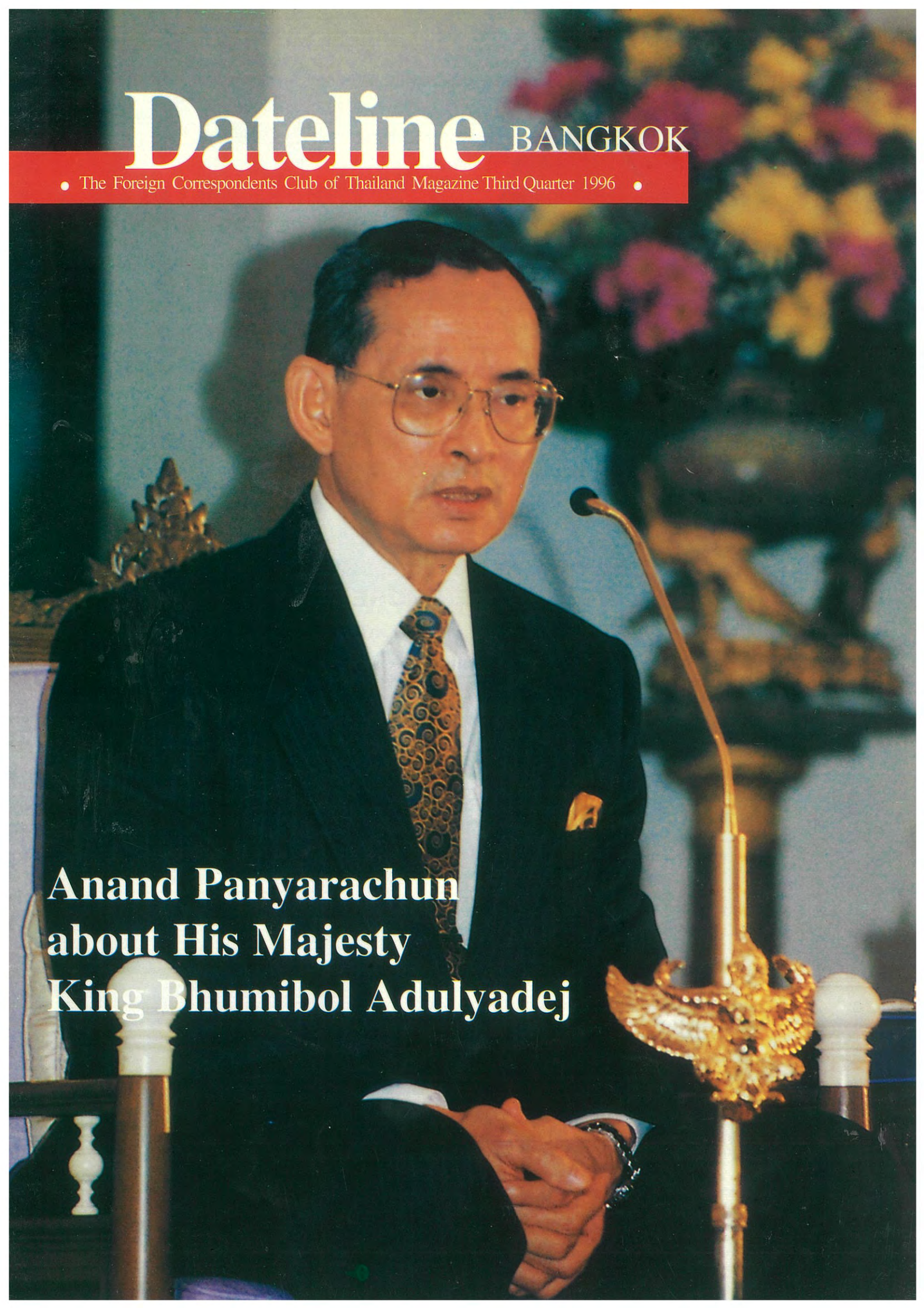


Dateline BANGKOK

• The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand Magazine Third Quarter 1996 •

A color photograph of Anand Panyarachun, a Thai politician, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. He has glasses and is looking slightly to the right. The podium has a microphone and a decorative golden bird ornament. The background is blurred, showing some greenery and a blue wall.

**Anand Panyarachun
about His Majesty
King Bhumibol Adulyadej**



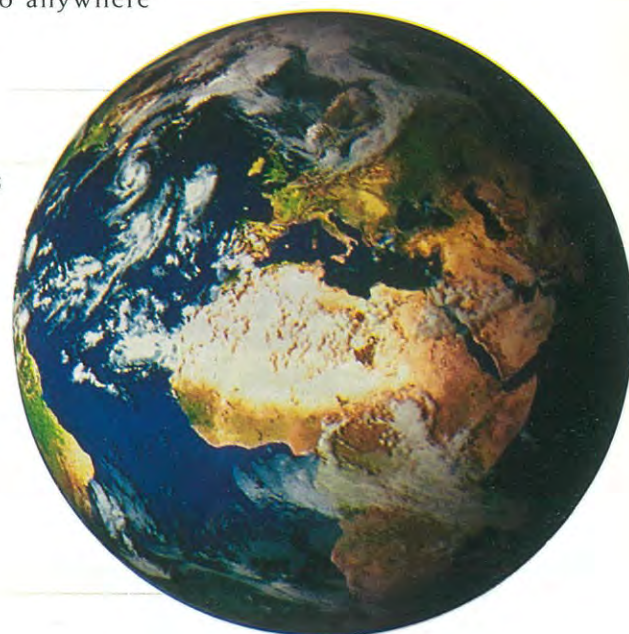
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"moving, wasn't such a nightmare after all"

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Vatikiotis

It wasn't such a nightmare after all. Moving into the new clubhouse, many of us feared that nobody would come. What's more, there were misgivings about the decor, the bar - even the furniture. It wasn't easy. You can never please everybody.

