

# Around The Traps

By TT Hun

The long aftermath of the effects of the tsunami are still being played out around the island. Slower growth and the immediate low season means that some businesses are just hanging in while others have given it away. Happy Days Pub in Patong has decided to call it quits after building up quite a following over the past few years. Champs Sports Bar down there on Soi Keksap has also called it a day after five years of operation. The landlord apparently decided to increase the rent by 33% taking into consideration how well businesses are doing since the tsunami.

**Soi Sea Pearl**, off Sawadeerak Rd. in Patong has suffered the loss of many of the back bars prompting the landlord to bring forward plans to demolish the place and start again. The plans call for a mall type structure with shops on the ground floor and apartments on the second floor. The strange thing is the design calls for a strip of beer bars right up the middle. I don't know how this would be acceptable for anyone wanting to purchase an apartment on the second floor. The last thing I would want when coming home at night would be a bunch of beer bars going off downstairs.

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**Many of the bars** there have re-located to what was Soi Moodies (now called Sukhumvit Entertainment) on Rat-U-Thit Rd. and this has added some much needed life to that soi. The front bar (which is now the second bar) had been trying to generate some excitement to anyone who'd look their way. Being all alone there for so long it was almost comical to see a single bar



Nooky's (3rd from left) birthday at Heroes pulled in quite a few people to help her celebrate, until the power went off for an hour. Air conditioned bars really do need the power to be working.

trying to give the impression of a vibrant happening soi. At least a bit more is happening soi now, but with a roof covering the whole soi it does get rather warm, maybe some fans would help to circulate all that genuine romantic loving feeling you get down there.

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**A lot of people** are also moving into Soi Sansabai, opposite the east end of Bangla Road. While this soi was full of reasonably priced guesthouses (and still is) it had the added advantage of being close to the entertainment areas but being quiet, except for the few front premises that stayed open after the Bangla strip closed down for the night. Now the closing hours seem to be a little more liberal, this soi finds itself competing with Bangla all over again.

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**Many people arriving** have never been to Phuket before and their impressions are quite varied. As one new visitor drove down the hill into Patong, she remarked at the devastation she was seeing all around her. It was then pointed out that the wave

had not reached that area and what she was looking at was just normal construction that goes on day in, day out.

Another remarked that when she told people in her home country she was coming to Phuket they reacted with disbelief as to why she would travel to a disaster area. Of course this made her a bit hesitant until she was driven down the beach road and saw how beautiful the beach was. She then pointed out that the people who had told her all about how bad Phuket was had never been outside their own country, so had no idea what it was like. For that matter they had no idea where anywhere was like.

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**During the past month** I had the opportunity to travel to Khao Lak when escorting a helper who had flown in from Australia to join the tsunami relief effort there. It was decided that Khao Lak was the place that needed the help the most, and on arriving there could not believe the sight before me. There is a view point on the southern end of the bay

and I had driven this way many times before, usually on a visa run to Ranong. It was fairly thick jungle with resorts hidden in among the coconut trees as far as the eye could see. When driving along the main road through the area you couldn't see anything but the occasional glimpse of the beach. Most of the main road was anything from one to one and a half kilometres from the beach anyway. To see the area now with nothing but the trees that weren't knocked over, no vegetation and nothing but the odd skeleton of a building still standing just beggars belief.

There is still a need for help there, particularly with the children. The local temples have set up care centres for displaced children. Most have lost one or both parents and the others have parents who are presently unable to look after them. One of the things they find difficult to supply is baby formula for lactose intolerant kids. Strange really that they should want for anything when six brand new, black, shiny Range Rovers/Jeeps/Land Cruisers were seen driving

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