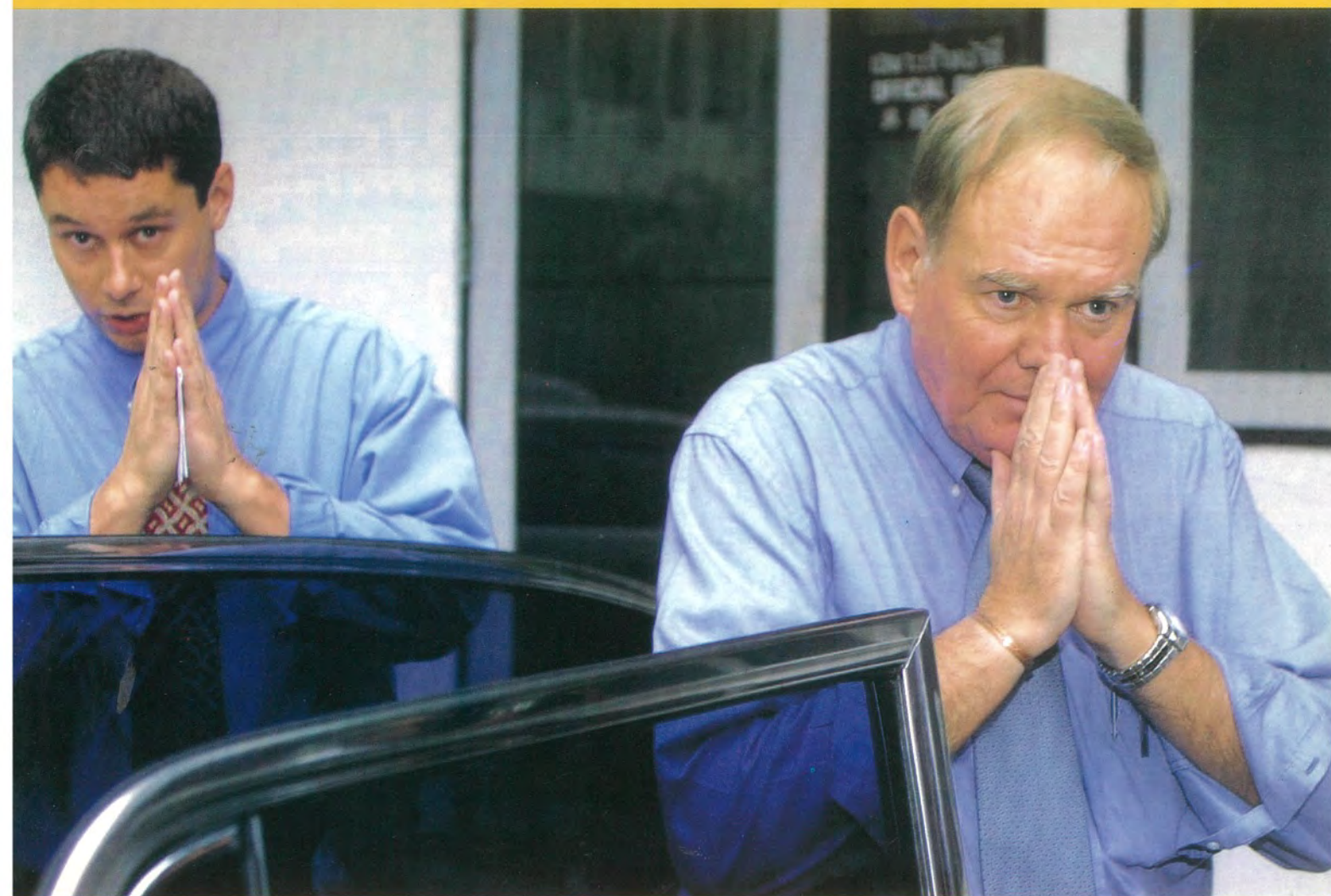


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FIRST QUARTER 2002



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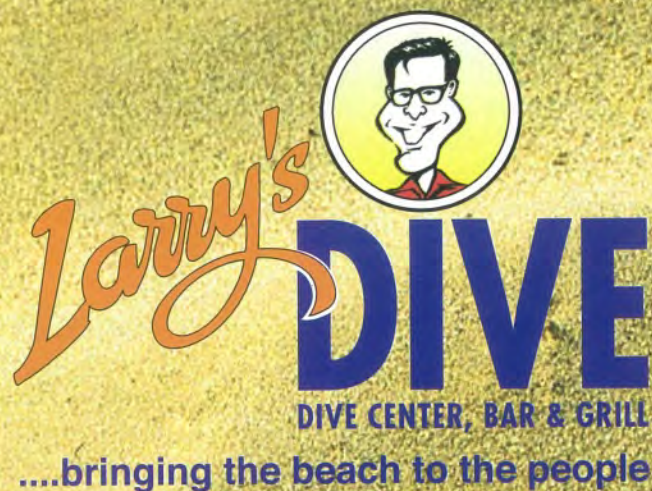
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The opinions expressed by writers in
Dateline Bangkok do not necessarily reflect
the views of the Foreign Correspondents
Club of Thailand or the editors.

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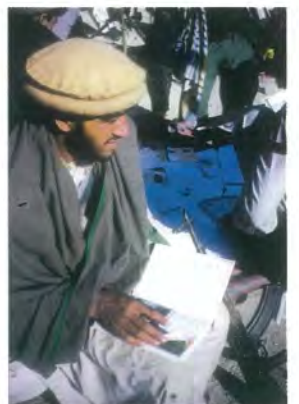
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Join Us

You don't have to be foreign and you don't need to be a correspondent to become a member of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand. Membership has its privileges: The club frequently hosts breaking news panel discussions with the leaders of government, private sector and non-governmental organizations. Each month the club exhibits work from a different photographer or artist, and the last Friday of each month there is live jazz music at the bar. Each member also gets a subscription to this magazine for absolutely free. So why aren't you a member? Don't forget that the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand is one of Bangkok's most prestigious addresses for press conferences, social gatherings and product launches. The club is outfitted with all the latest techno-gizmos, from wireless microphones to remote control television cameras, and can provide all types of catering, from light snacks to full meals. Impress your guests with the well known hospitality of the Foreign Correspondents Club.

Got a tale to tell?

