operation. Some self-help books do help – if you are willing to take their advice.

For many, a friendship with an ex's partner is realistic only if everyone concerned has found a new relationship. Karen, 47, divorced from Richard, 49, after a 25-year marriage – and now they share custody of their two sons, aged 10 and 12.

While she says she had a few "funny twinges" of jealousy when she first heard that Richard had started a serious relationship with a graphic designer called Louise, the fact that she had also met someone helped a lot.

"I heard about Louise from the boys," she said. "I didn't meet her for a while but when I did, I just thought, 'Oh, you're exactly

the kind of person that would be my friend'. The boys loved her and had great fun with her, which was a good advert.

"By then we'd been separated for five years: if I had met her a year after Richard and I had

split I would have been much more prickly about it, especially also knowing that she was much younger than me. It was also easier to deal with because I'm now with someone else, too."

Naturally, every situation is different – and to strike up a real friend-

ship with your partner's ex may be more than you can hope for. If friendship seems unrealistic, the most productive way forward is to try putting your emotions to one side. Aim simply for acceptance of the situation and civility, which might be *easier* than you think.

After all, you both picked the same man, and – like it or not – the same man picked you.

Ambrosia Sakkadas, a UK-born Greek Cypriot and graduate of Central St Martins College of Art & Design in London, is an artist, designer and newspaper columnist. Her first novel, Greek Girls Don't Cry, is available from amazon.com



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The northwestern border town of Mae Sot, also known as Little Burma is a rich blend of cultural diversity. The demographic consists of Thais, Buddhist and Muslim Burmese, Chinese, Indians, Hmong, Yao and Lahu all living in an area slightly smaller than Luxembourg.

Burmese men amble around town in traditional *longgyi*, similar to a sarong, while women and children have faces painted with cream-yellow *tanaka* paste. Refugees, gem dealers, expats, school children, Chinese and Indian traders, smugglers, farmers and NGO (non-governmental organization) workers walk Mae Sot's streets.

Used throughout Burma, *tanaka* cream is made from the bark of the *tanaka* tree in central Burma. When applied to the face and body it protects against sunburn, relieves headaches, wards off insects and remedies prickly heat and acne.

It is also said to be the ancient beauty secret of Burmese women.

Mae Sot is home to around 100,000 people of Burmese origin and is one of the four overland entry points into Burma, the other three being: Mae Sai-Tachilek, Three Pagoda Pass-Payathonzu and Ranong-Victoria Point. The Moei River serves as the geographical boundary separating Thailand and Burma.

In Little Burma, a diversity of cultures equates to a diversity of adventures. If you're feeling intrepid, grab a tuk-tuk and journey outside town to Phra That Doi Hin Kiu. Travel-time will depend on your driver and vehicle. Our tuk-tuk kept breaking down, but expect one leg of the trip to take at least 30 minutes.

The hike to the mountain-top stupa is a 30-minute trek, if not longer, and not for the faint of heart. Our driver said, "It's about 100 steps to the top of the hill." More like 500 steps.

The climb is steep and taxing; bring water and wear appropriate shoes or be prepared to pay the consequences. The stupa stands perilously on the edge of a small cliff.

The climb is tough, but the payoff is an incredible view of the Thai-Burmese border with the Moei River slicing between the two countries.

If you seek a less physical pursuit, the Rim Moei Market is a shopper's paradise. This bazaar offers everything from precious and non-precious gemstones to Burmese *longgyi* to the usual Thai goods.

The market is set on the banks of the Moei River, next to the disputed area that lies between Thailand and Burma and parallels the Thai-Burmese Friendship Bridge.

If you feel a hankering to visit Burma, cross the border to Myawaddy. At the time of going to press, due to the political situation in Burma, the Mae Sot-



Above: Hike to Phra That Doi Hin Kiu for an incredible view of the Thai-Burmese border.

Right: A Burmese woman with tanaka cream designs on her cheek works at the Rim Moei Market.



Myawaddy crossing was closed, though this could change at any time.

You'll require a day pass, which can be obtained in a few minutes from the building about 100 meters before the Thai immigration station. Pay 500 baht, walk to Thai immigration (open 6 am to 6 pm), get your stamps, traverse the Thai-Burmese Friendship Bridge and head to Burmese immigration.

You must leave your passport at the immigration office. Most importantly, you cannot spend the night in Myawaddy and must be back to Thai immigration by 6 pm.

If there is one piece of ad-

vice to remember: make it back to immigration with plenty of time to spare.

Once inside Myanmar, take a rickshaw tour through town and head to the Myawaddy Temple. I recommend spending an hour or two viewing the temple then walking across the street to one of the ubiquitous teashops.

Teashops are a way of life in Burma and play a vital social role in Burmese culture. Grass, pavement or any free space is occupied by plastic chairs where patrons sip tea and talk shop.

The teashop functions as a social atmosphere where Burmese discuss, debate and laugh.

No matter where you are in Burma, or Little Burma, finding a teashop is also finding a conversation.

Commentary about Mae Sot would be incomplete without addressing the refugee camps that dot the border. About 20 years ago, the Thai military began setting up refugee camps for displaced Karen, Mon and Burmese fleeing the violent conflict within the country. Over the years, the population in the camps has swelled to over 140,000.

The nearest camp is at Mae La, about an hour north of Mae Sot by car. Originally established in 1984, the camp houses more

than 40,000 refugees, the highest population of the 10 Burmese refugee camps in the area.

While the scenery during the journey to the camp is stunning, entering a camp without official permission is frowned upon, but may be possible with assistance from an NGO.

Mae Sot has a modest-yet-ample selection of accommodations. The Central Resort Hotel is by far the closest thing to luxury in Mae Sot. With prices starting at around 1,300 baht a night, the service and all-around comfort can't be beaten.

If you're looking for something in the 500-baht range, try DK Guesthouse or Bai Fern Guesthouse.

Air-conditioned rooms at the rather sterile DK Guesthouse (298/2 Intarakeeree Rd, Tel: 055-542648-9) are about 450 baht a night.

The rooms have private bathrooms, satellite TV and there are two computers in the lobby. Free Wi-Fi is available if your laptop can sniff out the rather weak reception. A bit expensive for what you get, but the staff are helpful and rooms are clean.

Just down the road is the small-but-clean Bai Fern Guesthouse (660 Intarakeeree Rd, Tel: 055-531349); a quiet and friendly option.

Air-conditioned rooms cost 300 baht a night and Wi-Fi is available for an extra 50 baht a day. The guesthouse has 10 rooms and communal bathrooms.

Mae Sot has a domestic airport, though direct flights from Bangkok are no longer available. Several budget airlines had direct flights to Mae Sot but high fuel costs forced their cancellation.

There are four buses a day from Bangkok to Mae Sot, all departing in the late evening. The 465-baht ride is an arduous, eight-hour journey through hilly terrain and winding roads.

The nearest train station is in Phitsanulok - from there you can take a bus to Mae Sot.

Thailand TRAVELER

By Scott Mallon

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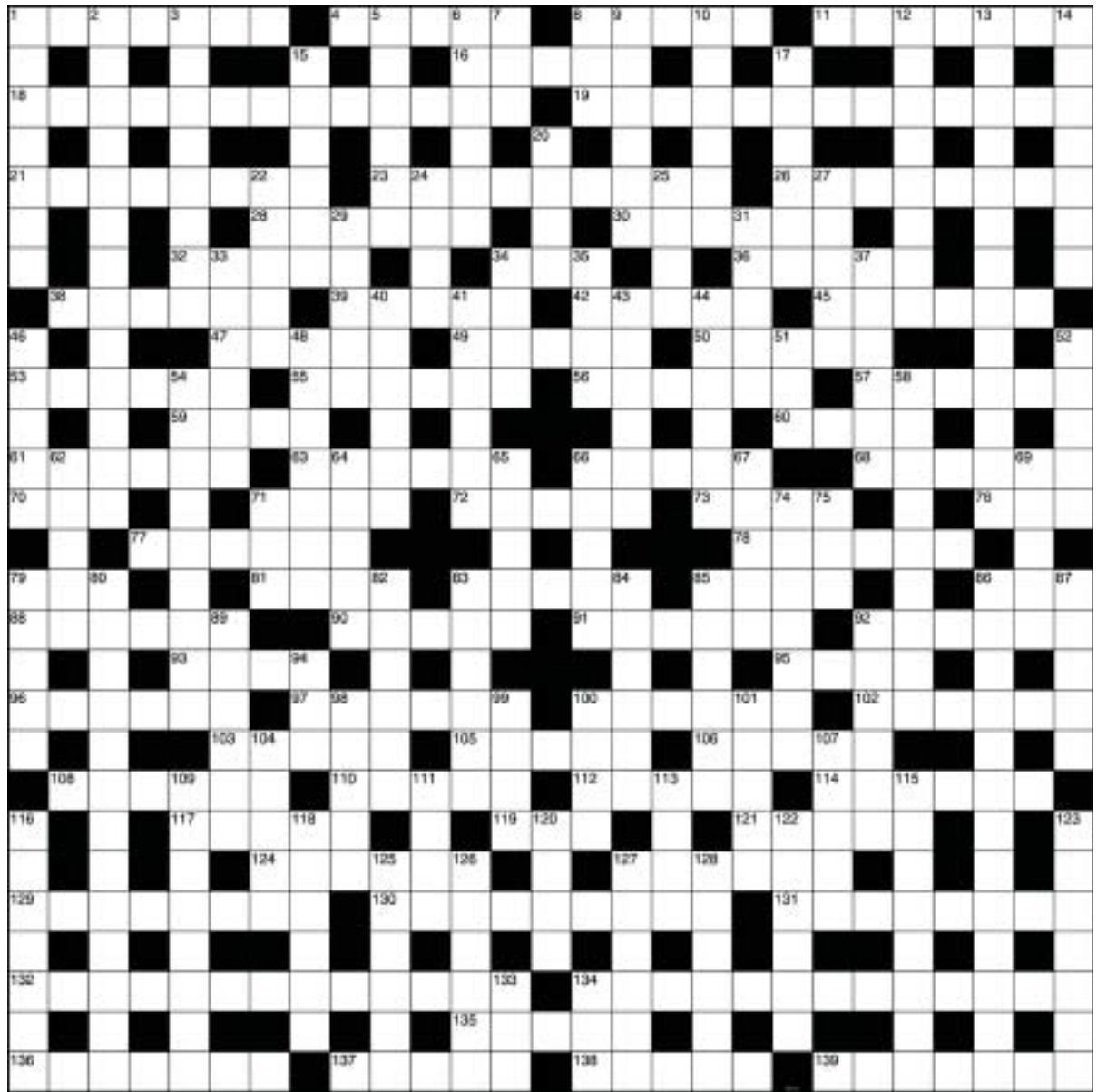
The BIG Crossword

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are the names of at least 25 animals. The words may read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They may also read right-to-left or down-to-up. Score: 15 or more, good; 20 or more, very good; 25 or more, excellent.

Solution on the next page.

