

Patong Beat

By TT Hun



Above: Phuket Governor, Udomsak Usawarangkura at the award presentation for the Andaman Sea Rally.

Right: Entertainment industry workers suggesting at a different rally that midnight closing may not be the way to go.

The word on everyone's lips throughout this month is closing times. While the island basks in a glorious but warm winter, those connected with the entertainment side are asking "Why is the government trying to kill the tourism industry?"

This may be a bit of over-reaction, but certainly one that concerns the barkeeps whose livelihoods depend on those late-night party-goers that make the difference between a profit and a loss. The office of the Andaman Post was inundated with irate callers last month protesting the government's latest attempted change in social order policy in suggesting a new way to keep control on the country's youth.

Well it seems a decision has been made, but as to the times and how and what constitutes entertainment is still a bit vague.



Dancer at Antons in Patong

Phuket apparently has been designated one big entertainment zone with a 1 am closing time, but wasn't that supposed to be 2 am or midnight. Well we will have

to wait and see as it will all fall into place on March 1st, we think...

Our pick for best hotel name this month: 'Stoney Monday'. It's a hard one to forget...

RECORDS SMASHED ON THE KATA GROUP ANDAMAN SEA RALLY said the headline of the media release. It shouldn't have been too difficult considering this was only the second year of the rally.

Nine boats competed in this year's rally between Phuket and Port Blair in the India controlled Andaman Islands.

Port Blair is just over two days leisurely sailing from the west coast of Phuket. An old British Colony, evidence of Port Blair's past is all around - colonial-style buildings, old churches. A group of 572 islands (including the Nicobar group) 420 nautical miles from Phuket, the Andaman Islands is one of Asia's last cruising frontiers with great diving and snorkelling and pristine beaches.

Speaking to those who enjoyed the event this it sounded like a great getaway and all were looking forward to next year's rally to be held between the 8th and 23rd of January.

It was revealed this week that the TAT has been doing exit interviews with tourists leaving the Kingdom. They asked passengers going home via Don Muang Airport what they thought was the worst

thing they encountered in Thailand. Not too many takers there until one fellow said "Yes there is one thing I don't like about Thailand." What was that, the interviewer hesitantly asked. The passenger replied "The departure gate".

One thing the traveller probably didn't encounter is Phuket's motorcycle taxis. Whenever friends turn up from all around the world, one of the problems I always have is trying to deal with the tuk tuk drivers. But some of Phuket's motorcycle taxis are starting to get a little ornery lately. When my wife had a page to head back to work, I wasn't ready to leave the premises I was at and suggested she take a motorcycle taxi. She returned five minutes later saying they wouldn't take her from the Beach Road to Nanai Road for the usual 20 baht. She then took our motorbike and I was to find my own way back. When it came time, I hailed a bike taxi and just to be on the safe side said that it was 20 baht. He looked at me in horror and suggested something about a dubious cross-species parentage. Nevertheless he accepted the fare and we headed home. On arriving I found that my wife wasn't there, and she had the keys to the house. I immediately thought something was wrong - where's my bike! and oh yeah I hope the missus is ok too. I rang her and we agreed to meet at Clarets Lounge just down on Nanai Rd. There are always plenty of m/c taxis and in a blink of an eye one was beside me.

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