This is your club's magazine and we welcome letters to the editor, articles, photographs, drawings, poetry or just about anything to help us fill up each issue. Submissions should address journalism or the story behind getting the story. All ideas considered, but please contact Mick Elmore before doing too much work. Submissions are paid for with glory and bar coupons.



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Your Travel Agent

The club may not be shifting into overdrive yet, but it is certainly in better shape than this time last year. For a start, Wednesday night programmes seem to be attracting healthy audiences, almost every week.

In fact, we had one or two stunning turnouts in February and March. Admittedly it was a time when freedom of the press in Thailand was a hot issue, drawing a great deal of interest. But the apparent increasing interest in a wider spectrum of issues augurs well for the rest of the year.

Not that the FCCT is a one-night a week club. We are trying to encourage members to use it for more social reasons: to come for a drink, and sample the new, well-received cuisine. Since March 1, Khun "Tum" and her able staff have put body and soul into their work since taking over the catering reins.

People are starting to use the club more for lunch - particularly Thais, who find Tum's Thai food irresistible, and very reasonably priced too. So these days, you will see diners at lunch and dinner every day. Come and join in. Don't forget, you can simply walk into the building from Chit



Lom sky train station, or park your car for two free hours in the parking lot.

Then there's jazz on Friday. Apart from our regular, solid band with Stewart, we now have "Bob" with his Nat King Cole-like voice and amazing dexterity on ivories. There are also occasional visits by top-grade modern groups, such as "Flow." They all draw crowds, as they should do, and remember, anyone can come and join in.