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



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Across

- 1. Bragged
- 4. Winner
- 8. Of sea phases
- 11. Malleable
- 16. Makes (wage)
- 18. Hard-to-say phrase (6,7)
- 19. Mottled jewelery substance
- 21. Ships' berths
- 23. Result
- 26. Crepes
- 28. Steering device
- 30. Wait
- 32. Offal dish
- 34. Ironic
- 36. Poet, ...Allan Poe
- 38. Not consumed
- 39. Relative sizes
- 42. Gazes lecherously at
- 45. Smiles derisively
- 47. Colorado ski resort
- 49. Paris railway
- 50. Maxim
- 53. Sister's girls
- 55. Scrimps
- 56. Getaway
- 57. Vienna river, Blue...
- 59. Drowsy
- 60. Fulfil (demand)
- 61. Dried grape
- 63. Risky
- 66. Cries weakly
- 68. Actress, ...Loren
- 70. Canary Islands port, ...Palmas
- 71. Singer, ...Collins
- 72. Sri Lankan language
- 73. Dismiss
- 76. Pig pen
- 77. Enter (4,2)
- 78. Elevated
- 79. Smog
- 81. Performances
- 83. Finished
- 85. Knife handle
- 86. Current unit
- 88. Embedded (in)
- 90. Epic tales
- 91. Bigotry
- 92. Scan
- 93. Helper
- 95. Press (clothes)
- 96. Famous telescope
- 97. Capsized, ...over
- 100. Maniacs
- 102. Star, Peter...
- 103. Hair plait
- 105. Nigerian city
- 106. Hostility
- 108. Hi-fi
- 110. Hoard
- 112. Scrapes (knee)
- 114. Introductory (4-2)
- 117. Speak in public
- 119. ...Misérables
- 121. Seize (throne)
- 124. More erotic
- 127. Decapitate
- 129. Tone down
- 130. Romanticize
- 131. Gauges
- 132. Excess
- 134. Mature (4-9)
- 135. Aggravated
- 136. Savings (4,3)
- 137. ...cologne (3,2)
- 138. Stage whisper
- 139. Redesign
- malities test
- 3. Sightseers
- 5. Boomed &...
- 6. Humbler
- 7. Average
- 8. Explosive (1,1,1)
- 9. Weather map line
- 10. Patriotic song
- 12. Unsafe
- 13. Scientific advances
- 14. Joins army
- 15. Admits guilt (4,2)
- 17. Transparent
- 20. Incite, ...up
- 22. Grilles
- 24. Air duct
- 25. Narrate
- 27. Acute remorse
- 29. Actress, Bo...
- 31. Greek fable writer
- 33. Logic
- 34. Misfortunes
- 35. Olden days, days of...
- 37. Positive poles
- 40. Dog or horse
- 41. Jolt
- 43. New Testament book
- 44. Internet letters
- 46. Menacing growl
- 48. Telepathic
- 51. For now, pro...
- 52. Detain
- 54. Opinion column
- 58. Reparation
- 62. TV magnate, ...Spelling
- 64. Intimations
- 65. Sleepy sighs
- 66. Food blender
- 67. Hindu gowns
- 69. News stories
- 71. Small vegetable
- 74. Relaxing
- 75. Soldier's pack
- 79. Quarrel
- 80. Basketball team, Harlem...
- 82. Most sensible
- 83. Canvas supports
- 84. Serviette fabric
- 85. Hired assassin (3,3)
- 86. Self-penned life story
- 87. ...Pan collar
- 89. Weight watcher
- 92. Needier
- 94. Supplement, ... out
- 98. East England county
- 99. Writer, Roald...
- 100. Rock growth
- 101. Follow next
- 104. Bake
- 107. Evade (capture)
- 109. Fibre
- 111. Cain &...
- 113. Frosts (cake)
- 115. Disciples
- 116. Skit
- 118. Arranging, ...up
- 120. Famed English col lege
- 122. Actor, ...LJackson
- 123. Sediment
- 125. Large lizard
- 126. Stale (of butter)
- 127. Two-footed crea- tures
- 128. Restored to health
- 133. Before (poetic)
- 134. Adult education group (1,1,1)

Down

- 1. Cricketer at crease
- 2. Pregnancy abnor-

su | do | ku

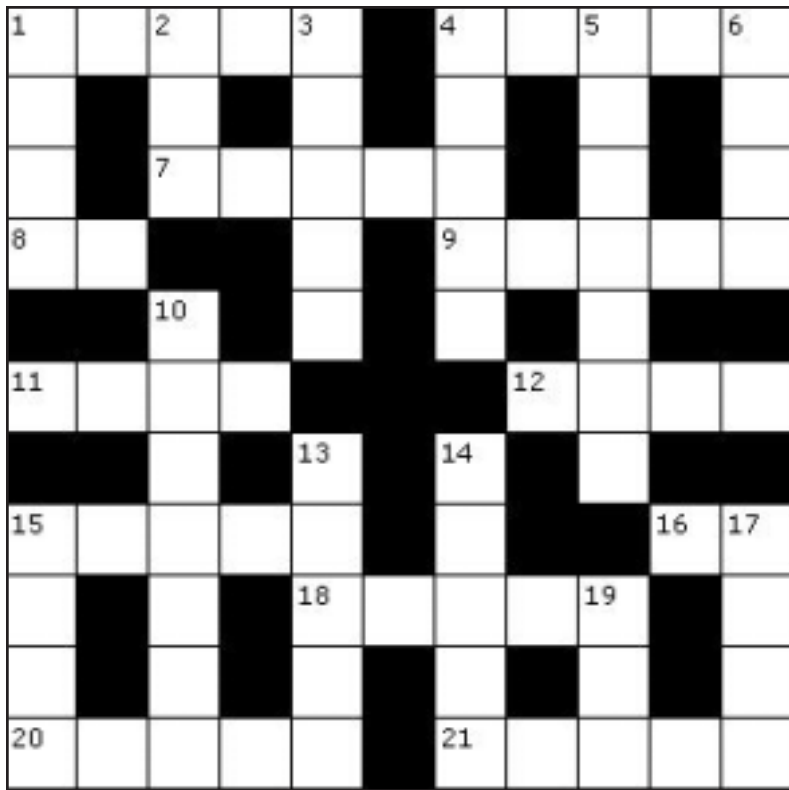
© Puzzles by Pappocom

Solution, tips and computer program at www.sudoku.com

		9	5	3	7			
4								2
	1							4
2			3	7				1
		1		8	3			
3			9	5				4
	7							3
5								8
		2	6	9	4			

Sudoku is very simple: each row, each column and each "box" of nine squares within the puzzle must contain all the numbers from 1 to 9 with, naturally, no repetitions. Beware: there is only one solution to this puzzle, which is on the next page.

Solution on the next page



Quick Crossword

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| ACROSS | Down |
| 1. Disappear | 1. Went by air |
| 4. Fables | 2. Hideout |
| 7. Objects | 3. Diver |
| 8. West Indies | 4. Thinks |
| 9. Same | 5. Mexican city |
| 11. Cowboy's heel | 6. Give for money |
| 12. Ignore | 10. Rifle shots |
| 15. Presents | 13. Normal |
| 16. Blues legend...King | 14. Bulgarian capital |
| 18. Needs exercise | 15. Radiate |
| 20. Early invention | 17. Jump out |
| 21. Invalidate | 19. Root of 100 |

Solution below

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



Kids! Ask Mum and Dad to help you find the answers to these questions. They're not easy but, if you do some research, you should be able to find the answers to all of them.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. What is a homunculus? | 8. What does "orbis non sufficit" translate as? | 15. What is the name of the tallest and fastest roller coaster in the world? |
| 2. What is the longest continuous river system in Australia? | 9. Who was the second actor to play James Bond? | 16. Where is the world's deepest lake? |
| 3. Which was invented first, the telephone or the light bulb? | 10. Which is the only US state to produce coffee? | 17. Which is the only continent not to have snakes? |
| 4. When is the vernal equinox? | 11. What is the difference between baby pythons and baby boa constrictors? | 18. Where did the first 7-Eleven open? |
| 5. Who was the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize? | 12. Who tutored Alexander the Great? | 19. Dueling is legal in Paraguay as long as both parties are what? |
| 6. What must a hamlet obtain before reaching town status? | 13. How long does it take light from the sun to reach Earth? | 20. People with acrotomophilia have a sexual attraction to what? |
| 7. Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page were all once the lead guitarist for which British band? | 14. What is special about a tiger's stripes? | |

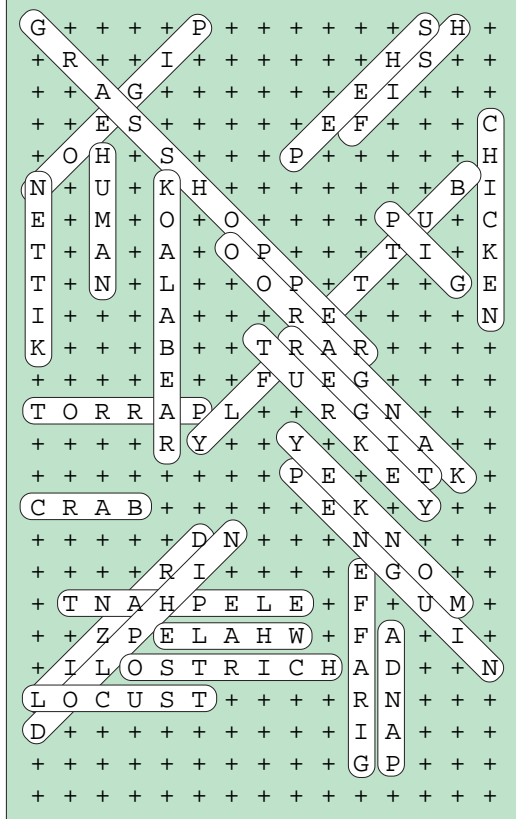
Answers below

Puzzle Solutions

Solution to this week's Quick Crossword

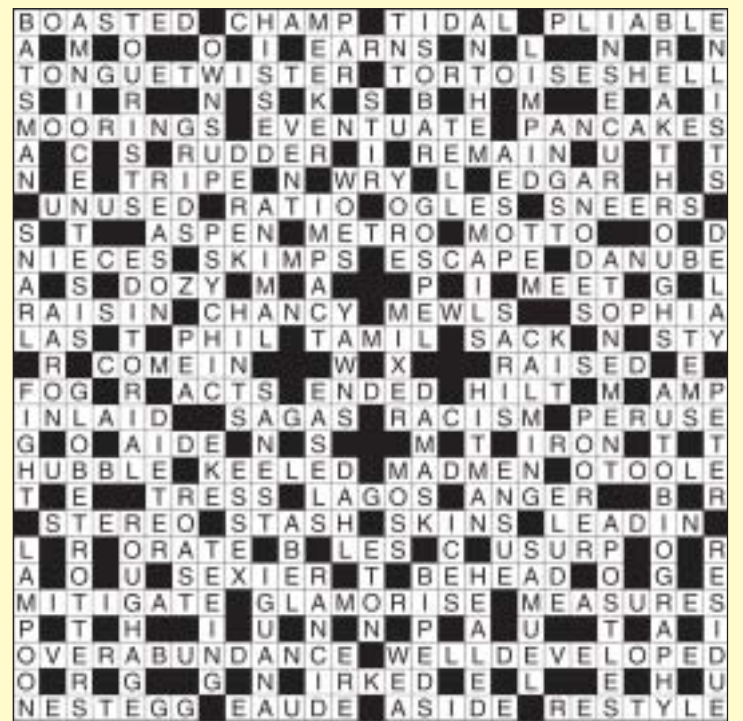


Hidden Words SOLUTION



Monster Quiz Answers


1. An artificially made dwarf; 2. The Murray-Darling River System; 3. The telephone; 4. March 20 or 21; 5. Marie Curie, for discovering radium and polonium; 6. A church; 7. The Yardbirds; 8. "The world is not enough"; 9. George Lazenby; 10. Hawaii; 11. Pythons lay eggs, boas give birth to baby snakes; 12. Aristotle; 13. Eight minutes; 14. Tigers have striped skin, not just striped fur; 15. Kingda Ka, New Jersey, USA, (139m , 206kmh); 16. Lake Baikal (1,637m) Siberia, Russia; 17. Antarctica; 18. Dallas, Texas, USA, in 1927; 19. Registered blood donors; 20. Amputees.



Solution to this week's BIG Crossword


8	2	9	5	4	3	7	1	6
4	3	6	7	9	1	8	5	2
7	1	5	8	2	6	9	4	3
2	4	8	3	6	7	5	9	1
9	5	1	4	8	2	3	6	7
3	6	7	9	1	5	2	8	4
6	7	4	2	5	8	1	3	9
5	9	3	1	7	4	6	2	8
1	8	2	6	3	9	4	7	5

Solution to this week's Sudoku puzzle



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Every so often you can become jaded with worthwhile literature and seek to wallow, for pure entertainment, in trash. The Spenser series of detective novels by Robert B Parker are fast-paced and chock full of sharp, funny dialog. The utter familiarity of the characters provides even more comfort.

Spenser (only one name, "like the poet") is a Boston private detective who first appeared in 1973. His lover Susan is a blonde Jewish psychiatrist with a doctorate from Harvard.

Spenser's sidekick is Hawk, a super-cool black guy with a shaved head and magnificent physique.

Pearl is Spenser's dog, and a major character in her own right. Never mind that all four characters, by my count, should be 75 years old by now.

Hundred Dollar Baby (GP Putnam's Sons, New York, 2006, 291pp) is the 33rd in the Spenser series. It opens in the classic way: a blonde "knockout" walks into the detective's office.

Spenser doesn't recognize her at first but she's April Kyle, the teenage runaway from Boston's red-light "Combat Zone" that he'd rescued in *Ceremony* in 1982 and from an abusive boyfriend in *Taming a Sea Horse* four years later.