Doubts and doubters notwithstanding, we are settling into the new clubhouse. People are braving the traffic on Silom Road. Attendance at programmes, lunch-time events, and press conferences is creeping up. I even detect wear and tear on the bar stools. Thanks to First Vice-President Philippe Decaux's sterling efforts, the popular embassy nights have been revived.

It hasn't been easy. Any decision to move is fraught with difficulty. Thanks are therefore due to last year's executive board, Khun Panjavilai and the club's staff, the clubhouse committee, and ordinary members who gave their time to ensure the re-location to the Jewellery Trade Centre was accomplished.

As president this year, I feel the main challenge is to make sure the club fully recovers from the move. We have tremendous audio-visual facilities for programmes and events. Second Vice-President Ted Bardacke, ably assisted by Michele Zack and Evan Williams, who run the programmes, are working hard to make the most of them. I think we've proven that we can. In the month of May, for

"We should not lose sight of the club's role as a venue for working journalists and professionals with an interest in the media."

instance, the club hosted a record 14 events including two embassy nights.

I have been particularly keen to encourage more lunch time activities. We kicked off in February with a lively talk from the French ambassador, Gerard Coste - just ahead of the Asia-Europe Meeting. The new American ambassador, William Itoh, Foreign Minister Annuay Virawan, and Hinduja, owner of the top Indian business group in the world, also graced our lunch table.

Proving that lunch times can be newsworthy, Amnesty International's launch of its China human rights report in mid-March saw Bangkok's finest arrest two of the participants on their way to the club. Amnesty's presser came just ahead of Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa's visit to China, and Thai officials accused the club of providing a platform for attacks on a third country. The charge was vigorously denied by the executive board. The club's constitution is very clear: the FCCT is mandated to provide facilities for press conferences of interest to foreign journalists.

I would like to encourage more press conferences. Not just on political and diplomatic issues, but also for the business community. We should not lose sight of the club's role as a venue for working journalists and professionals with an interest in the media. Please help us make the club work for you.

But the club should also be fun. High on the list of our priorities has been the revival of the embassy nights, when different countries can bring a taste of their cuisine and culture to the club. Philippe Decaux has worked tirelessly to make these a success. Thanks are due also to our friends from the diplomatic community who



have made German, Mexican, Lebanese, Swiss, Dutch, and Italian night huge draws. We have many more planned.

This year is auspicious for the club. Not only does it mark the FCCT's fortieth anniversary, but also the Golden Jubilee of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's accession to the throne. We'll be announcing news about a major event at year's end to mark our fortieth birthday.

To celebrate the Royal Jubilee, we were honoured by a speech and remarkably frank discussion on the role of His Majesty by former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun in June. The FCCT also made a donation through the Royal Thai Government of 100,000 baht in honour of the jubilee.

There's much more to do, plenty of improvements to be made. We are conscious of the need for better publicity, better food, and additional facilities. As always, Khun Panjavilai bears the brunt of our demands and requests, managing to administer the club and conjure up minor miracles when we're in a corner. Khun Panjavilai's loyalty and dedication to the club through this difficult period is greatly appreciated.

Thanks to Reuters, we'll soon be installing a top-of-the-line Reuters wire service. Thanks to correspondent publicity director Deborah Charles, we've found a new publisher for Dateline. FCCT member Lance Woodruff has been hired on a part-time basis as publicity coordinator. It all takes time and money, but I welcome your suggestions. Meanwhile, please enjoy the club -- it's yours to enjoy.

Michael Vatikiotis

PEOPLE & THINGS

JIM HATTON, former reporter with Agence France Presse and previously with Associated Press has left Bangkok to join another news agency. He is now living in Hong Kong and working as a subeditor for Reuters News Agency. He was replaced at AFP by **MATTHEW PENNINGTON**, who is still recovering from culture shock after moving to Bangkok from Vientiane.

Bangkok night life won't be the same any more. Party animal and Daily Telegraph correspondent **PHILIP SHERWELL** is leaving the City of Angels for the Big Apple where he will have the grandiose title of America Correspondent for the Sunday Express. Phil says he

plans to focus his attention on the southern part of the U.S., and is hoping a lot of news will force him to the Caribbean for stories.

PATRICK MCDOWELL arrived a few months ago from his last posting in Johannesburg to replace **PETER ENG** as news editor for Associated Press. Peter Eng, fondly known as the "night stalker" for his penchant for wandering into the AP office late at night to pick up his mail, now writes for various publications and is seen in various countries in the region.

Voice of America correspondent **DAN ROBINSON** will no longer be the brunt of verbal and written

attacks by Burma's ruling generals, because he has left for Washington. His replacement Gary Thomas, formerly in Washington and Pakistan, can enjoy the kind words of praise Burma has for VOA.

MARK TIMM, formerly Knight-Ridder bureau chief, has left the journalism world for greener pastures. He is now an analyst at Union Securities. Anchalee Koetsawang replaces him as bureau chief.

We would like to offer a warm welcome to the staff of recently-launched ASIA TIMES to Bangkok.

Bill in the Hole

Here's one for the "only in Bangkok" category. British freelance Bill Barnes - famed for his morning-after phone calls asking if anyone can remember where he left his bag during the previous night's revelries - recently decided to adopt a new clean-living hard-working regime. And indeed, at the implausibly early hour of 9 am on a Sunday morning, Bill — a stringer for the South China Morning Post and the Financial Times — was walking down Sukhumvit after returning a book to the Siam Society. Eschewing taxis, he had decided to head home on foot. After all, at that time on a Sunday, it isn't so hot or so polluted. So Bill is striding along, delighted at turning over a new leaf, when disaster strikes: in the form of one of those inexplicable holes in the ground that can turn a simple walk into an onerous obstacle course. For an hour, Bill sat slumped in the hole, spurning offers of help from passers-by, so painful was his throbbing ankle. Finally, two Thai men — proving that the Good Samaritan is alive and well — persuaded him he couldn't stay there all day, hauled his not insubstantial frame into a taxi, took him home and even carried him to his sofa.