The club is also being increasingly targeted for private functions. For a start,

it is an excellent venue for press conferences. Who else in town can match our sound system and monitors, plus refreshments for such a reasonable price? Just call manager "Noi" and it will all happen. Also, a number of organizations and companies are coming to realize the benefits of using the clubhouse for their meetings. Again, what value for what you get!

All in all, things are moving forward as never before. The club is being increasingly recognized for what it is: the biggest foreign press club in Southeast Asia. But with its wide variety of membership, it is far more than that. We have launched all kinds of promotion deals to increase membership, and we have every reason to be optimistic, given the increasingly high-profile the club is getting. For instance, try not to run away in June. Prime Minister Thaksin has promised me, with a handshake, that he will be back to address club members and guests during that month. And given the turnout a similar function achieved last year, it should be some evening.

Sincerely

Rodney Tasker



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TO THE EDITOR:

All of us at MilitaryCorruption.com, where Paul Vogle was vice president for operations in the last year of his life, (he was physically unable to work but we carried him on the staff list), wish to thank *Dateline* for remembering our colleague after his recent passing.

Paul Vogle was a dear friend of mine for over 30 years, when I, as a young war correspondent and former U.S. Army combat correspondent in Vietnam, was shown friendship and kindness by him, uncommon among some members of the Saigon Press Corps.

He was one of the very few correspondents who were fluent in Vietnamese, and United Press International owes him a great deal for his many years of dedicated service. Much of UPI Saigon's ability to be competitive with AP during the war years stemmed from Paul's unique ability and hard work. This is not to detract from so many others who did well too, but Paul was indeed the "essential man" in the bureau.

Ironically we both ended our careers working for UPI, and when he "retired", and I became chief editor of MilitaryCorruption.com, I was happy to bring Paul and another UPI Saigon hand, Chad Huntley, aboard.

As long as one of us who covered that war lives on, Paul Vogle will not be forgotten.

Thank you, *Dateline*, for helping to keep his memory alive.

GLENN MacDONALD

Editor-in-Chief, MilitaryCorruption.com

Phoenix, Arizona

**Dateline carried Paul Vogle's obit written by former UPIer John Hail in the Third Quarter 2001 issue.*



FCCT Board

Dumb and Dumber? Dumb enough to be on the board last year, most returned for a second year. Does that make them dumber? The new FCCT board are left to right, Christopher Johnson, Julian Spindler, Sarah Stewart, Dumras Rodjanapiches, Mick Elmore, Evguenii Belenky, Karen Emmons, Mira Kim Prachabarn and Rodney Tasker

Pictured at left are Lin Neumann and Jeanne Hallacy with past president, Heather Kelly. Board member Marc Laban not pictured.

New Journalism Prize Offered

Kurt Schork Prize for International Journalism

The Columbia Graduate School in journalism is offering two prizes of \$10,000 each in honor of Kurt Schork, a freelance journalist killed on assignment for Reuters in Sierra Leone on May 24, 2000.

One of the prizes is for a print reporter on a local publication in a developing country. The other is for a freelance journalist covering international affairs.

Submissions are due by June 1, 2002.

The committee can be contacted by telephone: (212) 854-8653 or via e-mail at schorkawards@jrn.columbia.edu or you can check out the awards website at: www.jrn.columbia.edu/prizes/schork/



Pictures from Christmas party

(Top photo) Craig Hobbs, second from the left, wins the Singapore Airlines ticket at last year's Christmas party. And more pictures above and on the left from the party held at the Marriot Riverside Hotel in December.