Spenser's idea of salvation for the girl was to send her to work for Mrs Patricia Utley, the best madam in New York City. April is running an upscale brothel in Boston now, a branch office of Mrs Utley's, in a mansion in Back Bay.

Her problem is that thugs have be-

Slumming with Spenser



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

gun turning up, trying to shake her down. Can Spenser help?

So we are set up for the classic Spenser scene of confronting the bad guys. He and Hawk are waiting at the brothel when two goons turn up: one fat, one a weightlifter. The scene goes:

"Time for another talk, whore lady," the weightlifter said.

He stopped and looked at Hawk and me.

"Who the f*ck are you?" he said.

"I often wonder," I said. "Don't you? Sometimes at night when you're alone?"

And shortly thereafter:

"I fainted at his stomach with my right fist. He dropped his hands and I slapped him with my left hand. And then

with my right. He hunched and ducked his head and covered his face. I slapped him on the top of the head. He put his hands up to cover. I slapped him in the face again."

And so it goes till the goons give up the name of their boss. Spenser confronts Ollie DeMars in his office. DeMars is a small time hood with a crew of enforcers. He's been hired to harass April Kyle by someone he knows only on the telephone. So Spenser heads to New York to confer with Mrs Grace Utley.

Patricia is very pleased with her protégé and presents a list of her prominent clients, which leads Spenser to her boyfriend, a smooth and handsome operator named Lionel Farnsworth, who had done time for fraud.

At each step of the way, Spenser confers with his long-time lover Susan, who functions as his moral compass. She's also a babe, ever randy and hot in the sack (not bad for 75).

"April is better off than she would have been," Susan said, "if she hadn't met you."

"Yes," I said. "I think that's so. But it doesn't mean she's well off."

"That's true," Susan said. "It's also true that you are not God."

"You don't know that," I said.

Farnsworth and DeMars are both murdered and the reader knows who did it and can anticipate the ending. But that doesn't stop the enjoyment of random little jewels, like Spenser hiring a gay body-guard for April Kyle named Tedy Sapp.

When four goons attack Spenser on the street, Tedy Sapp wades in to help finish them off. Spenser warns the leader that if Ollie DeMars keeps annoying him, "I will stop by and tie a knot in his pecker."

Later, Tedy says:

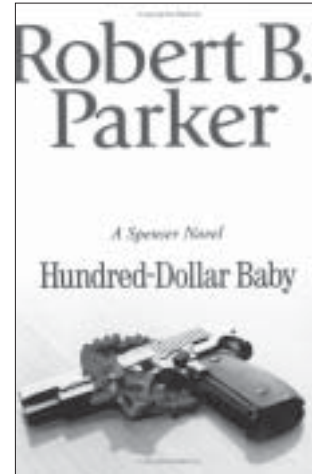
"You know that part about tying a knot in somebody's pecker?"

"I was trying for a convincing metaphor," I said.

"Sure," Sapp said. "But if it happens, can I be the one who does it?"

"God," I said. "I gotta find me some straight help."

Sapp grinned.



EVENTS CALENDAR

Upcoming events on the island

Until November 4. Phuket Thailand Open Beach Volleyball World Tour.

The last stop on the Swatch FIVB World Tour features the top women's beach volleyball players from 30 countries. Teams playing include the current world and Olympic champions from the USA, plus teams from Brazil, China, Russia, Germany, Switzerland, France and Japan. Admission is free with games from 9 am to 5:30 pm.

For details contact Geoffrey Rowe. Tel: 023-3824913. Email: ppc@pentanglepromotions.com www.pentanglepromotions.com

November 2. Peruvian Night @ Latino's Phuket

Noche Peruana, a night of Latin food, drinks, music and a fire performance, at Latino's Restaurant - Bar & Latin Club in Soi Saiyuan, Nai Harn, from 7 pm.

This event is being held in collaboration with the Peruvian Embassy from Bangkok and Pisco Payet. Enjoy Peruvian food: Ceviche Peruano (fish carpaccio marinated in lemon), Aji de Gallina (chicken in creamy aji sauce), Empanadas, Alfajores and more - plus Peruvian drinks Pisco Sour and Chicha Morada.

Entrance fee: only 495 baht, inclusive of full Peruvian buffet with one glass of Pisco Sour and one glass of Chicha Morada (purple corn and fruit drink). The feast will be followed by salsa dance with Latin DJ and a fire performance.

Reservations: Tel/Fax: 076-388180.

For more information con-

tact Jorge De la Torre. Tel: 089-7256994. Email: jorge@latinos-restaurant.com. Website: www.latinos-restaurant.com

November 14-17. Chalong Bay Fishing Tournament 2007.

Registration night is November 14 and the registration fee is 7,000 baht per team, including free beer. Fishing days will be November 15-17 with prizes given on November 17 from 8 pm. For further information contact Uwe Schittek. Tel: 081-7195766. Email: uwe@schittek@yahoo.com

November 16-17. BIS International School Football Sevens.

This international football tournament is one of the school's highlights. The tournament will take place at BIS 8:30am until 4:30 pm on each day. There will be more than 500 visiting football players from Thai and international schools in Southeast Asia.

For further information contact Patrick du Preez. Tel: 076-238711/20. Email: pprez@bcis.ac.th Website: www.bcis.ac.th

November 16. Jazzed Up on the hill.

An evening of entertainment set around the pool overlooking the bay of Karon with jazz singer BB Queen, a hurricane to knock you off your feet on arrival, followed by a barbecue and fireworks at midnight.

Tickets are 700 baht, 850 baht on the night if available.

For further information contact Keith Wickers. Tel: 084-

3060303. Email: keith.wickers@gmail.com Website: www.eden-thailand.com

November 17. How to survive a Tax Audit.

Network Advisory Team Ltd (NAT) would like to invite you to join a half-day seminar with advice about how to survive a tax audit. You will have the chance to learn and ask questions directly from the managing director of NAT, a chain of professional, English-speaking accounting firms in Bangkok, Phuket and Koh Samui.

The seminar will be held at the Phuket Merlin Hotel, 1 pm until 4:30 pm.

For more information contact K. Jantima at 081-537 9285. Alternatively, contact NAT, Phuket branch. Tel: 076-212989. Email: info@thaiaccounting.com Website: www.thaiaccounting.com

November 24. Sixth Annual QSI Fun Run, 1- & 6.5-kilometer races.

QSI International School of Phuket holds a fun run and auction each year to help raise money for important school

projects and to promote good health.

This year's run will be held at the Bang Wad Dam. The run will be divided into two separate runs: 1 and 6.5 kilometers. Participation medals will be given to the first 200 registrants, along with gold, silver and bronze medals to the top three finishers in each age category, male and female.

For further information contact QSI International School Phuket. Tel: 076-354077, 081-6334279. Email: qsi.funrun@gmail.com Website: www.qsi.org

November 24. PIWC Gala Ball.

Phuket International Women's Club will hold the most prestigious event of the year - the annual Gala Ball - on Saturday November 24 at the Indigo Pearl, Nai Yang Beach.

For further information contact Carol (Tel: 087-4178860. Email: carol@aplusplussoftware.com) or Sue (Tel: 087-277694. Email: arnulphy@loxinfo.co.th).

November 29. Wine Dinner at Mom Tri's Boathouse.

Mom Tri's Boathouse will

host an exclusive wine-tasting dinner, featuring wines of two very prestigious wine chateaux in France: Château Pichon Comtesse de Lalande (Pauillac, France) and Château L'Angelus (Saint Emilion, France).

Seating is limited and reservations are required. For more information call the Boathouse at 076-330015.

December 1-8. Phuket King's Cup Regatta.

The King's Cup Regatta is held every year to honor the birthday of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The week-long event is Asia's biggest and most popular regatta with great sailing and great parties along the way.

Visit www.kingscup.com or call 076-273380.

December 2. Laguna Phuket Triathlon.

Southeast Asia's premier multi-sport event, the Laguna Phuket Triathlon, is now in its 14th year, with a new swim course, altered bike and running routes, and a new start time of 7 am.

For details call 076-324060 or visit the website: www.lagunaphukettriathlon.com

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Building permit consistency slip-sliding away

As this edition goes to print, a 15-million-baht villa tenuously situated in the Patong hillsides stands ready at any moment to tumble into a workers' camp below. [See News section]

Reports of the late-night landslide quickly became the talk of the town in Patong, generating finger-pointing and speculative banter. Regardless of who is ultimately held responsible and who is left to suffer the brunt of the economic loss in this case, the fact remains that there seems to be no systematic approach – at any level of government in Phuket – to prevent such landslides.

While the nationwide ban on construction above 80 meters has been reasonably well enforced since its inception in 1994, what remains dangerously absent are any real controls on private-sector construction at lower elevations.

Former-Governor Udomsak Uswarangkura, who was keenly aware of the dangers involved, appointed a high-level provincial committee to deal specifically with approving new developments.

Unfortunately, after a high-profile case in Kalim targeting a project with foreign investment, the work of the committee – if it still functions at all – appears to have petered out. Committee or not, ever more risky hillside developments continue to spring up in places where common sense dictates they should not be allowed.

Some obvious examples can be seen along Phra Barami Rd, especially on Patong Hill. These not only create a landslide risk along the main artery into Patong, they also add to the already treacherous traffic conditions there as more and more motorists need to pull out, cross traffic and make precarious U-turns.

Remarkably, plans are now afoot to conduct yet another feasibility study, this one costing 80 million baht, investigating the possibility of building a new road or even a tunnel in the same area as a means of easing the chronic and worsening traffic problems in Patong.

Hardly a new idea, the megaproject in its latest conceptual incarnation would be funded by the central government (if the Democrats win the next election) or, failing that, built as a toll road with private sector investment.

Citing safety concerns, the municipalities of both Patong and Kathu – along with several other agencies – are fully behind the megaproject.

Patong Hill is far more dangerous for motorists now than it was five or 10 years ago. This begs the question: where was their concern for safety when the private sector development was turning a risky stretch of road into an outright hazardous one? – **The Editor**

Do you have an opinion you want to share?
Email editor@phuketgazette.net

The Phuket Gazette

In association with The Nation Multimedia Group PCL

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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.

Is Phuket still safe enough for holidays?

I read the *Gazette* every week and I am very afraid to come back to Phuket for my vacation because of the numerous attacks against foreigners.

Robbery, thieves and attacks in the night against farangs on motorbikes are becoming more common. How long will it take before more people are murdered?

I have been coming to Phuket for many years and I plan to come on holiday in November and January, but now I'm wondering if I should cancel my trip.

I sometimes come here with friends who have not been to Thailand before, and I ask myself, "Is Phuket safe enough?" What will the police do now?

Gerd Bullmann
Germany

Stamp out needless visa runs – now

So a bandaged and still-aching mugging victim is fined for overstaying his visa, even after presenting a police report to Ranong Immigration. What heartless – and brainless – bureaucracy, and yet what a perfectly clear example of the way certain officials in Thailand regard foreigners – as mere income pawns rather than as fellow humans.

One has to sit for only 10 minutes in Phuket or Ranong Immigration offices to see beneath the veneer of the Thai bureaucratic smile. As for visa runs themselves; they are an anachronistic and needless waste of time and money. The only people profiting from these abuses of dignity, time and safety are the

visa-run companies and the Burmese.

Everyone knows that, given the horrendous road and maritime safety record in Thailand, it is highly likely that there will be a serious accident during the course of one of these affronts, and that fatalities will ensue. All because of a passport stamp.

Sam W
Rawai

Looking for a safer place to stay

I used to be a frequent visitor to Phuket and spend my hard-earned money here as a tourist.

I am very surprised to read in the *Gazette* about the sudden increase in attacks on innocent tourists riding motorbikes late at night. This is not acceptable, but it appears to me that the local police are not interested in arresting the criminals.

I am aware that crime is on the rise worldwide, but mainly in large international cities where one is normally on the lookout for criminals. Phuket is a beach holiday destination, where foreign holidaymakers are less vigilant than they would be in a big city.

I urge the authorities to fly in top-class detectives from Bangkok to arrest these criminals, otherwise many of us will spend our money in holiday destinations where it is safe and where there is real law enforcement.

The "Thai smile" seems to be just a farce, because if this were allowed to continue, it would seem that foreign tourists were being looked upon purely as easy cash cows.