Two days of agony later, he hobbled to hospital to learn he had a broken ankle that required immediate surgery. Bill is now recovering on crutches. Dateline readers are reminded of the moral of this story: Sobriety comes before a fall.

Stunning Domenica

After an impressive attempt to become a full-time lady of leisure when she quit her job as a Standard Chartered executive, Domenica Piantedosi has moved into the jewelry trade. But while she has shaken up her life, she clearly hasn't shaken off those Italian roots. For the petite and immaculately turned-out former FCCT treasurer has been sited of late at some of the city's trendiest nightspots flanked by two handsome and equally immaculately turned-out oriental "bodyguards." Even her Soi 4 aides de "camp" were unable to protect her from a Songkran soaking by the pump-action water

HIGHLIGHTS

pistols of aqua-terrorists Phil Blenkinsop and Evan Williams at Philip Sherwell's Thai New Year bash. But while the rest of the party emerged dripping and bedraggled, Domenica's stunning lycra cocktail dress helped ensure she still looked like she had stepped out of the fashion pages of the glossies.

Genghis Williams

At a time when cash-strapped news organisations are more likely to be cutting bureaus than strengthening them, full marks for bucking the trend to rampaging Genghis Khan of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, our own expansionist Evan Williams. The publicly-funded ABC has closed two other international bureaus recently and is also making cuts at home as the new conservative government in Australia attempts to slash the budget deficit. But despite these ill portents, Williams has persuaded his bosses to turn Bangkok into a two-person operation. One correspondent will concentrate on radio, the other will have a remit to roam far and wide in Asia for TV. And yes, the latter position will be filled for now by the rugged Genghis Williams who had previously been slated to leave the City of Angels this year.

Watch out Rangoon



Forget the politics - where is the party?

Will sleepy Rangoon know what's hit it? Two of Bangkok's premier party animals — the statuesque, spiky-haired supremo at Stanley's Restaurant in Ruamrudee, Cushla Geary, and the Thai-Canadian Chamber of Commerce's equally statuesque Christa Avery — are planning to abandon the bright lights of the Big Mango for a pad on Inya Lake.

While Bangkok's journalistic fraternity piled into Rangoon recently to report on the National League for Democracy defiant party congress in Aung San Suu Kyi's garden, Cushla and Christa were in town on a work mission — to suss out money-making opportunities in the food and beverage field. The dynamic duo offered a spirited rationale for constructive engagement and its trickle-down potential for the Burmese people in terms of both financial benefit and liberalising foreign influences. Indeed, never one to hide her light, or opinions, under a bushel, Cushla went on the offensive in the letters' column of Bangkok Metro Magazine to dismiss bleating anti-junta NGO's. "Take note that N, G and O are the most significant letters in 'ingorance'." There's nothing like a constructive argument about constructive engagement and this is nothing like a constructive argument.... Wonder what Canadian Ambassador to Thailand Manfred von Nostitz makes of it. Just as he's passing on his government's support of Suu Kyi — who is openly critical of foreign investment — the representative of his country's Chamber of Commerce was talking business across the city. And on a chance encounter with some of the hacks in town reporting on the NLD congress, Christa seemed surprised so many Bangkok journos were in Rangoon. But forget the politics — what about the good times? Both women are renowned on the Bangkok revellers' circuit for their ability to sniff out the best party in the city. Rangoon would seem to be rather less fertile ground, but the dynamic duo are undaunted.

The big question — will lakeside neighbours Suu Kyi and General Ne Win get invites to the housewarming bash?

Don Felipe & THE EMBASSY NIGHTS

"What is there to do on those boring Thursday nights?"

This was the question which haunted me once the new clubhouse opened and all those monitors looked sad, their cyclopean eye empty of moving pictures and colours.

Then I looked at the FCCT membership directory, as if mapping roads from an atlas, and I discovered there were 83 countries represented in the Kingdom.

That meant there were potentially 83 embassies which could be willing to promote their countries at almost



Dan Robinson (right) makes a point while Domince Faulder (center) selects some of the Dutch cheese snacks offered by Khun Aniruth.



Philippe Decaux presenting a bottle of wine, - well, Italian wine -

no cost. And 83 Ambassadors, many of them likely eager to meet people out of the usual diplomatic circles. On top of that there were over 1,000 members curious about the culture, traditions, culinary specialties and wines of these sometimes faraway lands who would surely be pleased to be guided on a tour by envoys to the Kingdom.

The arithmetic alone showed there were opportunities for a whole cycle of events that had the potential to

go on for several years.

So I waited to get back on the board where I presented my ideas for "Embassy Nights" on Thursdays. Then I sent letters to all the Embassies and waited for the replies. The first country to reply was Mexico, followed closely by Lebanon, Israel, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Morocco. Thanks to those Ambassadors who were willing to take a risk, the idea became a reality and has become a Thursday event to be reckoned with.

Lots of help came from cultural attaches, hoteliers, restaurant owners, wine distributors, airline operators. Promotion was given by the Bangkok Post and Metro Magazine. All involved gave their best to help the events unfold.

A lot of thanks also goes to our members for facing the inevitable traffic jam lottery to navigate their way to the club and for supporting every one of these nights with good humour and interest.

The inaugural Embassy Night, La Noche Mexicana, started off in true Bangkok fashion when Hilton Hotel's Chef Rainer Holzmann, faced with



Cyro C. F. Sa with long time member Khun Janchai Pipatpan. For the Brazilian night, Cyro C. F. Sa had booked 30 seats to celebrate his birthday!



H.E. Dr. Vatcheh Nurbatilam, Lebanese Ambassador to Thailand and Mrs. Nurbatilam

typically-jammed city streets in the evening rush-hour, ended up getting a police escort to bring the food from the Hilton to the clubhouse before the guests started arriving. He made it on time, to the delight of all the guests.

