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arm-bending in bars and walking from your hotel to a deckchair on the beach.

There must be more activities here now than anywhere else in the Kingdom - long may this positive and healthy direction continue, as Pattaya gradually evolves into a sporting haven for many.

Thailand (and elsewhere) News

Given that we are yet to be inundated with readers' input to this regular commentary - free, like the Trader is to all you retired moguls, there is a dearth of news about anything else but real estate news and current political head-hunting, we must therefore look elsewhere for stimuli. Even interesting suicides, bag-snatchings and shootings appear to be diminishing. The first thing that comes to attention is a recent article on a front page Bangkok newspaper article headed "Ministry vows strict booze ban". Seemingly, the Public Health powers have finally decided to ban grog in its 10,000 public health offices around the country. I never even realised that you could slurp a beer whilst having a medical, operation or a physical enhancement in so many locations. Nor that you could have a quick drag whilst waiting for the doctor's opinion. Anyway, all will be relieved to note

that by 2008, all hospitals, clinics and even the Public Health offices will be free of smoke. Not only that, but helmet-less motorcyclists will be turned away and most importantly, "all departments, divisions and hospitals will be expected to keep their buildings clean, especially the toilets". Thank God for that.

Speaking of up-to-date government initiatives, Dubai recently sentenced 11 men for 5-year jail sentences for participating in the planning of a mass homosexual wedding. Another 14 were acquitted - perhaps for lack of dress. Apparently, it is illegal in the UAE to cross-dress and fancy other members of the same sex. The raiding government crew, just before St. Valentine's Day, nabbed lots of hopeful male participants, half of which were dressed as women, dolled-up to the nines. The mind boggles should such an initiative came about in Pattaya. A quarter of the town might be behind bars! Not that I am prejudiced, I often abandon the given rules - slipping on a sari when the mood takes me. Hello Bruce!

And finally, onto money. A huge survey in Australia has worked out that money does not buy happiness. Many rich Sydneysiders and occupants of the State capitols are amongst the most miserable in "God's

Country". In interviewing 23,000 people, the survey deduced that it is much better to be poor and be living

well away from any capitol city in the Land of Oz. Smiles all around in the bush. Applying that finding to Thailand, and the millions of farmers, workers and unemployed dotted around Thailand's vast countryside must be just jumping out of their lean-tos with huge smiles. Strange that we have Esarn workers wrapped around dance poles and heaving hammers in both Bangkok and Pattaya for a pittance compared to Aussie. Must be that they are fed up with rat for breakfast. I just feel sorry for all the mega-rich developers and estate agents that my colleagues write about in the property section. Poor things.

Anymore targets to have a vindictive stab at? No, that's it for now. Must go now - out for some exercise - a quick dab of eye shadow, slip on one of my new dresses and head out to find a beach deckchair where there is no building noise and where I can bend an elbow in peace as part of my daily exercise regime - unless the authorities have banned beach vendors from selling beer when the tide is out. I shall have my Russian and Armenian phrasebooks to hand, together with a begging bowl and sign "Deliriously happy but impoverished writer seeks meaningful contributions - it will make you happier" - all embellished with gusto in numerous languages. Oh, if anyone out there has some good cartoons about J.C. and His disciples, send 'em in - about time we heard from the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the rest - they normally express a better sense of humour than most. Catch ya' later.



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