The only tourists who will be safe are the ones locked up in

their luxury hotels, too scared to venture out by themselves at night.

Peter de Haan
South Africa

Rawai: police action is needed now

Action is urgently needed by the police in Rawai to curb the violent attacks on expats and tourists. The situation is now out of hand and it seems the attackers are not scared at all. It's only a question of time before expat residents take action themselves.

Where are the police? I live in between Rawai and Kata and visit Rawai most days. Occasionally, I see one or two policemen drive past on motorbikes.

I have been followed on several occasions by men in pairs on motorbikes and it seems to be the norm now for these guys to attack when opportunity arises.

Action must be taken by the police. Phuket is a nice place – let's keep it that way and work as a community to solve this serious problem.

John Martins
British expat

Time to save the environment

Humans throw away tons of garbage every day, having an increasingly detrimental effect on the environment. For a start, it is time to use plastic bags less. People should refuse them when shopping. It's better to take a basket from home instead.

Also, recycling should be promoted more and we must think of alternative energy right now.

Concerned resident
Phuket

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

Calling on the community

Hotels that allow their staff to steal from guests' room safes or otherwise harm them will find their businesses suffering from lack of trade in the long run. In our increasingly inter-connected world the flow of negative publicity over the Internet can quickly destroy a hotel's reputation.

For this reason hotels need to do everything possible to ensure their guests' security, as the actions of even one rogue employee can put the entire operation at risk.

Although responsibility for providing good guest security lies mostly with hotel management, I will raise this issue at the next [monthly] meeting of the Phuket Provincial Security Committee.

I will also ask the police and private sector groups like the Phuket Tourist Association (PTA) and Thai Hotel Association Southern Chapter about security threats facing hotels as we enter the high season. In fact I have already mentioned these particular allegations to PTA Vice-President Panu Maswongsa.

On a broader level, the most effective approach to security depends upon having

The Governor's Letter

In this month's letter to Phuket's expat community, *Gazette* Chief Reporter Sangkhae Leelanapaporn asks Phuket Governor Niran Kalayanamit about recent reports on the Phuket forum of popular Internet blog site that one hotel in Patong has allowed its staff to systematically rob guests of valuables stored in room safes.

Here Governor Niran re-affirms his commitment to tourist security in general and warns hoteliers that failure to provide this will result in their own financial ruin.



strong community networks. This is especially true in Phuket, where the police force is small compared to the population – plus the large number of annual tourist visitors.

This is why I call on community leaders and local groups to come together to help strengthen our community ties.

I really do believe that strong community networks are the key, but this is a real challenge for a place like Phuket, which has

developed so rapidly.

Everyone here is wrapped up in their own business, which causes a lack in the kind of social cohesion that is the natural deterrent to crime and social ills.

In my campaign to develop our social networks I would also like to take advantage of technology, such as encouraging the Phuket Amateur Radio Club to assist in communication and the installation of more closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras.

Of course, the role of the police remains vital; if they can't uphold their duties, they shouldn't be on the force.

Going mobile. Phuket's mobile resident registration van, now fully-fitted with computer equipment and a satellite link to the Interior Ministry's registration offices in Bangkok, will be launched on November 4.

The objective is to report the actual number of Thai citizens living in the province, as many have lived here for a long time without registering.

The central government allots government budgets to provinces based largely on their registered populations, so for years Phuket has lost out in this regard due to the enormous number of workers migrating here from other provinces who don't transfer their names to a local house registration form (tabien baan).

The mobile registration van itself was donated by the Ban Thai Resort in Patong, which is where the van will make its public debut. The computer hardware and software alone costs about five million baht.

TOT is charging us about 800,000 baht a month for the

van's land-to-satellite link so we have to seek a discount from them and then find a budget to pay for that.

We still have to work out a regular schedule for where and when the van will be available to the public so that we can maximize the number of new registrations made.

The van will record movements of people in and out of the province, as tabulated by current listings on house registration forms. [By law, listed homeowners are required to add all new residents within 15 days of their moving in. If not, they are subject to a 1,000-baht fine.]

Other services offered by the mobile registration van will include free legal and employment consultation, though we still have to arrange manpower from the agencies involved.

We are making progress in our campaign. The official population at the end of 2006 was about 290,000. This latest count was 326,737.

Vegetable matter. I am glad that this year's Vegetarian Festival went off so well and want to thank the police, the Chinese shrines and the public for their co-operation in making it a success.

There were no major problems this year, and it was the first time I was able to pay a visit to all 16 participating shrines and enjoy meals with them.

I have heard that the number of people taking part this year was higher than ever. Perhaps this was partly due to the current economic situation.

With the high cost of fuel and other commodities maybe more people decided to take advantage of the low-cost and nutritious food on offer.

Niran Kalayanamit,
Governor of Phuket

Karon Pitch saga raises doubts about Rotary

Why did Patong Rotary spend 1.2 million baht on the grass at Karon stadium when there is still so much poverty and hardship in Phuket? Isn't the Rotary supposed to "provide humanitarian service?"

Explain to us the humanitarian benefit of grass. The real point of the Karon stadium fiasco has been overlooked.

The local soccer players, who have nowhere else to go, are now being blamed – along with local officials – for the poor state of the playing surface.

The fact is, the tourists can go somewhere else; the locals cannot.

Surely Patong Rotary didn't give such a massive amount with the hidden agenda of providing a soft landing for the once-a-year tourists who fly in to play rugby and soccer?

Patong Rotary should be helping the needy. Get your priorities right and stop abusing the good name of Rotary, please.

Marcia Flemington
Samkong

OB Wetzell, president of the Rotary Club of Patong, replies:

While I proudly believe that the donation of money by the Rotary Club of Patong was a good thing for which we should

be praised and not challenged, perhaps some explanation would further understanding.

Many donations to any Rotary Club come with allocation restrictions. With regards to the donation for Karon Stadium turf, the donor required that the funds be spent on rebuilding something that had been destroyed in the tsunami of December 2004.

Due diligence performed by the Rotary Board suggested several other reasons why the Karon Stadium turf project was an appropriate recipient of funds.

Among the reasons are that the children of Karon had lost a playground; Rugby 10s had lost a venue to host an event that would generate further charity funds and recognition for Karon; Patong Rotary had assurances

that the field would be maintained.

Since this donation satisfied the allocation restrictions and held other potential charitable gains, the board voted to spend the money to re-turf the pitch.

Patong Rotary has had the good fortune of placing over 42 million baht in an array of worthy causes, including immunizing children against polio, sponsoring the full (K-12) education of 225 children, rebuilding an entire fishing village wiped out by the tsunami and providing 20 immobilized people with motorized wheelchairs.

The fact that our donation was not properly maintained by the local authorities doesn't merit us criticism. We are all volunteers and we do our best.

Issues & ANSWERS

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The Japanese may have lost World War II and won the peace, but their lingering world legacy is karaoke, the follow-the-bouncing-ball music machine that makes tone-deaf people think they sound like Frank Sinatra reincarnated – and that includes the women.

I was reminded of karaoke when watching some aged former singer doing Frank Sinatra's anthem *My Way* on television: "...and not the words of one who nills/the recud shows I took the blows/and did it my way." It was sung in monotone by someone who might have been a real hit with a microphone in 1960, but this guy was long past it now and sounded Zambian.

Here in Fun Town, the plethora of karaoke bars is reaching plague proportion with anyone and everyone installing a machine and warbling, screeching and screaming at full volume from sundown to sun-up. Many sound as if they are being strangled and castrated at the same time.

Before the former Interior Minister Purely Puritannical's crackdown on places of entertainment in the early part of the Thaksin premiership, the *Pattaya Mail* newspaper was receiving many irate letters from expats suffering sleep deprivation and sensory assault.

The then-mayor K. Slowleecatchemonkey said it would take between three

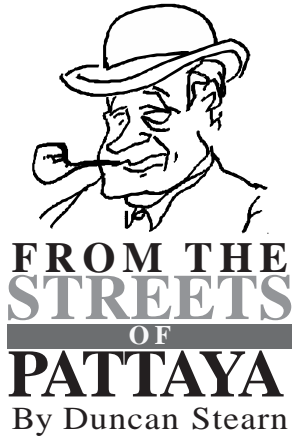
Sirens sweetly strangling

and 10 years to enact and enforce zoning and noise regulation; in the meantime, people started voting with their feet and moved away from areas where the karaoke bars reigned supreme.

Somewhere, there is a Thai translation of Homer's *Odyssey* that depicts how Ulysses was unable to resist the lure of the Sirens and became the first Greek karaoke singer in history; a fate decreed as worse than death by the Gods on Olympus.

The louder the Sirens wailed, the more devastatingly attractive and irresistible they became. The operators of karaoke bars failing to draw sufficient custom employ what I call the "Sirens solution": pump up the volume until either the speakers explode or the whole edifice collapses like the Walls of Jericho.

In many places, the volume is close to full pitch, the speakers face the street and the bar is lucky if there are more than two or three customers. Sometimes there are none at all. Of course, the simple solu-



tion to a lack of custom is to turn the volume up. Perhaps bar owners think their fellow citizens have the auditory sense of homing pigeons and will be drawn to the noisiest establishment.

Truth in advertising is another dubious area when it comes to this style of establishment. At the entrance to Soi 5 on the Second Road was an incongruous sign promoting one karaoke. Coming from the Central Pattaya side, the

sign featured a voluptuous female in a white bikini while the reverse showed a young lady sitting in the sand in a full gold-color g-string swimsuit.

Yet another sign at the end of the soi showed a lady immersed in water up to her chest with what looked like a pair of giant buoyancy tanks in front of her. All three ladies were of the blond-haired, blue-eyed variety and I seriously doubt those who frequent this establishment ever expected to find such Valkyries' warbling in D-flat into the microphones.

In the Philippines, karaoke is taken

extremely seriously. Many Filipinos are accomplished singers and there was once a report in a major newspaper of a 25-year-old Filipino man being stabbed to death for singing out of tune. The song in question was, of course, *My Way*. Wholesale slaughter would ensue across the length and breadth of Pattaya if it were permissible to stab people to death for singing out of tune.

Some of the residents of Soi Yensabai in South Pattaya were so incensed by the lack of police enforcement of closing times (meant to be 2 am, but many places remain open despite the law), they were selling up and moving elsewhere, while holidaymakers were vowing never again to rent a condo in the vicinity.

When the boys in brown do front up at the offending bars following a raft of complaints, the karaoke bar owners turn down the volume for about an hour or so, or, if it is a Thai who has complained, the joint might stay subdued for a couple of days.

Regardless, it isn't long before the wailing starts again at increased pitch: "...but, through it all/when there was doubt/I ate it up/and spat it out/and did it, my way."

In The Stars

by Isla Star

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): If you're upset by a family member this weekend, the only sensible reaction is to do nothing. Your tendency to fly off the handle will stir the pot. Those celebrating a birthday will find the year ahead easier than the one just passed, but one or two challenges still need to be faced during November. Finances are forecast to receive a boost from a surprise source later this week.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Too much time spent dreaming of the impossible is holding you back. Where work is concerned, Aries is beginning to wonder if you have the skills required to move up the career

ladder. Seize the opportunity to prove yourself in the middle of the week. Love takes you on a journey this weekend; resist the temptation of traveling too far from the familiar path. The number 5 can bring some luck on Monday.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Many of you will be in high spirits this week as more than one project comes to successful fruition. On Tuesday you discover a possible way to make some extra money; don't share this secret until it's a done deal. Cancer could be a prospective romantic partner and this liaison has the full support of Cupid. Deep-jade green sharpens your instincts.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19) A lucky month lies ahead in love and finance. If you've been single for some time and are serious about altering that status, accept a social invitation on Saturday, even if it means leaving your usual comfort zone. You will also have the chance to help a shy Libran friend meet someone special. Investments made at the beginning of the week should be worth their weight in gold.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Play it safe at work this week. You should first prove that you are capable of doing the job before trying to get a pay rise. Where love is concerned, you get a bee in your sunhat that could

irritate someone beyond the point of no return. Monday is the best day for investigating the property market if you're thinking of relocation. The color pearl pink soothes your stress.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): An intriguing mystery occupies much of your attention this week. You will not be able to let this matter drop until you have got to the bottom of it. Aquarius can possibly shed light, but Taurus is ready to play games. A romantic interlude on Tuesday helps you to realize that you are ready to get more serious with the person concerned. Wearing onyx encourages strength of character.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Cooler weather allows you to feel less hot and bothered. As soon as you learn not to sweat, the small things in life will take you on a tranquil path. November is a good month to pay attention to minor health issues that you have been ignoring. Romance begins to become more important toward the end of this week, and being reunited with someone from your past is highlighted.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): The cloud of confusion that hung over you during the final week of October should blow away this weekend. You will know exactly which moves to make regarding work and finances, but a love affair remains an awkward issue until the middle of the month. A Leo friend has a burning question to ask on Sunday – don't feel obliged to give the answer you know they expect. The number 6 can open a lucky door on Monday.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): Finances remain a rocky issue, al-

though the situation is due to smooth out by the end of the week. Become less flexible where unpaid debts are concerned as people are probably using that money to their own advantage. Fun is highlighted for those of you who are actively seeking it; if you're content to remain in your shell, it won't come knocking. Wear lime green to encourage more energy.