Now that the FCCT members have had a taste of what the world has to offer, they are hungry for more.

The Embassy Nights will resume in September with Brazilian night which will surely be an all night fiesta, and there are many more to come. Just follow the bulletin, Metro-Mag or the Post.

One day, I will have to send my apologies to the Bangkok Metropolitan traffic office for adding a hundred or so more vehicles onto already-congested Silom on Thursday nights.

Philippe Decaux

(- works for French Television and is First Vice President of the Club)



H.E. Ms. M. Laetitia A.C. van den Assum, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Thailand, introduced the Dutch Night

Embassy Nights or Ambassadors' Nights?

The Italian ambassador, HE Ferri de Lazara greets "Three Musqueteer-Style" the Cambodian Ambassador, HE Roland Eng and the Moroccan Ambassador, HE Abdallah Salah Eddine Tazi, while the Italian ambassador's wife and AFP Bureau Chief Michele Cooper watches.



H.E. Anand Panyarachun answers questions about His

Majesty

Question (FINANCIAL TIMES):
You mentioned in your presentation that when the King visits the local villages, he consults and lays out general guidelines or principles for local officials to follow. I'm wondering if you could talk more about that process, because it would contrast with the general feeling that the King actually gives the detailed instructions. We see him on a television with detailed maps, giving very explicit instructions about how specific projects should be carried out. So I would be interested in hearing about how local officials have a discussion with him.

“ I think you would be missing the point if you interpreted his remarks to be instructions. (...) You have to make a distinction. There are those who would view the King's expressions as instructions, and follow them blindly. But that's not the King's fault. It's a fault of the people who took his expression of views as an order from the monarch.

But then there are the others who would listen to his words and his remarks very carefully and would analyse them, and perhaps would come back to him a day or a week or two weeks later with a certain input of their own. Our King is not a dictator. He is very accessible.

He is the only King in the world who has tracked to every part of his country. In his younger days he was not using helicopters or planes. He, together with the Queen, would track for hours and hours. To every part, every remote area of the country. He knew the areas, he knew the people, he would remember the villages. Then years later, he would tell the government officials or district officers who had just arrived to take a piece of the processes three or four months before the King's visit. Sometime I heard it with my own ears, that the district officials were not even aware of the fact, that there was a village of 55 people on that spot which was not reflected on the map. He would ask what happened to the village, he would give a name, and the district officers would be totally at a loss.

I was embarrassed, because every time I had an audience with him and he mentioned names, at first I tried to cover my ignorance. The first few times, I managed. But later on, it was impossible, I was totally in a dark. So occasionally I would ask him, “Which province, Your Majesty” Or, „Where is that, Your Majesty?”

He is the longest practising monarchy, and the longest practising politician. He is the best constitutional lawyer in the country. Governments come and go. Prime Ministers come and go. Army Chiefs come and go. But he is still there. What he has accumulated in his fifty-year reign; he has been through fifteen constitutions, twenty one prime ministers and seventeen attempted or successful coup d'etat. But that does not tell the whole story. What he has been through is that he has seen Thailand. He knows it's people, good or bad, or indifferent. He has had to deal, or has dealt with all these people in the political world and the business world, he has dealt all of them.

”

– at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand on June 5, 1996.

Question (SATURDAY TRIBUNE):
If I could go back to your earlier answer, given Thailand's dramatic economic changes and the changes in society, do you think that all future monarchs need to display such an extraordinary knowledge of every place in the country to maintain the extraordinary popularity that he has - and I'm also wondering why do you think this King, at the time when monarchies around the world are declining in positions, why this King has maintained the position he has.

“ If you look around the world you will have two types of monarchies; on one extreme you have the Scandinavian monarchies, who in their wisdom have studiously and systematically become commoners. They may retain the titles of Kings and Queens, yet would ride bicycles in the streets or would shop in supermarkets. On the other side, you would have some other monarchies who still appear to be traditionalist upon some circumstances, ceremonies, traditional ritual and rites and what not. (...) I think that our present King in his fifty-year reign, he has evolved the monarchy into a middle-way. (...) The tradition of middle-way, Buddhist way, the tradition of gradualism, and the tradition of tolerance. This type of institution of monarchy in Thailand has evolved into something which is very fitting to the mandate of Thailand.

In a monarchy, the moment that you take away the mystique, the moment you expose the institution of the person who holds the position to a daily public scrutiny by the modern media, you've had it. I think in our case, we, the Thais, would like to have that mystique remain over the institution. (...) The moment you take away the mystique, you take away the sacredness of the institution and make him or her into an ordinary human, subject to daily public scrutiny, criticisms, be it constructive or destructive - most nowadays are destructive, and the institution or the person himself would have very little chance of survival.

Now, if we go to your next question, how this it possible for those who follow him. Well, it is hard to follow a great King - or a great Prime Minister or a great father. The son will have a difficult time. Everybody would have a difficult time to follow the present King. But we must all recognize that, here we have a very unique King, a great King who has done a lot to his country. It would be unfair for the Thai people to judge his successor based on the present King's standard. It would be not only unfair, it would be wrong. We have to judge people in a different context. But as I said it is impossible for anybody to follow our present King. But we'll survive.

”

Question (DAILY TELEGRAPH):
We saw a documentary film about the King and his work a couple of months ago, done by BBC in 1979. It followed the King who flew by a helicopter to villages, listened to local people's concerns, and heard what was worrying them. But the constant backdrop of the documentary was the communist threat of Vietnamese troops along the Cambodian borders, and communist insurgency in Thailand. I wonder how these two aspects are overlapped; the development issue, and the importance of countering a possible popularity of communist insurgency in this country. Do you see an overlap there? Is that an important motivation?

“ Yes, I would say the problem was interrelated in that the King, as a constitutional monarch, also had to lead the governance of the country to the existing government.

