



Jock-ularity



HIGH PRICES, LOW REWARDS, SOME GOOD LUCK AND A LITTLE PIECE OF ***** TOO!

The low season would appear to have descended on us all too soon again this year. But high or higher prices seem still to be the norm, unfortunately!

A classic example of this is the ridiculously high tariff's set by some of the hotels around the island.

One gentleman, a regular traveller to Phuket arrived recently on a flight-only ticket, from England. He decided to shop around, as he wanted to see the quality and availability of rooms with a view. He was astonished when he arrived at one hotel where he had spent time before in the recent past, to find that the nightly room rate had risen from 1,500 baht per night one year ago to a whopping 3,800 baht for the same room this year. On confronting the front desk manager, stating that he was somewhat of a regular to Phuket and indeed this particular hotel, he was told that there was nothing that could be done regards discounts "even as the gentleman intended a three week stay" due to the fact that the hotel was not full and they needed the money to pay bills, wages etc. Needless to say the gentleman left!

Beer and spirit prices in general seem to have taken a hike this season also, with a Heineken, for example now ranging from 70 baht in the more lowly establishments to a mighty 120 baht in some of the club venues. This together with some establishments charging 100 baht for a bottle of water, is, in my view at least pushing the already at sea, boat yet further out. Surely logic would say that if the noticeable lack of paying tourists around wish to patronise such places in numbers the prices should reflect on the lower not higher scale!

We all eagerly await the Government's findings and ultimate rulings on zoning and opening hours. Hopefully the draconian proposal to have bars open only

from 6 in the evening till midnight will not or indeed never transpire, and that a more sympathetic approach will be employed by the powers that be. Phuket, contrary to the T.A.T. (Tourist Authority of Thailand) and particularly Patong has suffered much since the late 90's as tourists have found other and cheaper holiday destinations to spend their hard-earned cash. If such laws are passed and implemented then the tourist erosion will turn into a complete embargo. Thailand as a holiday destination is not receiving a favourable press in the world's media and now with Bird Flu to further complicate things these new proposals surely would be the last straw and spell total disaster to the hospitality trade in all the main resorts. But there is some cheer and be thankful news around.

The much derided Tuk-Tuk community must be commended (or at least one of their number) this month! A couple looking for accommodation in Patong hailed a tuk-tuk to assist them in their search. After some time getting in and out of the vehicle searching in vane for accommodation to suit the budget, they eventually settled on a small guesthouse/hotel that suited their pocket. They decanted the vehicle of all their travelling belongings whereupon the tuk-tuk departed. It was only then that they realised that they had left some hand baggage in the front of the tuk-tuk. This

consisted of their passports, travellers' cheques, 90,000 baht in cash and a mobile phone. Panic stricken the couple asked if the hotel could call the mobile in the hope that the driver would answer. This they did and their belongings were duly returned intact and the driver left with a 20,000 baht reward and the biggest smile in Patong. Nice one Tuk-Tuks.

Lastly but not least, a good friend recently took part in a weekend bike ride to Ao Nang. (A travelogue poem of that event appears elsewhere in this edition) On the return his travelling companions decided to visit the monkey Temple in Phang Nga. The lads all bought bananas to go feed the monkeys but he decided, as he was not too sure of the little primates, to go and sit it out on a concrete bench under some trees in the grounds, viewing the proceedings from a safe distance.

After about an hour it was time to return to the bikes where it was then noticed that a strange smell was in attendance. Monkey poo was the general opinion, but where? You guessed it; our reluctant friend had inadvertently descended on the little pile of "Ling Poo" while sitting it out and was now carrying it around on the seat of his pants. He was made to ride home at the rear of the bike group for obvious reasons!!

Hence this appears at the **BOTTOM** of this month's article Ha Ha.