LEO (July 24-August 22): A busy week lies ahead. Most things won't go according to plan until after Tuesday, so put important decisions on hold until then. If you are single, you will be impressed by how hard Virgo tries to get noticed; you are advised to show low-key interest, but take the time to find out what really makes them tick.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Your confidence should be higher by now, but those of you who still can't forget a romance that turned sour earlier in the year will have good reason to do so this week. A chance to earn some extra cash should be pounced on later in the week. Thursday is the best day for sorting out a tedious bureaucratic affair, but be prepared to accept that your point of view will not be taken seriously.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): November should be a good month for finances. Those of you who have been waiting patiently for the right investment opportunity will be satisfied this week. However, some last-minute juggling will be required to pull the deal off. Your partner is likely to expect some extra attention this weekend; if you've been working overtime recently, now is the chance to make up for it.

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Phuket kids learn Budo

By Michael Stanley

Yes, it is spelled correctly. Budo is a sport with roots in Japanese martial arts, which combines several self defense and fighting techniques.

One of the multi-faceted sport's teachers Olaf Van Ellen recently brought Budo to Phuket with the 7th international Budo Camp Thailand, held from October 18 to 24 at the Best Western Bang Tao Beach Resort.

The Budo camp, jointly organized by Phuket Provincial Administration Organization, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and Phuket Sports Association provided a forum for martial arts enthusiasts to share their skills, experience and cultures while helping to promote the sport among young people.

Budo is a Japanese term that literally translates as "martial path" ("bu", meaning martial, and "do", pronounced "doe") is derived from the Buddhist Sanskrit, meaning the "path to enlightenment".

Budo comprises many different disciplines and many consider it a more civilian form of martial arts, compared with the older *bujutsu*, which is categorized as a more militaristic style or strategy.



Budo disciplines include Thai boxing, taekwondo and aikido with more unorthodox styles being continually added by its teachers and is rapidly gaining in popularity around the world.

Olaf has been involved in martial arts for over 31 years. A German national coach, Olaf is the founder of Budo Camp and has even pioneered his own fighting technique, the Atemi Combat System. The first Budo Camp was held in Sri Lanka in 1999 where he taught from up to 35 people at one time.

"Budo has become much more popular over recent years. The last time I went back to teach Budo in Sri Lanka, I was teaching much bigger classes of about 400," Olaf said.

"Word about the camps has spread



Above: Students size up at Budo Camp Thailand. Left: An older student learns a more physical lesson in self-defense.

and now they are held all over the world, including China, Sri Lanka, Malta, Holland and Dubai," he added.

Helping out Master Olaf at Budo Camp was Phuket Muay Thai trainer Sawirin Pinkaew, also known as Master J, who has won several medals as a Muay Thai fighter and taught in Europe before he opened his own gym, Surakit Gym in Cherg Talay.

During the camp, Master J said that he discovered and built up muscles he never knew he had by practicing capoeira; a form of self defense that was developed by African slaves taken to Brazil.

The slaves were forbidden to practice their martial art, but they evaded this

rule through the guise of traditional African dance. Musical instruments were played and the result was a unique form of dance that disguised the fighting techniques they were practicing.

Capoeira engages the eyes and ears of spectators and the muscles of anyone taking part. Europeans and Asians alike practice this ancient Afro-Brazilian art. The incorporation of capoeira bears testament to the versatility of the camp, but it's just one of the many disciplines that fall under the budo blanket.

If budo sounds like your kind of martial-arts training program visit www.budo-camp.com



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Phuket receives Google Earth major upgrade

Two years ago, I talked about Google Earth in this column. At the time, it was a brand-new application with breathtaking capabilities, destined to revolutionize the way people looked at maps and mapping.

In 2005, the map of Phuket was roughly divided down the middle – in terms of quality. The eastern half of the island had fairly-detailed maps, with roads and large buildings clearly discernible.

The western half of the island, though, appeared in low resolution. You could make out large areas such as Laguna and Patong, but it was impossible to see most roads or landmarks.

About two weeks ago, all of that changed.

For reasons only known to the Googlies, in early October the western half of Phuket got a refresh – a makeover of the first degree. As the accompanying screen shot shows, the new maps of western Phuket include enough detail to clearly see individual cars and buildings.

The satellite photos appear to be about a year old, judging by the status of various construction projects.

You can now bring up full maps of Phuket – and most of Thailand – with incredibly detailed satellite photos all stitched together in a way that makes it easy

to zoom in or out, pinpoint a location, or even – you have to see this to believe it – angling the view from the tops of buildings or take in long vistas with mountains, rivers, trees and highways.

Google has integrated references to Wikipedia – click on the orb in Ao Nang, for example, and the detailed Wikipedia description of Ao Nang appears. It also has automatic links to photos posted on Panoramio: click a camera icon on the map and Google Earth retrieves a photo taken at that specific point.

It's an absolutely indispensable tool for anyone who works in tourism, real estate, land development or conservation, and it's mighty handy for those of us who need directions.

If you've never used Google Earth, you're in for a treat – providing your Internet connection can handle the load. Go to earth.google.com and click the link to download the appropriate version of Google Earth. It'll take a while to download and install.

When Google Earth comes up for air, type "Phuket, Thailand" in the search bar, and watch as the earth rotates, gets closer and closer, until finally you can see the island.

Then you can "grab" the map and move down, say, the by-

pass road, identify the landmarks as you fly, and "tilt" the camera so you see the tops or different angles of the fronts of buildings. Yes, you can zoom in and see cars and shopping carts, or zoom out and look at the roads, lakes, hills, intersections, construction sites and even patches of undeveloped land.

The new Placemark tool caught my eye. Navigate to a location that you find interesting – say, your house, business or a favorite watering hole. Click the

yellow push-pin icon on the Google Earth Toolbar and a new Placemark, which looks like a

yellow push-pin, appears on the map.

Drag the push-pin to the location in question, then type a name for the Placemark.

When you've positioned the Placemark where you want it, right-click on the push-pin and choose "Email".

A couple of clicks later, you can email the Placemark to anyone you like. If the person who receives the message has Google Earth working, simply double-clicking on the attached Placemark not only fires up Google Earth, it moves the globe around to the precise location you chose.

Your correspondent can



I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW: Google Earth now offers fairly-high-definition satellite photos of all of Phuket, sufficiently detailed to show individual cars.

This shot of Jungceylon, still under construction, confirms that the photos are about a year old. There's a car on the right, near the current location of the new Starbucks.

then zoom in or out, tilt to see the surrounding terrain or use the location as a starting point to ask for driving instructions. Incredible.

If you're feeling particularly earth-bound, you can use Google Earth to map out the sky. Use Google Earth to navigate to your house. Then click "View", "Switch to Sky". A minute or two later, and you're staring at the sky directly above the location you chose – with constellations, galaxies and other heavenly objects clearly indicated.

There's an excellent overview of Google Earth's myriad capabilities and features at www.earthblog.com/basics.html.

Google Earth ain't perfect. In many ways it relies on the contributions of normal people like you and me. Don't know about you, but I make a lot of mistakes. So do the contributors. If you want to see a particularly confusing set of errors, try using the search box to look for "Chalong, Phuket". I counted eight differ-

ent prominently-marked locations for Wat Chalong – all of them associated with the LOCR photo service – while the real Wat Chalong is easy to find only if you already know its location.

Got a computer question, comment, suggestion or vituperation? Join us for the weekly PC Group Therapy meetings, 10 am until noon every Sunday morning at the Sandwich Shoppe in Patong. See www.khunwoody.com for driving instructions.

Every week we tackle a variety of problems and bring folks up to date on the latest news. It's absolutely free, and open to everyone, especially unabashed novices.

I'm trying to figure out a schedule for holding PC Group Therapy meetings in the new Sandwich Shoppe just before the main entrance to Laguna in Chalong Talay and the new shop at Fisherman's Way Center on Chao Fa East Rd in Chalong.

If you have a suggestion for dates and times, please drop me a line at Woody@KhunWoody.com

When he isn't writing computer books and magazine and newsletter articles, or knocking Microsoft around on his website, Woody Leonhard (woody@khunwoody.com, www.askwoody.com) runs Khun Woody's Bakery and the Sandwich Shoppes in Patong, Laguna, and soon in Chalong.

Woody's 33rd computer book, Windows Vista Timesaving Techniques For Dummies, was sighted at several local bookshops last month, but now appears to be sold out in Phuket.

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China stumbling to avoid crash

In mid-October, business television channel CNBC interviewed Bill Gross, founder and chief investment officer of PIMCO and considered by many to be the guru of bonds. PIMCO, until the fairly recent merger of Merrill Lynch and Blackrock, was the largest fixed interest-bond manager in the US.

PIMCO is now owned by German insurer, banking and asset management giant Allianz, but obviously a real part of the value of the business is Bill Gross. In his opinion, the US economy in 2008 will slow to an annualized rate of 1% to 1.5% GDP growth (gross domestic product). This is slow, but he does not foresee a recession.

He also said that the US Federal Reserve (the US central bank) will reduce its Federal Funds Rate – currently at 4.75% after a 50-basis-point cut of 0.5% in September – to around 3.75%. However, the cuts will take some time to implement.

He sees the US stock market as being fair value at around 16 times price-earnings ratio and that the position is being helped by a robust global economy.

Also, he pointed out that US exports are rising, a situation being helped by the weak US dollar making US products cheaper on the global market.

The international press has highlighted that this October is the 20th anniversary of the 1987 Wall Street “crash”. The current economic situation shares some similarities, such as years of rising US stock market values.

However, what is often for-

gotten is that in 1987 the market was in a full swing bull mode. The US Federal Reserve, or “the Fed”, raised interest rates twice, by 1% in each case. It was only after the second rise that the market crashed.

What is also often forgotten is that despite the violent correction, the markets rallied and most major global stock markets exceeded their 1987 highs within 18 to 24 months of the “crash”.

This means that it was not actually a “crash” but rather a huge correction in an ongoing bull market that had run ahead of itself.

Today, the Fed has cut interest rates, providing a much more benign environment for the stock market.

There are bubbles, however, one of which appears to be China. Until recently, it was just assumed that this rising leviathan was going to continue to grow at an enormous pace.

Yet, cracks may be appearing in the Chinese economic dream. Shenzhen, a city of 14 million adjacent to Hong Kong, is experiencing problems in even upscale areas of the city, with significant empty new apartment blocks, 30% to 40% unoccupied.

A few months ago the market was hot, now real estate agents stand on the street with placards loudly touting real estate to passing traffic – to little avail.

The Chinese Central Bank has raised short-term interest rates five times this year and forced banks and commercial lenders to increase their reserve requirements eight times. I

MONEY TALKS



By Richard G. Watson



The Chinese stock market is at record levels, but the economy is showing signs of stress. The question is, will the bubble burst?

strongly suspect that much of this lending is of poor quality.

In the words of Huo Deming, an economics professor at Peking University, “What China is doing nowadays can be described as crossing a river by fumbling for stones... The Chinese government is, in fact, fumbling for the right path for Chinese Economic Development.”

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that some economists are becoming alarmed that the Chinese authorities are tightening economic controls too rapidly. These are communist controls on what is an increasingly capitalistic economy. The *Journal* reports: “there could be devastating consequences far beyond the

real-estate market in Shenzhen”.

It was also reported that state banks abruptly stopped lending, stating that they had reached their quota.

In addition, “black market” banks were raided by police for financing speculation in the property market, which in effect removed yet another source of liquidity.