SOI WHISPERS

At press time the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* Rodney Tasker and Shawn Crispin were back on the job, legal reporters once again. ■ Taxi drivers, however, were having a few problems. One driver suggested they should start their own newspaper, just like Chalerm and Co. So keep a look out for Taxi News, everything you ever wanted to know about Buri-Ram. ■ Press freedom dominated the news for the two months before press time. The Club held three programs on the matter. The first on January 30, raised several concerns with a few people speaking to the Club afterwards. Said one; "I thought there was a strong element of intimidation at the session. During the question and answer session, a photographer (who appeared to be from the police) pointedly took pictures of each and every person who asked a question." That did happen, and it shouldn't have. ■ On a less serious note, the ABC's man in Bangkok Geoff Thompson did a juggling act after Frances Ford Coppola's March 9 press conference. While walking next to Coppola he handed his camera to a friend for a moving shot next to the God Father while at the same time called a mate in Perth on his mobile. With his friend on the line Thompson handed the phone to Coppola. "Why not a God Father Four?" the question came from Down Under. "Interesting," Coppola said, "but I'm busy with other things at the moment." Talking to Coppola was an offer his friend just couldn't refuse, Thompson said. Two days later the BBC's Jonathan Head and Mick Elmore with *The Hollywood Reporter* interviewed Coppola. He said he liked their scarves – Cambodian kramas – so they gave them to him. So the man who made the best movie ever based in Cambodia now has two sweaty kramas from there. ■ And in Paris 17 photographers got naked after billionaire Bill Gates sacked them from their photo agency Corbis Sygma. *Soi whispers* wants to know if some Bangkok-based photogs are considering stripping off. The Paris photogs took photos in the buff with lenses strategically placed to protect their modesty. Or lack there of. The question is, would Bangkok photogs need wide angles or telephotos to do the same. ■ And closer to home, a few movements between news agencies. Dan from AFP to AP, Matthew from DPA to AFP and Hanoi to Bangkok, and Dean from with AP from Singapore to Bangkok. And from father of one, to father of two. All in the same month. And if anyone can figure out those moves, a free beer for you. Or course you will have to reciprocate. ■ One other agency man is on the move. At press time AP's Denis Gray was preparing to swim across the Mekong in an annual race in Phnom Penh. More of that in the next issue.

Editorials Around the World

FROM THE ECONOMIST

By coming down on the press, Thailand is moving in the wrong direction, says 'The Economist' in this week's editorial

Last week, we published a generally upbeat survey of Thailand. For our pains, the government blocked the distribution of the edition. A week or so earlier, it had told two journalists from the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that their visas were to be revoked (a sanction subsequently withdrawn after the magazine apologised). Both *The Economist* and the *Review* had published articles that, apparently, threatened the stability of the country by daring to discuss its monarchy; though *The Economist*, at least, was never formally informed of its sin.

It is true that most Thais revere their monarchy, but the survey contained only five paragraphs on the subject.

It did, however, say much more about the many conflicts of interest surrounding

Thaksin Shinawatra, who is at once prime minister and Thailand's biggest businessman. Similarly, the offending article in the *Review* was less about the monarchy than about [His Majesty] the King's alleged unhappiness with Mr Thaksin.

If the foreign press is having a tough time just now, it is nothing compared with what the domestic media have to suffer. Already, independence has disappeared from television: Mr Thaksin acquired the only non-state-owned broadcaster, iTV, before last year's election, and many of its journalists were subsequently fired.

Those who remain complain of pressure to report the news in a pro-government way.

Radio journalist fare much the same: after the broadcast of an interview that was critical of Mr Thaksin, the government this week ordered a radio station to stop taking news reports from one of the country's few indepen-

dent sources, the Nation Multimedia Group.

Though the press fares better, editors say Mr Thaksin's family business use their financial muscle to discourage criticism of the prime minister by withholding advertising from papers that voice it. A leading Thai polling organisation complains of intimidation, saying police raided its offices after one of its surveys showed a fall in Mr Thaksin's popularity.

Until recently, the press has been delightfully free in Thailand. Now the trend is towards the authoritarianism of Malaysia. There, Mahathir Mohamad allows almost no freedom, either for the international press—one recent week saw *The Economist*, the *Review*, *Time* and *Newsweek* all blocked—or for the local media, which are almost completely muzzled.

It would be sad if Thailand went down that path. Fortunately, as many Thais have discovered, our survey is available free on our website, at www.economist.com/surveys.