In the 70's we reached the peak of the so-called 'communist insurgency' (while) at the same time in the south, there were bands of bandits - whether inspired by ideology, or just plain bandits. It was a serious situation for Thailand - we faced problems in the northeast vis-a-vis the communist insurgency, and problems in the south, vis-a-vis the separatists or plain bandits.

I believed that the King was quite determined that the solution to those problems would have to be a two-dimensional solution. I think he was aware of the root causes of communism or the rise of communism. It's quite plain that Thai people in general basically would not be inclined to that type of political ideology. The real problem was the corruption, the abuse of power of the governmental officials, particularly provincial authority or the army, and the failure of the succeeding governments to address the poverty problem, water shortage, the cost of living problem, etc.

At the same time, he felt that he needed to be where the problems were. So he took to travelling widely in those areas, frequently staying at those places for quite long periods of time. He wanted to signal to the people that in the face of these very serious problems, at the risk of his own personal life, he would stay with them. That is a very strong political message for a constitutional monarch to send to his people in distress.

On the other hand, he had to go the roots of the problems and lift up the living conditions of his people. He had to carry the burden a number of Royal projects mainly to serve the objectives of helping his subjects to have a better and more constructive and more hopeful life.

”

Farang Ban Nawk Goes to the Health Club

I sank up to my neck in the bubbling jacuzzi and suddenly regretted my misspent youth.

Had I not joined the Peace Corps and wasted my twenties in West Africa and Brazil, had I not traipsed after my idiot friend Erik Hansen to gallivant in a sail-boat on the South China Sea, had I not squandered my thirties on the beach in Songkhla, had I not bumbled on down the primrose path into middle age and journalism, I could have been somebody.

If only I had stayed home in New York City and got a steady job and patiently climbed the corporate ladder and bought a house and a Volvo and a parakeet, I wouldn't think a health club was such a big deal. I certainly wouldn't be burbling away now in the jacuzzi, agog in infantile glee. Hell, for twenty years I've been sleuthing myself Thai-style and now I'm reduced to rapture by hot water.

And it's free.

I couldn't believe my luck as I stumbled off the elevator into the carpented and mirrored plushness of the 16th floor Health Club. There was an armed guard at the elevator to keep people like me out. But all I had to do

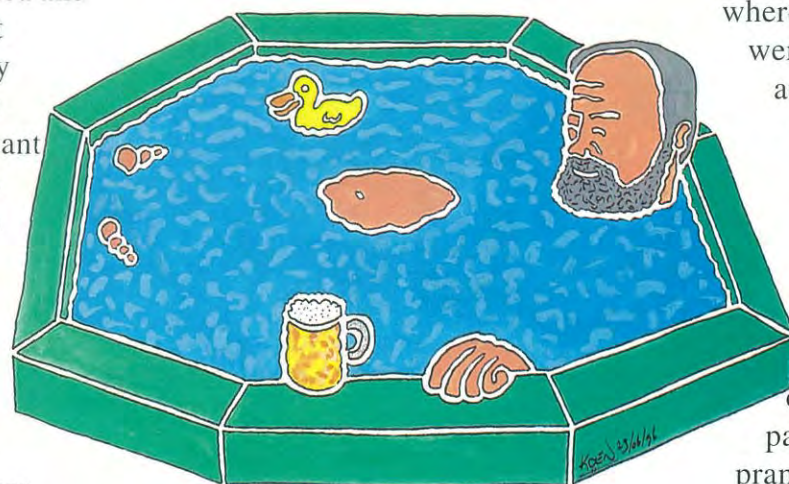
was present my FCCT card and I was handed a locker key, towels and a bathrobe. I stripped down to swimming trunks and headed for the pool.

On the way I passed a medieval torture chamber where speechless victims were splayed on racks and Catherine's wheels. Others were forced to trudge on treadmills and climb endless stairs. Next to this vision of Hell was Paradise: a roomful of nubile wenches in pastel lycra tanksuits prancing to Whitney Houston. Oo.

Up on the rooftop swimming pool, I beheld a magnificent panorama of Bangkok. Ah, the view from the top! I swam thirty laps and strutted back to the locker room for a sauna. I had never taken a sauna. I had seen them in movies and knew you had to beat yourself with twigs. There weren't any twigs around, so I just sat in the baking heat of a this wood-paneled cubicle and read a book till the sweat dropping off my nose turned the pages soggy.

I escaped to the jacuzzi and bliss.

As I flopped about in the bubbling froth, I thought: why wasn't I born rich? Why had I not devoted my life to accumulating geld so I could swill champagne all day and loll in a jacuzzi?



FINALLY, I HAULED MYSELF OUT THE JACUZZI AND, WEAK-KNEED WITH PLEASURE, WOBBLED OFF TO THE SHOWERS.

I prolonged the idyll till my fingers were pickled. Finally, I hauled myself out the jacuzzi and, weak-kneed with pleasure, wobbled off to the showers. There was a dial to make the water hotter or colder, slower or faster, and a machine with two buttons that you pushed for free soap and shampoo. I played with that machine for a long time.

Reluctantly, I put on my clothes to rejoin the real world. The armed guard at the elevator leapt to his feet to punch the down button. I felt great. Here I've spent half my life as a farang ban nawk - hillbilly farang - and now I'm a big city sophisticate. I'm going back to the health club every day. I plan to buy running shoes and prance about with the dancing girls. And I still haven't tried out the massage. Oo.

To those luckless FCCT members who missed the May 30 deadline to join the health club, I say: good. At my magazine, I'm surrounded all day by working stiff journalists. I don't want you in my club.