Taking all this into consideration, plus the aforementioned increases in interest rates and the banks’ capital reserve requirements, the scene is starting to show cause for deep concern.

The stock market is at record levels. Unfortunately, it has lost track with anything near value, with some analysts estimating that the average Chinese share could be trading at a price-earnings ratio of 70.

Considering that a PE ratio of 15 is reasonable and 25 expensive, at 70 the Chinese stock

markets are performing a high-wire act. Eventually, there must be a crash.

The *Wall Street Journal* quotes the chief economist at Asia-Pacific brokerage firm CLSA, Jim Walker, who has long been worrying about weaknesses in the Chinese economy. He predicts that efforts to control inflation will fail in 2008 and economic growth will “screech” to 5%. “They are walking straight into the Japan problem.”

A “drop” to 5% would be very welcome in Thailand right now as growth this year is lower, at around 4%. China has an economy that is hurtling along at 11% plus, a rapid deceleration to 5% with asset markets tumbling is going to cause a lot of pain and bad debts for the finance and banking sector.

The real impact on the economy could be severe. The “Japan problem” that Jim Walker referred to is very real. Japan had a booming economy in the 1980s. Stock market valuations were very stretched. The property market was white hot. Japanese companies were respected world players.


Then came the early 1990s. Japan’s economy crashed. It took about a decade to restore credit worthiness to Japan’s banking system.

The Japanese government, led by its current LDP (Liberal Democrat Party), went on a spending spree, landing Japan in debt of around 170% of GDP – the highest in the industrialized world.

China must be very careful not to follow Japan. However, with a Communist government in charge, anything can happen.

The other problem is contagion – how much will a changed Chinese economy spill over to the rest of the world? As the Chinese say, “May you live in interesting times.”

Richard G Watson runs *Global Portfolios Co Ltd*, a Phuket-based personal financial-planning service. He can be reached at Tel: 076-381997, Fax: 076-383185, Mobile: 081-0814611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th Website: www.global-portfolios.com



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By Janyaporn Morel

Phuket minimum wage to match Bangkok rate

PHUKET: Recently announced increases to the daily minimum wage rates are higher for Phuket than any other province, making the rate the highest in the country outside Bangkok.

Effective January 1, all employers in Phuket will be required to pay non-salary staff a minimum of 193 baht a day, a seven-baht-a-day rise.

Krabi's minimum wage is set to rise four baht to 160 baht a day and Phang Nga's rate will rise three baht to 162 baht a day.

A three-baht-per-day increase will take effect in Bangkok and surrounding provinces, pushing minimum wages in the capital to 194 baht a day.

The pay rises, based on the suggestions of tripartite advisory panels in each province, still need final approval by Cabinet.

Phuket Provincial Labor Office chief Suthipong Saisakhars told the *Gazette* that the revision was based on Phuket's sustained economic growth.

K. Suthipong represented the government in the tripartite advisory panel that also included representatives of employees and employers. "Phuket has the same cost of living as Bangkok, if not higher. That's why we decided to raise the rate to be on par with the capital," he said.

The new rate would not have a large negative impact because most workers are involved

in the tourism sector and are already paid above the minimum wage, said K. Suthipong.

The new rate will apply to foreign workers as well as Thai nationals, he added.

Wijit Dasanthad, president of the Phuket Service Workers' Association, said the new rate is appropriate and will help attract more workers to the province, which faces a labor shortage, he said.

One sector that stands to be affected is the fishing industry. Sathaporn Bhuyathorn, general manager of Thai Ocean Venture Co Ltd in Rassada, said his firm currently employs about 250 minimum-rate workers.

"We are already struggling with the strength of the baht because we sell our products in US dollars. An increase to the minimum wage will force us to adjust budgets across the board. A seven-baht increase is huge. It will also force us to raise the wages of our 78 salaried employees in order to keep everything balanced.

"As soon as we were told

about it we held a meeting and calculated that our salaried employees will need a 12% pay hike just to maintain the current differential. This is going to be tough for us," he said.

The hike was announced too late to allow it to be incorporated into next year's budget, he added.

"We cannot factor it into our product costs right away because we sell three to six months in advance. We did plan on a minimum-wage rise, but expected it to be only about four baht per day."

"Even though we are a large employer, we were never asked for our input. Of course we will comply, but I think there could have been a more balanced approach. It seems like they only asked tourism businesses, which can pass the costs on their customers more easily. A factory like ours can't do that nearing the end of the quarter," he said.

The company will discuss a price increase with customers and try to find ways to improve worker productivity. The Phuket fish processing industry faces

chronic labor problems due to competition from the tourism sector, where workers are paid better for easier work, he said.

Monthly employee turnover is already about 20% and the company faces problems keeping staff long enough to gain the training and experience needed to do tasks requiring greater skill.

"We don't use foreigners because we can find enough Thai workers, perhaps because they get paid every two weeks. We plan to increase our workforce by about 15% next year," he said.

Supa Prouksarat, of Siam Tuna Supply in Rassada, said, "We have about 60 minimum-

wage workers. This hike will certainly affect us as it will have a ripple effect across the entire production process," she said.

Prices of raw tuna and other materials would also rise as a result and ultimately the added costs will have to be passed on to customers, she said.

Phummisak Hongyok, former Phuket City Mayor and current President of the Phuket Real Estate Club, said businesses were already suffering from increases in both oil prices and official land assessments. The pay hike could deal a further blow to the investment climate in the province, he said.

VITAL STATISTICS:

Company Registrations	Sept '06	Sept '07
Limited company registrations	76	78
Limited partnership registrations	32	26
Limited companies restructured	363	329
Limited partnerships restructured	35	38
Companies de-registered	17	24
Partnerships de-registered	8	5

Source: Phuket Business Development Office

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Phuket diver sets the record straight

The high season is here and the dive industry has been quiet in the past few months, so this is the perfect opportunity to clear up any confusion about the industry before the facts are mixed up, misreported, misspelled or just plainly misunderstood.

Starting with the basics: flippers. Divers refer to animal limbs as flippers such as the appendages found on turtles, penguins and dolphins. When it comes to diving or snorkeling equipment, we prefer to call them fins. Consequently, when you swim underwater with such equipment, it is called finning.

Then there is confusion between masks and goggles. A mask encloses the nose, therefore making it possible to blow air into the mask in order to prevent the water pressure from crushing it against your face. Goggles cover only the eyes and are typically worn by swimmers who do not face water pressure changes during their activities, no pun intended.

And another object of confusion is the dive computer, which is not a watch. A watch tells the time, date and maybe the even the moon phases and tides. A dive computer gives so much information that it would require a dedicated article. In general, a dive computer gives dive time limits, depth limits and other potentially lifesaving information.

What seems to cause the most confusion are terms like dive master, master scuba diver, dive master trainee, instructor, master instructor, instructor trainee and course director.

It may be unclear that there are different dive certification agencies. Most of them are international and have similar goals: to educate people in the sport of diving and offer courses up to a professional level. However,

some of them use different terminology for the equivalent levels ranging from entry-level diver to instructor.

The most well known in Thailand and best marketed so far is PADI, which is an acronym for: Professional Association of Dive Instructors. A large majority of the dive professionals in Thailand are PADI instructors working in PADI-affiliated dive centers.

A growing agency in Thailand is SSI, Scuba Schools International, which has already enjoyed much popularity overseas. They also provide the same kind of education, from entry level to professional. It is possible to be an instructor affiliated with more than one agency.

The Confédération Mondiale des Activités Subaquatiques (CMAS) is quite popular in Europe. In Thailand the TDA, Thailand Diving Association, is the Thailand branch of CMAS and was just recently mentioned in the local press for certifying sea gypsies to entry level with hopes to "prepare them for possible future work as instructors in the local dive industry".

Other associations not so obvious in Phuket are NAUI (National Association of Underwater Instructors) and BSAC (British Sub Aqua Club), which probably has the most rigorous training course.

Years ago, even the YMCA in the US used to issue diving certification cards. In addition to these agencies there are smaller

Beneath the SURFACE
By Sylvie Yaffe



With the high season fast approaching, now is the perfect time to brush up on terminology and sort out your dive masters from your master dive instructors. Photo taken by Joel Tomalin.

ones that also provide similar training and a handful of technical agencies for dive training well beyond recreational limits.

For an entry-level diver, the course is generally three to five days and includes classroom theory, confined water skills in a pool or shallow ocean and then the actual dives, referred to as the "open water" dives.

Once the course is complete, the student is a certified diver. For PADI and SSI, this is called Open Water Diver. for CMAS it is a 1-star.

From entry level, the diver

of hands-on experience assisting with dives, guiding under supervision and lots of theory. During this process the student is a dive-master trainee, under the supervision of an instructor.

It is commonly misunderstood that a dive master is higher than an instructor.

After the person completes their PADI dive master course, they can go on to take the instructor course. It is not necessary to continue with PADI; a person can continue their education with a different agency depending on each agency's own criteria.

A person who wants to be a PADI instructor then has to take the instructor course, well known to be grueling, but hey, it's only about two weeks long. A course director, or as SSI says, instructor trainer, then conducts the course. Think of it as an instructor instructor. With PADI, this instructor certification course is called the IDC, or instructor development course.

After a person becomes a PADI instructor they can go on to fulfill a new set of criteria and become master instructors. Also adding to the confusion, recreational divers who like to accumulate certification cards and continue with dive courses to broaden experience and education can go on to become master scuba divers, which is not a professional rating.

If this is all to confusing then remember this: ironically, a dive master often refers to the title as "dive slave" because there is usually an instructor somewhere asking them to carry heavy tanks and boxes, and to clean dive equipment. Of course, this is one of the incentives to continue on with the program and become an instructor.

Sylvie Yaffe is a retired dive master with over 1,000 dives in the Similan Islands and friend of the Phuket dive industry. She can be reached at info@andamanavenue.com.

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Four Winds sails to ACYC victory

By Leslie Hand

AO CHALONG: "Plain sailing" described the action during Race 13 of the Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC) Keelboat and Multihull Race Series 2007 on October 21.

Light winds and a course that involved a sail around Koh Mai Thon for the Racing and Multihull classes and windward-leeward legs for the Cruising class, saw the seven boats taking part enjoying an easy yet long day out on the water.

Ben Copely's *Asia Spirit* won the Racing class once again, finishing the course in four hours and six minutes. The all-Thai crew on *Cinders*, in training for the upcoming King's Cup Regatta, finished in six hours, just making it to shore by nightfall.

The "Banana Boat", John Fenn's yellow *Four Winds*, once again lathered up to take first place in the Cruising class. Roger Diggelman on *Nerida* finished second in the class, followed by Nick Band on *Emerald Blue*, which placed third.

Tim Milner's *Seekronghuk* maintained her winning streak in the Multihull class, ahead of Bob



John Fenn's *Four Winds* sails to victory in the Cruising class of Race 13 in the ACYC Race Series. Photo by Leslie Hand for ImageAsia Events.

Brindley on *X Cat Riot*, which finished second.

With only two races remaining in the series, class placements and the overall winner trophies are still up for grabs. Race 14 will be November 4, followed by the final regatta on the November 18.

Awards will be handed out at the race series closing party on November 30.

For more details call Tony Knight at 081-7470074.

King's Cup Regatta set for record turnout

By Pathomporn Kaenkrachang

PHUKET: The Phuket King's Cup Regatta 2007, scheduled to take place December 1 until 8, is expected to attract record numbers of sailors to the Andaman Sea this year.

The regatta is being held in honor of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who celebrates his 80th birthday December 5.

Phuket Vice-Governor Worapoj Rattasima said, "We are looking forward to the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, which is an international sailing event."

"More than 100 boats have signed up for the challenge and over 200 international media members will be present. This is the biggest race in Asia and we will support it with tight security, sightseeing tours and other tourist services."

"This year we have support from the Third Navel Area Command, Thailand Authority of Tourism (TAT), and many other organizations in Phuket."

Likhit Charoensup, deputy commander of the Third Naval Area Command, said, "We are responsible for providing security for this event, and we will support it and be on the alert with helicopters to help any racers in need of assistance."

"There will be two teams from the Royal Thai Navy and a team from the Royal Thai Academy present at the event."

Suwalai Pinpradab, TAT Southern Region 4 Office director, said, "The Phuket King's Cup Regatta is known around the world and is a good way for us to promote Thailand as a tourist destination."

"There will be many tourists in Phuket before, during and after the race."

