

Continued From Page 6

on Phuket. This office was inundated with enquiries from relatives and friends looking for loved ones in Phuket and also from media asking for interviews with the injured and dying.

When told the place was nearly cleaned up and could they mention that, they didn't want to know. "No-one wants to hear about that" said one. Well I'm sure I would if I had friends living in the area. When this office was contacted by people who could hardly speak through emotion enquiring about friends and family, I think the media owes the world an honest assessment of the true nature of the disaster. It was almost impossible to use a phone after the first day so nobody could find out anything about anyone they knew here. The media should have supplied that conduit, but didn't, instead focusing on digging up more tales of death and destruction to appease what they thought their viewers wanted.

Even when the huge amount of relief started to flow in, television broadcasters were bickering over who was giving the most and using various statistical measures to back themselves up. 'We gave the most per capita', 'We gave the most overall' etc... It is not a game of one-upmanship, just get it there to those who need it.

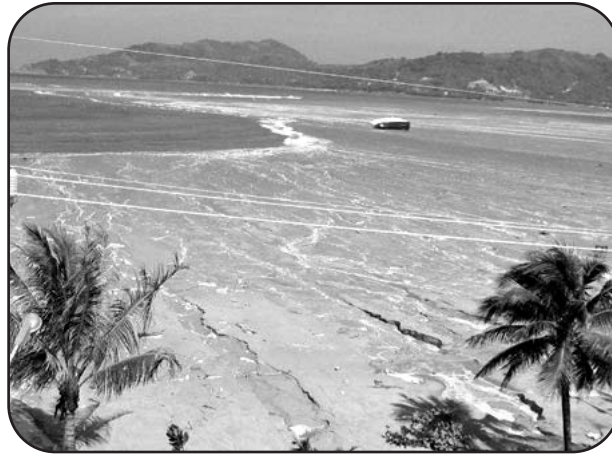


## Humanity Wrap - From Page 8

But for those the tsunami didn't hit, but which took away their priceless loved ones, what now? How do you go on? Other people think you want to talk, hinting that they won't be embarrassed if you break down. Sometimes you talk, sometimes you don't, sometimes you can't. It makes little difference. The words aren't the right ones; or rather, the right words don't exist. The language of bereavement is often foolishly inadequate, and there is only a limited number of prayers on offer.

And what is it doctors say again? "I'm deeply sorry, Ms Blank; there will of course

Overall the world response has been very generous and for many living here on Phuket there is so much respect for the brilliant efforts the local Thai people who have put their all into the retrieval of bodies and the cleanup afterwards. I severely doubt if any nation, Western or otherwise, could



have done a better job with the resources available.

There is no disease risk on Phuket, we never even lost power, apart from the beach road, that was cut off to allow rescuers in to find survivors. It was extremely difficult to make phone calls for the first three days, but that is because the system was so overloaded. The government put on free overseas calls so tourists could inform

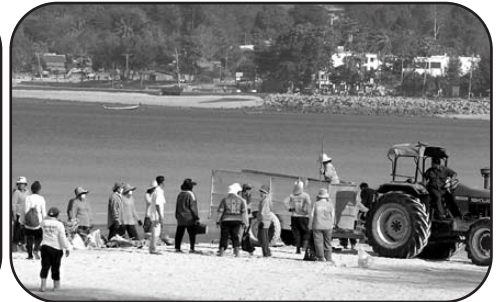


family overseas they were all right. There was never a problem with water and although the hospitals were inundated, handled the situation in an orderly and efficient manner.

Many expats touring or staying here have often wondered how the Thai authorities would handle a disaster, manmade or natural. The Thais have a laid back attitude to most things, well you need to, to put up with some of the hot-head 'farangs' turning up here, but when the crunch came have handled themselves brilliantly. The few rotten apples that let the side down; the looters, the greedy looking for over-the-top compensation, and the price gauging merchants taking advantage of the distress of others (one in particular was charging up to 250 baht over the list price of phone cards to bleeding and injured foreigners and Thais who wanted to inform loved ones that they had survived.) will pay the price with bad karma. But they are few and the rest should be congratulated for the efforts they have put in and are continuing to do so.

So if you have time to journey to Phuket, please do so. Don't be put off by the constant rehashing of the same old news reports, the good people of Phuket need you.

oo0oo



*From Left:* Kata Noi - as clean as it gets; Vendors wondering when the tourists will come back; Everyday in Patong cleaning crews arrive early morning - there is not so much as a coke can left.

be a period of mourning, but rest assured, you will come out of it; take two of these each evening."

"I would suggest, a new interest, Mrs Blank; fruit-carving, formation dancing? Don't worry: six months will see you back on the roundabout."

But mourning is full of time; nothing but time.

Work, they say, cures anything. Taikutsu. Not if you don't have any it doesn't. Even if you do, it rarely induces tiredness: the nearest you get to it is a neurotic lethargy. And there is always time. Have some more

time. Take your time.

And what is it the counsellors say again? "It may seem bad, Mr Blank, but you'll come out of it. I'm not taking your grief lightly; it's just that I've seen enough of life to know you'll come out of it."

And you do come out of it, that's true. After a year, after five. But you don't come out of it like a train out of a tunnel, bursting into the sunlight: you come out of it as a gull comes out of an oil slick. You come out tarred and feathered for life.

And many years later you will still burst into tears at the sight of a beach.