Story by: James Eckardt
Illustrated by: Koen Olie



Fact Box

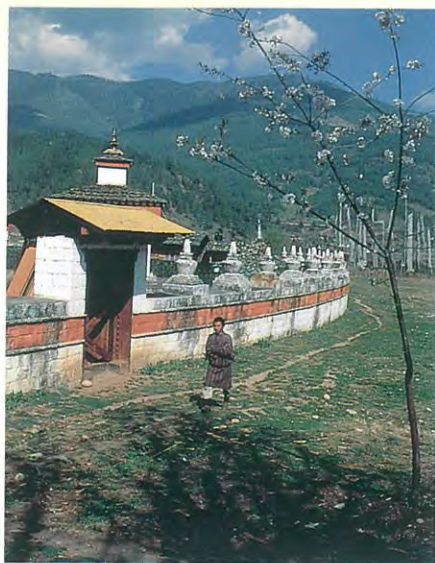
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STORY BY BERTIL LINTNER
PHOTOGRAPH BY HSENG NOUNG LINTNER

BHUTAN — THE UNTOLD STORY

"Trouts, imported from Kashmir have rivers and streams"

Old dzong in a high valley in the Himalayas.

I never thought I would have to hide my fishing rod in shame on my way to catch some trout. I thought angling, the world's oldest sport, was accepted everywhere. I was wrong. Not in Bhutan, this almost forgotten kingdom in the Himalayas which many still refer to as the last Shangri-La. The country's almost fundamentalist Buddhist believers forbid the killing of any living being. A Bhutanese would panic if a fly landed in his tea cup. It may drown. Such a disaster could bring down bad karma upon the person who thought he was just about to relax with a cup of tea.

A trout? The innocent fish may be the reincarnation of one's grandmother, and who would want to put a hook in her mouth, much less break her neck, dip her in batter, fry her and eat her?

It could also be a 15th century saint who had misbehaved in subsequent lives and as punishment, was reborn later as a fish. But no matter who the trout may have been in an earlier existence, the consequences of killing them remain severe.

Thailand is also a Buddhist country, but fishing here is an extremely popular form of recreation and escape from the traffic jams of Bangkok - as well as all the fishy characters who frequent the FCCT's bar. But the Thais never admit to killing anything in the process. They just "make the lives of the fish a bit shorter." The flexibility of the Thais interpretation of fundamental Buddhist concepts

does not exist in Bhutan. The only allowance, since most Bhutanese still like to have fish in their curries, is to concede that it is not a sin to eat the flesh of an animal killed by somebody else.

The outcome of all this is that the markets of Bhutan are full of smelly, dried fish trucked in from India - while the nearby streams teem with trout. But there are a few sinners in Bhutan, and they promised to show us where to look for the best trout in the country. We set off in a hired four-wheel drive along winding and treacherous roads into the Bhutanese mountains. There was also my 10 year-old daughter Hseng Tai, who lives slicing up the fish as much as I do. My wife Hseng NOUNG, a professional photographer, came along as well to document the crime against species we were about to commit.

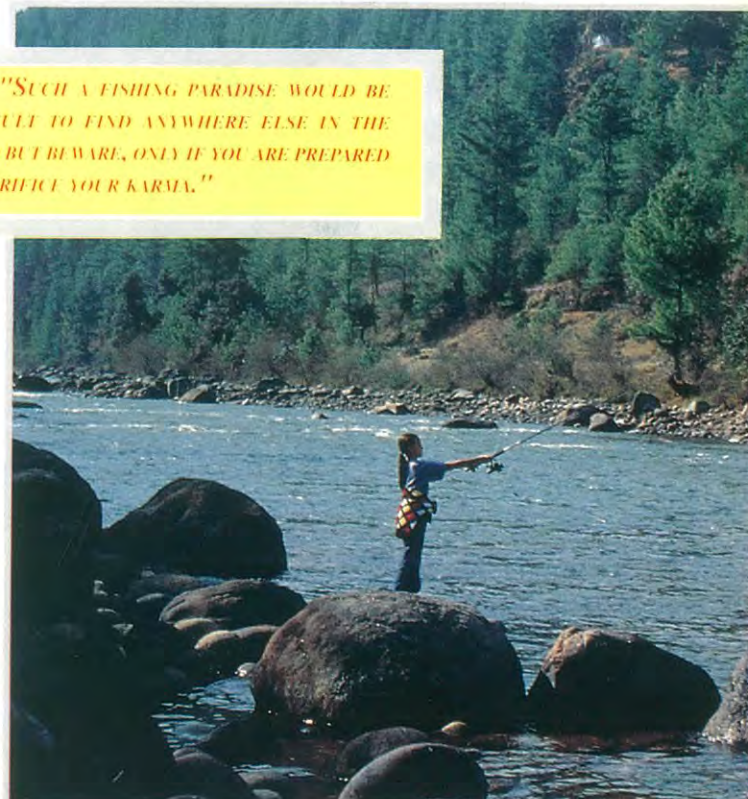
The setting of our sinful expedition could not have been more dramatic. Bhutan's mountains are some of the most spectacular in the world. Sparsely populated virgin pine forest still cover the slopes and has not been turned into firewood or build-

ing material for houses, as have entire forests in neighbouring India and Nepal.

We were alone with the beautiful forest surrounding us, majestic peaks in the background, and a clear mountain stream full of trout. We had caught about a dozen when we decided that it was enough for dinner that night and breakfast the next day. Suddenly, we discovered that we were not alone. A group of curious onlookers were perched in a row on a rock beside the stream.

My immediate thought was that they wanted to watch the mad foreigners ruin their karma. Fortunately, however, they turned out to be Nepalese workers who were upgrading some road close to our new found fishing paradise... Hindus and therefore fellow fish killers.

"SUCH A FISHING PARADISE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO FIND ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD BUT BEWARE, ONLY IF YOU ARE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE YOUR KARMA."



almost become a pest in Bhutan's highland

The trout is actually not native to Bhutan. In the last century, British colonialists introduced brown trout to their favourite playground, Kashmir. A century later, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck decided to bring Bhutan out of the Middle Ages and into the modern world. In the early 1960s, roads were constructed from the Indian plains, and the first motor vehicles entered the Himalayan kingdom.