The Press Must Be Vigilant

The dust has settled and the scandalous actions of the Anti-Money Laundering Office have reached a full circle. Bottom line: A slap on the wrist (a pay cut at best) for officials who abused their authority by ordering investigations on the financial backgrounds on journalists, academics, businessmen or grassroots activists. Much more is at stake beneath this latest development – the government's arrogance and contempt for basic freedom of expression and individual rights.

The government's actions against the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Nation radio and television and the AMLO scandal clearly shows that it is prepared to exert pressure – direct and indirect – to stifle criticism. The direct approach: the promise of withdrawing lawsuits in exchange for less criticism. Indirect: the threat of cutting off advertising baht and potential revenue, again in exchange for less or no criticism.

I would not be honest if I said that these tactics do not weigh heavily in the minds of some newspaper editors or proprietors. They do. But overall, the response from the Thai Press is unified. But for the moment



Pichai Chuensuksawadi is editor of the Bangkok Post.

the government is getting away with it not just because they have the numbers, but because with the passage of time will shift the controversies of March off the front pages.

Frustrating? Yes, indeed. Concerned? Most certainly. Defeated? Definitely not. The Thai press can and should be criticized for its shortcomings. But even its critics cannot deny the role it has played in fighting long and hard for basic freedoms and rights of the society in which it serves. Those rights and freedoms, which we have today, is a result of decades of struggle. And it is clear that the struggle is far from over.

But thankfully, unlike the past, Thais now have the means – although still imperfect – to address abuses by governments and its agencies. Petitions have been filed with the Administrative Court and Senate deliberations are under way as a result of the March controversies. It remains to be seen how this process pans out but at least this is a step forward. Inch by inch we need to push forward. And every inch is worth the frustration and setbacks along the way until we achieve a democratic system that truly nurtures those basic rights enshrined in the current charter.

FROM THE ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL

Thailand has had a well-earned reputation as a liberal democracy open to the ideas and investment of the world. Which makes it especially regrettable that the Thai government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been tarnishing that reputation in an attempt to improve his own.

The government has threatened to expel two reporters based in Bangkok for our sister magazine, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. It objects to a short Jan 10 item in the *Review* that reported tension between Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The report meant no disrespect to Thailand's royal family. The King commands our admiration as a symbol of Thai sovereignty and for his many good works and exemplary leadership of the Thai people. To remove any doubts on that point, a letter from *Review* editor Michael Vatikiotis will be delivered today to the president of the National Assembly apologising for causing "any adverse commentary concerning Thailand's highest institution". Our hope is that this will settle the matter.

But we should be candid that settling this will also depend on the response of the

Thaksin government. It's clear to every one that the government has picked this fight with foreign reporters as a way to deflect attention from its own troubles. This is a familiar if dreary political tactic, used in Asia by the late Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos and Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad, though even the latter hasn't expelled reporters since the mid-1980s. Thai leaders haven't typically resorted to his sort of tinhorn behaviour.

But Mr Thaksin has a thin skin and is quick to blame others, especially foreigners, for his own mistakes. Elected with a huge majority last year, the country's richest man has since seen his popularity erode amid a series of economic policy blunders.

He's kicked around foreign investors, in particular cancelling a Japanese contract at Bangkok's airport, sending foreign investment into a tailspin. Mr Thaksin has also picked a fight with a reform-minded central bank governor. The result has been a sharp reduction in economic confidence and growth.

King Bhumibol himself issued a pointed public criticism of Mr Thaksin late last year, nothing that the country is "in a state of disaster instead of prosperity". Mr Thaksin's

response has been to berate the messenger in the press and public. He's urged business-folk and economists to stop airing "negative views". And the government subjected leading Thai journalists to a session on "Reforming and Improving the Efficiency of Media", which seems to mean saying nicer things about Mr Thaksin's policies. Now he's assailing the foreign press.