"We estimate that there will be about 2000 crew members arriving here."

Santi Kanchanabandhu, King's Cup president, said that



Royal Thai Navy 1 salute during the sail-past in honor of His Majesty The King's birthday at last year's King's Cup Regatta.

Photo by Rick Tomlinson.

there will be competitors from Hong Kong, Russia, China, Germany, Belgium, Canada and the Philippines, as well as about 10 Thai teams.

"It is a great way to meet new people. December 1 and 2 are for registration and measurement and then an opening party will be held at the Kata Beach Resort on December 2 at 6:30 pm.

The first day of racing will take place on the morning of

Monday December 3. This year there will be a candle ceremony to celebrate HM The King's birthday and the Royal Thai Navy will perform a sail by on the water."

There are 10 classes for King's Cup: sunsail one design, IRC classes, SBR sport boats, bareboat charter, ocean rover, firefly 850 sports, multihulls and classic. Referees will be from Australia, China, Japan and Thailand.

PATONG DARTS LEAGUE

PATONG: In a closely-fought battle between league leaders Queen Mary and defending champs Dogs Bollocks, Queen Mary fought their way back from a 3-1 deficit to win three straight games. Dogs Bollocks recovered to even regular play at 4-4 to force the match down to the last doubles.

Lars and Joy gave Queen Mary the 5-4 win when steady-handed Lars banged the match-winning dart into the x9. Pong of Queen Mary needed only one dart to close the beer leg with a double-16, giving Queen Mary a three-point victory.

October 23 results: Piccadilly 5 Market Bar* 4; Queen Mary* 5 Dogs Bollocks 4; Shakers* 8 Beach House 1; Simply Red 1 Offshore* 8; Valhalla bye (* = winner of beer leg).

Standings: 1. Queen Mary (24); 2. Piccadilly (20); 3. Dogs Bollocks (18); 4.= Shakers, Offshore (16); 6.= Market Bar, Simply Red (8); 8. Valhalla (5); 9. Beach House (2).

November 6 matchups: Dogs Bollocks v Market Bar; Piccadilly v Queen Mary; Offshore v Beach House; Simply Red v Valhalla; Shakers bye (home team first).

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Design by Semacote Suganya



The villas at Layan Tara are being built over an actual lagoon.

Floating a design

Layan Tara villas offer waterfront living in contemporary Balinese-style homes resting on the surrounding waters of a nine-rai lagoon near Bang Tao Beach.

The single-level, low-density residential development covers 18 rai and is designed to offer residents a tranquil resort-like environment with spacious and airy villas, each with a private pool, overlooking the lagoon.

Project Director and Phuket native Kawee Nganhawee enlisted 3K development to help carry out the planning and construction of the modern villas designed to offer a unique and contemporary lagoon-side lifestyle.

Living in a villa that seems to float on the surrounding water is the conceptual focus of Layan Tara. Each home also has its own private pool overlooking the lagoon.

“With so many residential developments in Phuket, we have worked hard to come up with a unique modern concept that reflects the traditional Asian lifestyle of living on the waterfront. We had to dig the lagoon and line

it with PVC to ensure the water stays in,” K. Kawee said.

“Layan Tara villas comprises both residential and resort villas, which will be operated with hotel service oriented management.

“The idea of the villa designs and layout is to give residents the feeling of living in a condominium that is open to the elements, is peaceful and private,” K. Kawee added.

At 1.5 meters deep, the man-made ponds offer tranquil surroundings for the villa residents and resort guests.

The villas’ pilings are designed to be high enough to keep the villas raised above the lagoon’s water level so the homes seem to float on the water.

Using several deep pilings as opposed to the standard single footing for the homes ensures that they will be very stable and support them safely above the water.

Seven villas have already been completed so far and foreigners are expected to make up the majority of the home owners as the project is in Bang Tao,

which is a popular tourist area in Phuket.

There are two buying options for the villas. Foreigners can own the villa outright and take out a 90-year lease on the plot, even though the villas are on water. The plots and the villas can also be bought if the buyer is Thai.

Being surrounded by water, it was important to ensure the construction materials for the villas would last a long time without being affected by moisture so the door and window frames are made of white aluminum instead of wood, which would deteriorate and warp with the humidity.

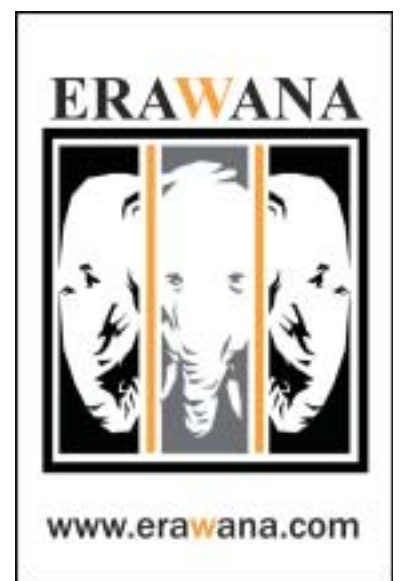
The villas are designed to be airy and allow the wind to provide natural ventilation, which will keep the homes cool, even in the hot season.

This is achieved with large sliding glass doors at the front that open out onto the lagoon view veranda, which will look nice when it is lit up at night and reflected in the water.

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The view from atop

Ayara Baan Thai is a large, luxury property in a prestigious estate at Surin Beach, Cherng Talay. This palatial home boasts traditional Thai design, four bedrooms, five bathrooms, a range of modern amenities and magnificent sea views from every room.

A view of Phuket's famous west-coast sunsets can be seen from the 60-square-meter infinity swimming pool and poolside terrace. Great for late-night soirées, this area has an impressive outdoor entertainment system and pool bar.

The first level of the residence has two bedrooms with built-in wardrobes, en-suite bathrooms and two maids' quarters, also en-suite.

The second level houses the main living area, one bedroom with en-suite bath, and an additional bathroom servicing the living room, kitchen and dining room.

The living room features vaulted hardwood ceilings, as does the luxurious and modern master bedroom. Replete with a private balcony, office and library area, this bedroom also boasts a walk-in closet and large dressing room.

Perfect for Phuket's climate is an outdoor bath with two shower heads and small sitting areas, perfect for a romantic time with a loved one.

The third level hosts a master suite and second living room, offering total privacy.

This large house with ducted air conditioning is fully furnished with quality furniture made from natural, local materials and is ready to move in. The price of luxury? Unfurnished, this property will set you back 80 million baht.

Located in an affluent neighborhood on the west coast, Ayara Baan Thai is located near a range of facilities including



Ayara Baan Thai is located at Surin Beach in Cherng Talay. This luxury residence, featuring four bedrooms and an infinity swimming pool, is ideal for entertaining guests.

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Construction

by Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

Classy digs open in town

PHUKET CITY: Slated to receive residents this month, Phu-Ke-Ta is a new serviced-apartment complex located next to the PTT gas station near Super Cheap on Thepkrasattri Rd. A four-star hotel is set to open on the same one-rai plot in January.

Phu-Ke-Ta is a Phuket family affair. Managing director is Danai Aikvanich, 31, whose family owns the land and the company acting as project developer, Marot Co Ltd.

Although this is the first residential project taken on by Marot Co Ltd, the family opened the gas station on the adjoining plot 20 years ago.

The name "Phu-Ke-Ta" is a play on the word "Phuket", transformed to give the meaning "music of the mountains", which K. Danai said has no more significance than being a pleasant-sounding phrase.

The construction of Phu-Ke-Ta has been broken down into two phases. The first, construction of which began September last year, is the building of 32 serviced apartments, expected to be ready for residents to move in to this month.

The three-story building has a reception and six apartments on the first floor, while 13 apartments



Phu-Ke-Ta (above) offers contemporary hotel accommodation, including hotel-style reception (left) and services, as well as serviced apartments on Thepkrasattri Rd in Phuket City.

fill the second and third floors. Each apartment is 33 square meters and will be available for daily (800 baht) and monthly (10,000 to 12,000 baht) rental.

As part of a launch promo-

tion, apartments closest to the road will be available for 8,000 baht a month for three months, increasing to 10,000 baht thereafter, said K. Danai.

The apartments, which are

divided into a bedroom, bathroom and outdoor balcony, include a minibar, television, air conditioning and wireless Internet access, while a rain-shower and bench seat is included in each bathroom.

Inside the building, the walls are adorned with oil paintings, which are also on sale.

"For people renting monthly, our maid service will change the bed sheets and towels twice a week. Our main clients will be airline staff and expats, as well as government officers and private-sector workers who travel to Phuket for seminars and meetings," said K. Danai.

There will be a range of outlets, divided into six 40sqm units rented to outside businesses, on the first floor of the apartment building. The units will feature a DVD-rental store, Thai restaurant, salon and cosmetics shop. "At the moment, we are looking for business partners to invest in building a spa or fitness room next to the hotel," said K. Danai.

"The style we are aiming for is modern mixture of hip de-

signs that will stand out from other accommodations in town," added K. Danai.

The second phase of the project is a 27-room, four-star hotel spread over half of the one-rai land plot. Construction began in April and should be finished by January 2008.

"That project is about 50% complete. The building work should be finished by December and then the hotel will be decorated," said K. Danai.

The 27 rooms will comprise 18 40sqm standard rooms, five 45sqm deluxe rooms, and two 68sqm suites occupying the corners of the building, each with a bedroom, pantry and living room.

The hotel's 28m-long swimming pool will be available for use by hotel guests and apartment residents. A night at the hotel will cost between 1,200 baht and 1,600 baht. The interior of the hotel has been designed in a similar style to the serviced-apartment building, and all interior design work was conducted by Karn Architect Co Ltd.

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Gardening

by Bloomin' Bert

Phuket's 'High Five'

Anyone who got as far as this page in last week's *Gazette* may recall that due to complete ineptitude and lack of planning I didn't have enough space to include Phuket's top five plants. Considering that's 50% of what I planned to sit down and ramble on about, that's not bad going. Call me old-fashioned, but I wanted to be paid for writing about all 10 plants, so here we go with the second installment.

Last week I also asked if anyone could guess what the top five would be, but I have a confession to make – this column is written in advance, so even if someone had emailed me, I wouldn't be able to say so here because this article had been written by the time last week's article was published.

I cheated. I feel like that bloke in the film about the quiz show in the 1950s who was caught cheating.

To be honest, I don't care. I'm hardly the first person to fudge a bit. Can every golf player honestly say that he's never "modified" the state of play? The ball lands six inches into the rough and it never magically appears a few inches onto the fairway with the remark, "That was lucky"?

Football is amazing for blatant cheats. These overpaid big girls' blouses manage gymnastic feats thought impossible when faced with a slightly high kick anywhere within a one-foot radius of their delicate little bodies.

Athletes are no better. How many have been caught taking concoctions to improve performance? I don't believe they all had infections, heavy colds and asthmatic ailments that require the ingestion of various substances that coincidentally made them perform better.

So I cheated a bit. At least I'm admitting it. An apology to one person at least – the bloke who puts the pictures in this column is going to have to do a bit



Number 5 on Bert's Top 10 is the ubiquitous, colorful bougainvillea.

of overtime again this time week. Sorry about that.

Here we go with the final five of Phuket's top 10 plants:

5. Bougainvillea. This plant is everywhere in Phuket, and with good reason – its perfectly suited to the conditions here. It loves sun, and plenty of it. In fact, the more sun it has, the more colorful it is.

It loves warmth, but if it is grown in partial shade it will not produce flowers.

Bougainvillea is content in the garden or in pots. Nearly the only thing that will cause it to mope is being indoors. If you want it to grow like a possessed triffid and cover the patio wall and spill over the roof, you'll need to plant it in the ground.

4. Yellow alder. Called *baan chao* in Thai, this plant is often overlooked in the garden as it requires little attention. It grows best in full sun. The bright yellow flowers appear



flowering bracts hang down while others are upright.

The bracts of some heliconia are vivid in color, while others are subdued. The shapes are odd, too. Some have the shape of a lobster's claw or a bird's beak or a pleated fan. There are hundreds of varieties and there's sure to be at least one in your garden.



2. Frangipani. I've got a soft spot for the frangipani, or plumeria. It looks and smells spectacular, but unfortunately it has a bit of a dark reputation in Thailand as it is often associated with graveyards. Hardly an ideal alliance for a tree with such stunning flowers.