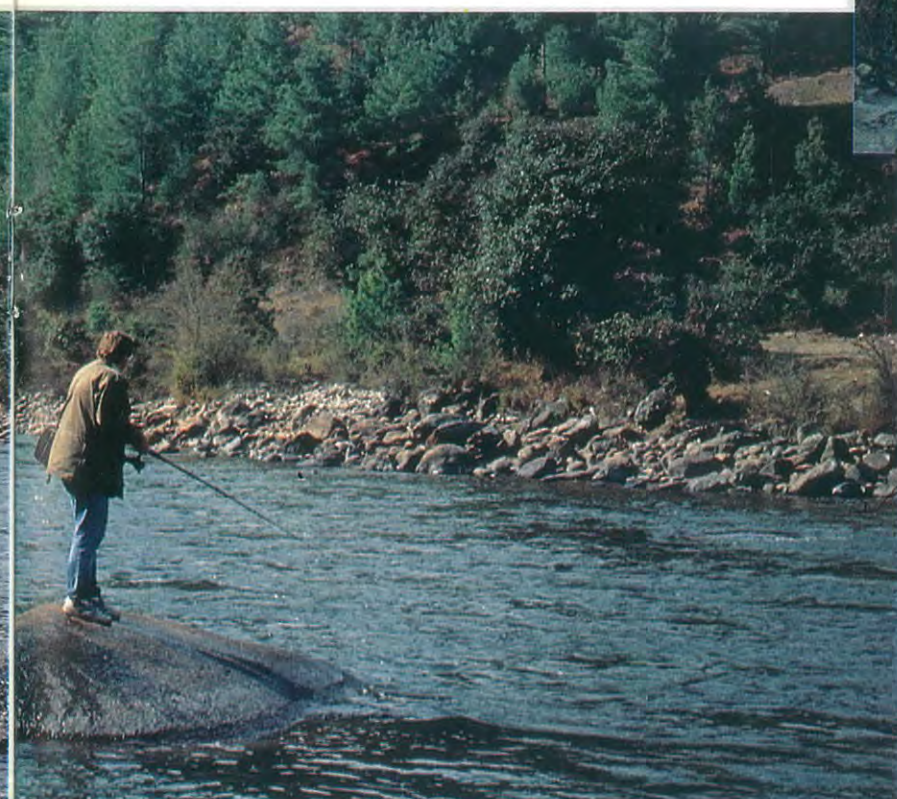
A relative of the king was interested in fishing, and as soon as the roads from India were strong enough to carry trucks, he brought in tankfuls of trout from Kashmir. They soon found themselves at home in the fast-flowing, cool and crystal clear waters

of Bhutan. The trout grew to decent sizes and multiplied rapidly. By now they have taken over most of Bhutan's highland rivers and streams.

But since so few people are interested in fishing, the trout have almost become pests, even to the extent of threatening the survival of the main native species, a slow-moving carp that is no match for the trout in terms of feeding capability.

Schoolboys have to wear Go, traditional Bhutanese dress for men. Bhutan may be one of the most traditional societies on Earth.

Below: This correspondent and his daughter fishing in Bhutan.



Here is proof of my sins: A dead Bhutanese trout.

Yaks provide the main means of transport in the roadless north of the country where peaks can be as high as 7,000 m.



Old woman praying



Racing the smog By Ted Bardacke

The City of Angels does not yet have an official Tour de Bangkok, but I and ten other half-cocked Bangkokians didn't let that - or anything else - stop us from participating in a recent Saturday morning 53km bicycle race through the choked streets of Asia's most polluted city.

A proper race would have had cooperation from the local authorities in blocking off streets and reserving special lanes for the cyclists. Ours did not. Instead, it was a no-rules, no-privilege, unofficial (and probably law-breaking) in-between-the-cars, cut-off-the-motorcycles, use-the-sidewalk-if-you-have-to, run-the-red-light dash where the competing desires of survival and a fast time hung in precarious balance.

The route was simple enough. Beginning at the President Park complex on Sukhumvit Soi 24 we went east on Rama IV, up Soi 71, across Ramkhamhaeng Soi 39 and Pracha Uthit to Ratchadapisek, which we took all the way back down to the Sukhumvit-Asoke intersection. Then it was right towards Ploenchit, north on Ratchadamri, around the Victory Monument, down Ratchawithi and over the Krung Thon bridge to Thonburi. Charan

Sanit Wong, Arun Amarin and Isara Phap took us back to the Memorial bridge, where we crossed back into Bangkok, made a circle around the Grand Palace, cruised through Chinatown on Charoen Krung and then a long straight-away back down Rama IV to the finish.

Mercedes churn out invisible and odor-less, but even more deadly, CO₂.

Luckily, race organizers provided everyone with a face mask, although that didn't stop my nose from dripping a gritty black ooze for several days after the race.

"A Saturday morning 53km Tour de Bangkok through the choked streets of Asia's most polluted city."

Having reported from the non-wars of Haiti and Chiapas, along with the uneventful and rosy civil war mopping up operations in Cambodia and Burma, the race was the closest I've ever been to real combat reporting.

Like a trained observer of missiles, military vehicles and machine guns, during the race I became acutely aware of the different exhausts and sounds emitted by different motorized vehicles. Blue smoke and a high-pitched wail is sure sign of the dreaded two-stroke motorcycle. The tuk-tuks combine white smoke with a put-put sound that would be folkloric if it weren't so loud. The rumbling buses, of course, spew a sooty diesel from mufflers strategically placed right at nose-level. And the silent and sleek

We were not given mace, which would have come in handy. Early in the ride I got chased by a pack of dogs. This normally doesn't happen in Bangkok, where the street mutts are generally tolerant of two-wheeled traffic. But these particular sharp-toothed creatures began by going after a pick-up truck whose passengers riding in the back had bled them up. As the truck sped away, the dogs turned their attention to me. I eventually got rid of them by darting across two lanes into the middle of the road and using the cars whizzing around me as protective shields.