The dispute here is not between Thais and foreigners, but between the Thaksin government and the press. Our mission in Thailand is to report the truth fairly, and the *Review* has been doing so for more than 50 years. Having foreign reporters on the ground in Bangkok is the interests of the Thai people, not only because these journalists are able to explain the country to the outside world, but also because they offer Thais another perspective that enriches the local debate.

We are gratified that local journalist have sprung in our defence against the government's recent actions. And we hope that the Thaksin government will recognise the damage that media explosions will do to Thailand's reputation as a modern society.

FROM THE WASHINGTON POST

February 28, 2002

IN DECEMBER Thailand's much-respected constitutional monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, delivered a rare public rebuke to the country's populist prime minister. The government of Thaksin Shinawatra, said the king, had brought the country to the brink of disaster, in large part because of his failure to listen to criticism.

Now Mr. Thaksin, a business tycoon turned politician who has devoted the year since his election to compounding his political power, has proved his sovereign correct.

Following the publication of an article about the speech in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the government announced its intention to expel two of the respected weekly's journalists from the country – an act that would ruin Thailand's reputation as a haven for free speech in Asia.

The formal case against the two journalists – Shawn Crispin, a U.S. citizen, and Rodney Tasker, a Briton – makes little sense; no inaccuracies have been cited in their 175-word article, and they have been charged under those favorite catchalls of authoritarianism – threatening public order and national security.

As is so often true in such cases, their real offense was to publish embarrassing truths: The king, they wrote, has been annoyed by Mr. Thaksin's arrogance and by his efforts to meddle in the affairs of the royal family. Such behavior would be consistent with Mr. Thak-

sin's aggressive attempts to consolidate power in Thailand.

Already one of the country's richest men and the owner of its sole private television station, he has stacked the cabinet with business cronies and pushed his political coalition to a dominant majority in parliament by swallowing opposition parties.

The royal family and the press are among the strongest institutions still outside his control, which may explain why this fight has erupted. Luckily, Thailand's press understands these stakes and has embraced the foreign correspondents' cause as its own.

Articles and editorials in the leading newspapers have been blasting Mr. Thaksin; at a meeting of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand, a host of Thai politicians and journalists demanded that the government reverse the expulsion orders, which are currently under appeal.

Mr. Thaksin, who frequently strikes nationalist poses, angrily rejected the U.S. State Department's criticism of the expulsions as foreign meddling. But he'd do well to listen to what his own journalists are telling him.

"It's not too late to draw back from this pointless confrontation that can only seriously damage every aspect of our nation's future," wrote Kanjana Spindler of the *Bangkok Post*. "The world is watching."

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Fiery Night To Remember

The demonstrations against Suchinda's taking power had been gathering pace for weeks, but had been suspended for the last week. The pro-democracy campaigners awaited a promised constitutional amendment which would oblige the un-elected general to step down. There had been only words, marches, banners; no confrontation, no violence. Peaceful means for righteous ends.

But the government reneged. So on Sunday May 17 the protesters rallied again at Sanam Luang in huge numbers – 150,000 said the *Bangkok Post*.

the demonstrators, several thousand, were sitting peacefully in Rajdamnern Klang Road on the other side of the barbed wire barrier strung across Phan Fah Bridge. Somebody told me they had been marching on the parliament but had been stopped by police at the bridge a few hours earlier. So how had it come to this? There was a riot in progress, but there were no forces of order whatsoever: no regular police, no riot police, no army.

Some of the rioters wore police helmets. One guy held a ripped out radio transceiver to his ear, jokingly pretending to listen to police radio. Another guy aped

uphold the nation and the monarchy”.

More blazes lit up the night along Rajdamnern Nok, the road that leads to the Parliament. Several parked cars were fiercely burning, and a bus. A concrete building inside a compound was ablaze. Yet all was calm and deserted. It was dreamlike – but full of foreboding.