Native to tropical and subtropical America, today it is very

much at home in Thailand. The perfumed blossoms bring a sweet, tropical aroma to gardens, particularly in the evenings. Often, you can smell frangipani before you see it.

1. Allamanda. At number one, for no reason other than it appeared at the end of my list, is the allamanda. In fact it may well be justified, as this is probably the most common plant on the island.



It's not particularly showy, but it makes up for that with its huge number of bright yellow flowers.

This is one plant you can neglect completely. In fact, it's often planted by local councils in areas they just can't be bothered to maintain. It will grow like crazy year-round regardless. It doesn't even care what season it is, it will just keep on spreading and blooming.

Well, there we have my choice of Phuket's top 10 plants. Please don't tell anyone how they were selected, though. Actually, please do – and then let me know. I think I owe the layout chap at the *Gazette* a beer, anyway. He can't cheat.

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Property Gazette

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Two-bedroom apartments, all with sea views, starting from 72sqm. Last freehold units available (foreigners eligible) from 3.4 million baht. Tel: 076-282394, 086-0043008. Email: info@ayudhya.net For details, see our website: www.kataoceanview.com

SEAVIEW APARTMENT

2 bedrooms, top floor, north Patong, 20 steps to the beach, freehold. Price: 9.7 million baht. Tel: 086-2765117. For photos, please send email: jihshand@gmail.com

SURIN/BANG TAO APARTMENT

Club Lersuang, 2-bedroom apartment, ground floor, big pool, gym, restaurant, bar, etc. 6 million baht. Tel: 076-271870, 087-0790650. Email: mlcberg@netvigator.com

Properties For Rent

THE GREENHOUSE BUNGALOWS

Chalong. New 2-bedroom bungalows, fully-furnished, cool and quiet, close to all facilities. 12,000 baht per month. Contact K. John. Tel: 081-9791976.

BOAT LAGOON LUXURY

Waterfront townhouses for rent. 2 & 3 bedrooms, UBC, TV. Long- or short-term rent from 35,000 baht per month. Call K. So. Tel: 081-3444473.

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Close to Laguna. 300sqm. Fully-furnished 3 bedrooms, living room, dining, kitchen, and pool. 2 min to Laguna. Long- or short-term rent. Contact K. Gai. Tel: 081-7344324 or see our website: www.phuketgreenlandvillas.com

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Small 1-bedroom house. Can walk to Patong Beach and main strip. Cable TV, swimming pool, maid service. Tel: 076-344343, 342948.

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RAWAI STUDIO

for rent. Fully-furnished, terrace, swimming pool, cable TV, ADSL Internet, long-term only 10,000 baht/month. Tel: 081-6067410.

RAWAI FLAT

for rent, fully-furnished. 2-bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, living room, kitchen, swimming pool, balcony, cable TV, ADSL. Monthly: 29,000 baht; long-term: 18,500 baht. Tel: 081-6067410.

RAWAI/NAI HARN

Large luxury house on the lake, 5-6 bedrooms, 7 bathrooms, swimming pool. Long-term rent: 60,000 baht per month. Tel: 081-3971835.

HOUSE FOR RENT

New house for rent 25,000 baht per month and for sale at 4 million baht. Tel: 087-2646808, 083-1743880.

RAWAI BEACH VILLA

4 bedrooms, garden and parking. Rent: 35,000 per month. Tel: 086-9408914. Email: chotipo7@yahoo.com

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B.L. APARTMENT

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Property Gazette

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3-BEDROOM HOUSE
for rent or sale. 2 bathrooms, central hotwater, aircon, European kitchen, garden, furnished. Only 10 min to Patong and Kathu. Long-term contract required. Tel: 084-1871939, 081-7356684.

HOUSE FOR LONG-TERM RENT

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HOUSE FOR RENT



65sq wah, opposite public garden, 1.5km from Central Festival. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, bathtub, well + pump, 5 aircons, fully-furnished, garden, sprinklers. Call K. Mongkon. Tel: 084-0628040.

KAMALA BUNGALOW
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TOWNHOUSE PATONG
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Property Gazette

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- F&B SERVICE ATTENDANT 8 POSITIONS

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- SPA TRAINER 1 POSITION
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CANDIDATES FOR SUPERVISORY AND MANAGERIAL LEVEL POSITIONS SHOULD POSSESS THE FOLLOWING QUALIFICATIONS:

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- ORGANIZED RESULT-ORIENTED AND EFFICIENT
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HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
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CONTACT: KHUN SUKAN PUKAO

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- Female.
 - Age 25 to 35 years.
 - Excellent spoken and written English skills.
 - Excellent computer skills.
 - Basic accounting skills.
- Tel: 076-273379, 089-474 1246. Fax: 076-273379.
Email: info@octopusasia.com

HOTEL STAFF KATA

Need receptionists with good English skills and house keeping maids. Tel: 087-2674091.

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Full- and part-time staff needed. Contact K. Kim Tel: 084-9657964, or K. Danny Tel: 084-8516053.

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Phuket town. Full- and part-time staff needed. Contact K. Kim Tel: 084-9657964, or K. Danny Tel: 084-8516053.

CHEF WANTED !

Tapas & Wine Restaurant opening in Kata in December. Head Chef wanted from mid-November. Western nationality. Please send Email to: mona@oceanicdivecenter.com

EDUCATED THAI LADY

Patong based office requires educated Thai lady. English skills essential. Those interested should contact Tel: 084-7300190.

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Hotel in Patong requires 1 receptionist with good English skills, plus 1 house keeping maid. Tel: 087-2674091.

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required for luxurious villa located in Kamala. Excellent salary and working conditions for the right candidate. Contact Lai. Tel: 084-6302027.

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Hotel in Patong area requires 1 therapist to start immediately. Please contact for more information at Tel: 081-8920038.

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Waitress urgently needed for restaurant in Karon. Please contact for additional information at Tel: 081-8914019. Email: tkosching2000@hotmail.com

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Full- and part-time, for Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Flash Coral Draw, 3D Studio. Tel: 087-4723526. Email: prosopikos@yahoo.gr



The Village Coconut Island is now recruiting for the following position:

Beach Restaurant Chef

Requirements:

- Thai National
- Male or Female
- At least 5 years experience as a Chef.
- Experience in producing a high level of both Thai and International cuisine
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- English an advantage
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The Village Coconut Island will soon be opening its first beach restaurant. We are looking for a highly motivated, hard working individual that is able to produce great food. This role will require the chef to assist the management in developing this restaurant from conception through to fully operational within a short period of time.

20/12 Moo 2, Boat Lagoon Phuket, Thepkrasatri Rd, Tambon Koh Kaew, Amphur Muang, Phuket 83200
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- Ability to support and co-ordinate the admin and paperwork of the Operation dept.
- Computer literate

3. Executive Housekeeper

- 3 years experience in Senior or Executive Housekeeping positions.

Please send you application with a recent photo to Human Resource Dept.
Phuket Island Property Services Co.,LTD (PIPS)
393/2 Moo 1, Silsoonthorn Road, Chengtalay, Thailand, Phuket 83110.
Tel: 076 270 750. Fax: 076 270 751. Email: hr@pipsphuket.com

THE BARBECUE STORE PHUKET IS LOOKING FOR A STORE SUPERVISOR

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CALL: 02 662 6665 FAX: 02 662 6436

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Experience in sales, marketing and customer service especially in real estate -Excellent spoken and written English - Computer literate with own transport. Tel: 076-310507, 087-8988178. or Email: aui@baanyamu.com

FB ATTENDANT KOH LANTA

Layana Resort & Spa, 5-star luxury resort on Long Beach, Koh Lanta is looking for a food and beverage attendant. Must have: Thai Nationality with previous experience. Food and beverage knowledge. Fine dining knowledge and good English needed. Tel: 075-607100. Fax: 075-607199. Email: job@layanaresort.com

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Island Job Mart

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We are looking for competent, enthusiastic and highly qualified individuals for the following vacancies to join our growing business:

Position	Marketing Officer (1 Position)
Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female age not over 35 - Bachelor Degree in Marketing or related field - 1-2 years' experience in Marketing communication or advertising - Good command of English - Computer literate-MS Office and Photoshop - Active, strong communication and interpersonal Skill - Good organizational skills - Own transportation with valid license is preferred - Thai Nationality
Position	Customer Service Representative (1 Position)
Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male, age not over 35 - Excellent English - Service-minded - Excellent driving skills - Non-smoker - Excellent interpersonal skills - 5-star hotel experience preferred - Thai Nationality
Position	Personal Assistant (1 Position)
Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female age 40+ - Very good experience in travel arrangement, Hotel Booking - Good command of English - Strong communication, hard working, honest and Positive - Good organizational skills - Thai Nationality
Position	Quantities Surveyor (1 Position)
Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - 3-5 years' experience - Good command of Computer skills - Thai Nationality
Position	M&E Engineer (2 Positions)
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Email: hrphuket@salaphuket.com

For more information about Sala Resort & Spas Please visit our website at www.salaresorts.com

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with these qualifications:

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Two positions:

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Basic salary plus commissions from sales and other bonuses.
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Please send your CV to mansharafat@gmail.com

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Home help wanted for afternoons. Must have motorbike or car. Chalong area. Contact Greg. Tel: 086-7458832. Email: gregmackay67@hotmail.com

INTERNET CAFE AND JUICE BAR
needs full- and part-time staff in Phuket town. Contact for additional information at Tel: 086-5097510. Email: simonstomas@hotmail.com

MEXICAN RESTAURANT
One cook and two waitresses wanted for new Mexican Restaurant in Chalong. Must speak English. Tel: 089-163 8166. Email: vjngong@gmail.com

SALES, MARKETING AND ADMIN
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Personals

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Golf Stuff

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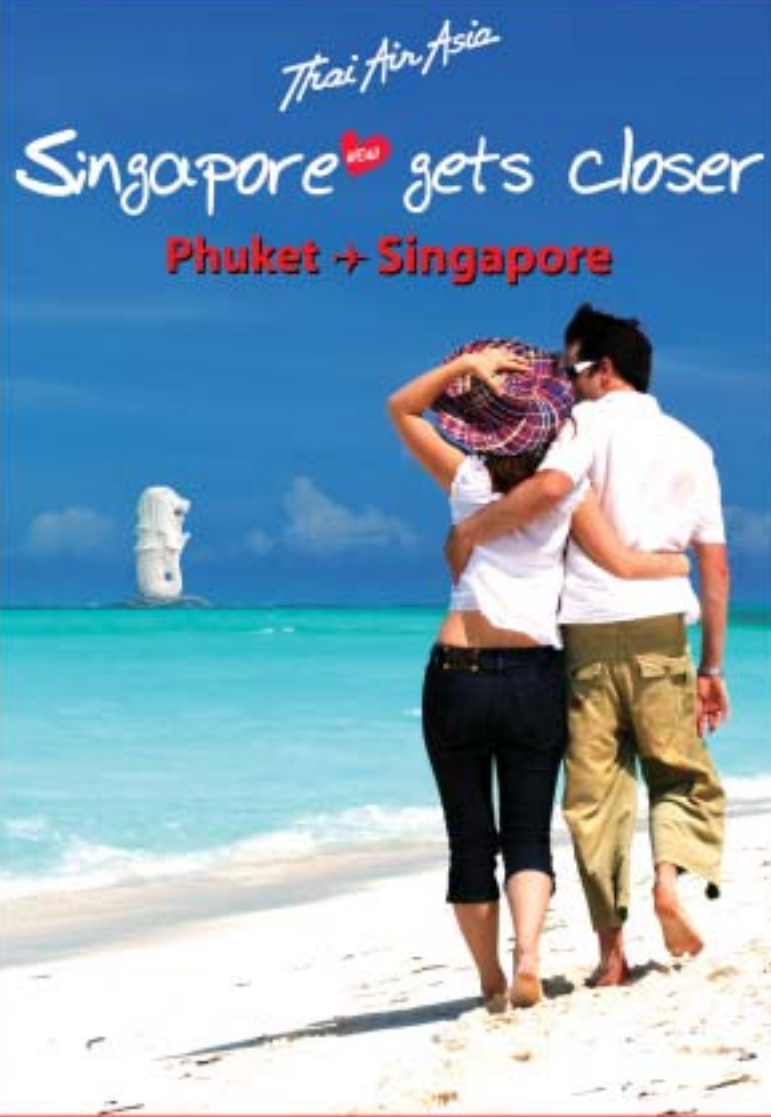
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