Yet more often than not, vehicles were a hindrance, not a help. Though the race was held on a Saturday (some masochist's suggestion that it be held on a Friday afternoon that coincided with an end of the month payday was rejected) traffic was still congested around the city, especially in Chinatown, where new year preparations were in full swing. There I lost a great deal of time to my competitors when I got stuck

between a bus, a cement truck and a black BMW the size of a tank; the sidewalks here, equally as congested as the streets, were simply not an option.

Another problem was at the road planning joke known around the Memorial bridge(s). Although the old bridge, and the one I wanted to get on, goes over the river to the left, entrance to it can only be gained from the extreme right lanes. As I fought the cars which were merging left to get onto the new bridge going right, I posed myself that classic Bangkok question: wouldn't it just be easier to tear down everything and start all over again.

That, in addition to being impossible, would simply not be right. Bangkok is a living thing, with wonders tucked in among the madness, small and unexpected joys such as the continual cheers of encouragement from the motorcycle-taxi drivers playing checkers at their queue. Or the policeman who held up traffic after the light had changed so that I and a three-wheeled contraption powered by a 50cc motorcycle engine and laden down with hand-made dust brooms could continue safely on our way unimpeded.

Even black, here so often associated with the hazy colour of the sky and the grime that accumulates on your skin, was beautiful in spots. In the neighborhood around Chitralada palace most of the women were dressed in black, still mourning the Princess Mother. And the Chao Phraya river, running black due to a chemical mixture I don't want to know about, was a buoyant bustle of barges and tugs, ferries and ocean liners.

The bridges were also of some comfort cause the traffic flowed easily and we cyclists could concentrate on our speed. If traffic was the great equalizer in this race - a two-minute lead produced by several kilometers of hard pedaling could easily vanish by being caught waiting at a red light - then speed was what eventually separated the pack. A guy named Randy finished the course in a lightening 1:45. I arrived in seventh place at 2:32, with the last riders coming in at just under 4 hours. There were no external injuries. My time was helped by a little trick I pulled getting onto the Rama IV flyover near the end of the race. The flyover is technically off-limits to bicyclists and a policeman stationed near the on-ramp was a slight deterrent. But the prospect of avoiding four traffic lights, and the judicious presence of a nearby pick-up truck, was too alluring. I grabbed onto the bed of the pickup and was propelled up the onramp but right into the sight-line of the policeman. He didn't even flinch.

I smiled all the way to the finish. The incident proved that the best thing about Bangkok is that this race could even happen. In Singapore, even sending out the announcement of the race would have earned us the wrath of who knows how many policing institutions. Then again, having such a race in Singapore would not have been very much fun. Not enough traffic.

Ted Bardacke is a correspondent for The Financial Times, based in Bangkok since 1995.

- such a race in Singapore would not have been very much fun. Not enough traffic...

REUTERS AND IMMF TRAIN INDO-CHINESE JOURNALISTS

Reuters and the Indo-China Media Memorial Fund (IMMF) did their bit for a total of forty Indo-chinese journalists from the print, broadcast and television media by offering them training courses in business news writing in May and June.

The IMMF course for 16 participants from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia (including a Thai journalist) was held in Bangkok from May 5-24 and concentrated on helping them hone their economic news reporting skills.

During the course, participants met senior business personalities, did interviews, wrote stories and went on excursions including to Thailand's industrial Eastern Seaboard.

Reuters held five-day journalism workshops for 12 journalists each in Phnom Penh and Vientiane from June 10-14 and June 18-22 respectively.

Two journalism trainers from the Reuters Foundation in London conducted the courses which covered the basics of news writing using computers and case studies.

Journalists who attended the course said they found the experience at the courses beneficial and

Two journalism trainers from the Reuters Foundation in London conducted the courses which covered the basics of news writing using computers and case studies.



IMMF journalists in Bangkok visiting Reuters newsroom during their training course. Reuters bureau chief Rajan Moses (author of article) on left

would use knowledge gained to enhance their writing and publications.

More courses are expected to be held in the future for journalists in the Indo-chinese region because there is great demand for them from local editors and state agencies, the organisers said.

Funding, however, is a problem. The IMMF was only able to provide the comprehensive course because of grants from interested bodies. The Reuters Foundation financed its own courses.

Any help from out there is most welcome.

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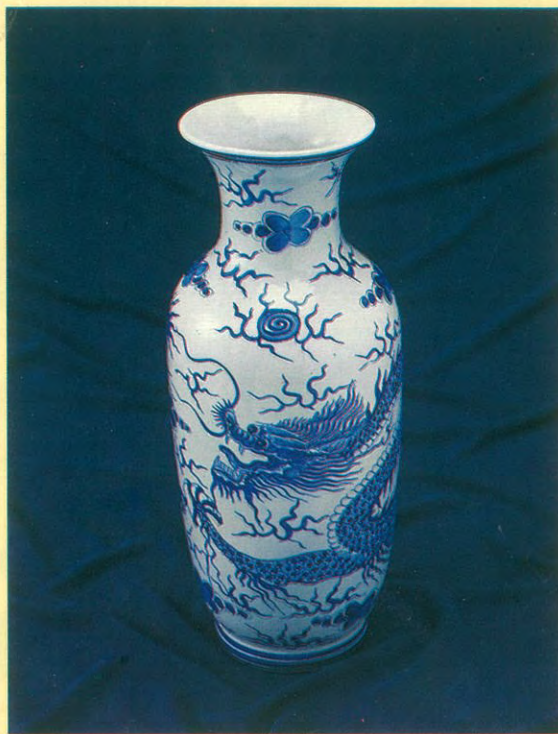


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