In the street was just one person, a photographer, Thai, mature, very calm. I asked him what the building was. “Nang Lerng Police Station”, he said, without emotion. He seemed to be methodically documenting. More perplexed than ever, I walked into the compound and saw a couple of twelve-year-olds, a boy and a girl, with police caps on their heads cocked at rakish angles, staring at the blazing police station with a look of childish wonder.

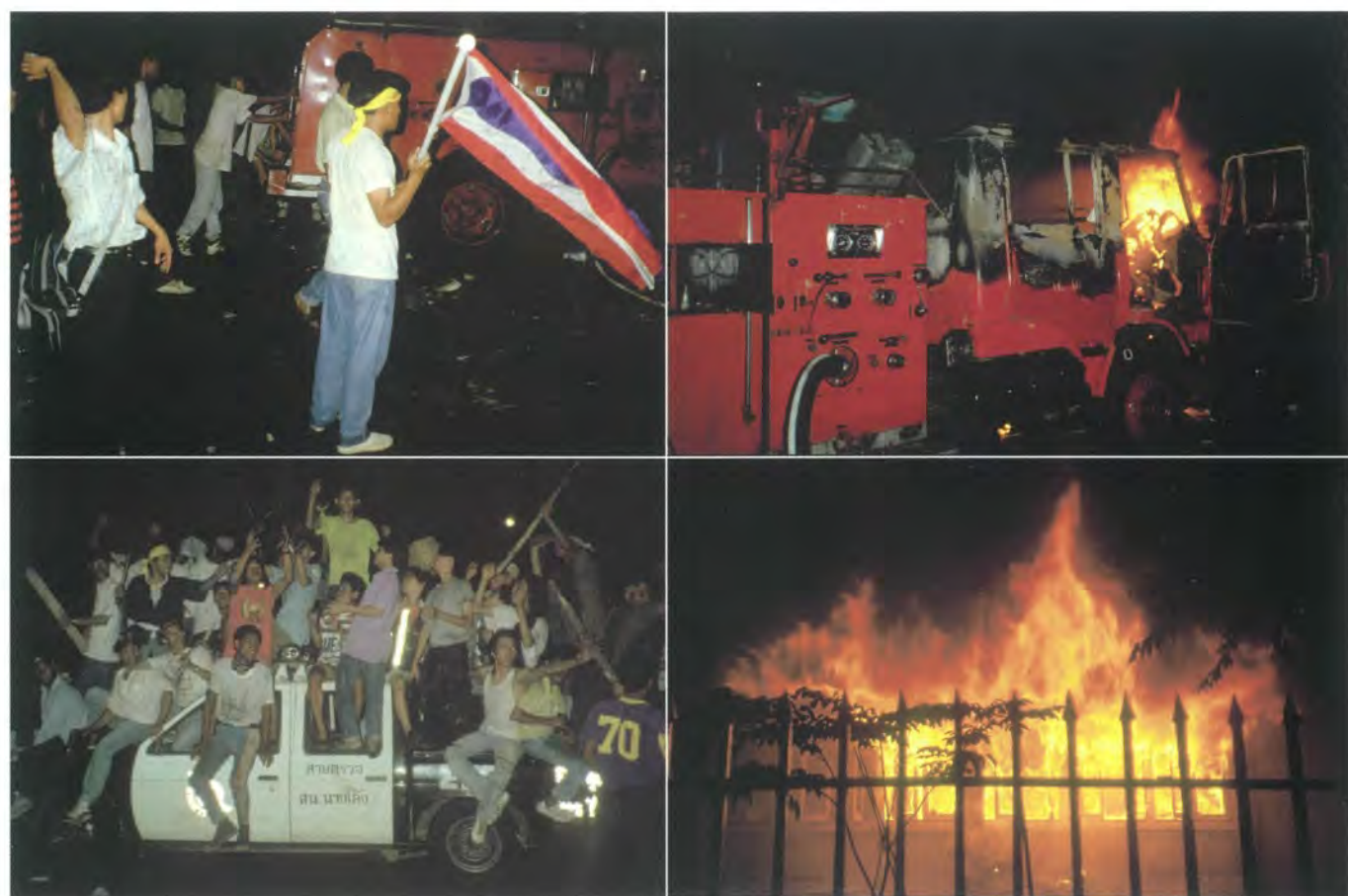
Inside, an office was strewn with trashed files, but several men were purposefully sifting through the mess. There was nobody in uniform whatsoever. I took a photo, upon which a man in a white T-shirt came up

there. Around 3 am, a crisp rat-a-tat-tat shattered the calm. Firecrackers? But then we all saw the electric red tracer bullets flying overhead. Everybody hit the ground, then started crawling away from Phan Fah Bridge, from whose direction the shots came.

Somebody in panic crawled over the top of me. Another automatic rifle burst spat out. A bloodied woman was carried away by her friends.

Then silence. It seemed over, for the moment. Rumours began that the army was closing in on all sides, heavily armed. For the first time, I felt really scared. And I asked myself what I was doing there. It wasn't my country, no matter how much I liked it, and I wasn't going to die for it. The Thais could do that. Or maybe nothing was going to happen, but I was dog tired and wanted to go to bed. I headed for home.

Walking away up Nakhon Sawan Road, just before dawn, I met a convoy of army vehicles. In open trucks, troops sat stony-faced, automatic rifles held between



All photos by Keith Mundy

About midnight on May 17, I caught TV images of bloodied people being admitted to hospital and reports of disturbances at Rajdamnern Road. A crunch had plainly come. I took a taxi straight to the scene. Somewhere along Larn Luang Road, vehicle access was officially blocked. Drawn by eerily blazing skies, I walked towards Phan Fah Bridge, where I came upon a surreal scene of mayhem.

A fire engine was ablaze, and some young men were beating it with iron bars. Twenty young men piled crazily on top of a police pickup and careered about as if in a mad carnival. Others made a raging pyre out of police motorcycles. A few more beat a gutted fire engine with sticks, as if it were a monster. With total impunity.

The scene made no sense. The vast majority of

playing a looted saxophone. They were having a whale of a time. Evidently, the police had been routed and had fled, and now they were being mocked. But wait – why should a couple of hundred rampaging youths, armed with iron bars and Molotov cocktails at the most, make the heavily armed security forces run away?

Who were these guys? Some people called them students, but they were different from the people sitting on the other side of the barrier, rougher looking, carrying no protest banners. Two messages contrasted with their destruction of government property: one guy brandished a large Thai flag, another, dressed in smart leisure clothes, stood unsteadily on top of a moving minibus holding a portrait of a royal figure. In case anyone thought otherwise, they wanted to say: “we



Location: Bangkok, Rajdamnern Road, the early hours of May 18, 1992; and the morning

About 1am: at the beginning of Rajdamnern Nok Road, whilst youths attack a fire engine, one man holds a Thai flag as a declaration of patriotism.

About 1am: at Phan Fah Bridge, a fire engine burns.

About 1am: at the beginning of Rajdamnern Nok Road, at least 20 youths pile on top of a police pickup and career around.

About 2am: Nang Lerng Police Station is ablaze.

About 2am: a boy in a police cap, his loot in a plastic bag, stares pensively at the burning Nang Lerng Police Station.

About 6am: Nang Lerng Police Station, in the aftermath of its sacking and burning.

Around 3 am, a crisp rat-a-tat-tat shattered the calm. Firecrackers? But then we all saw the electric red tracer bullets flying overhead. Everybody hit the ground

and politely said, “Please do not take pictures.” With distinct authority.

Out in the compound, a clutch of men attempted to smash open a safe which had been dragged outside. Where were the police? Whatever it was that was happening, there had to be some comeback. I walked up Rajdamnern Nok about 200 metres and could still see no sign of any security forces. They had to be planning something. I decided to join the peaceful demonstrators in Rajdamnern Klang.

Thousands of people sat calmly on the road, holding their ground, making their point just by being

knees. Incredibly, trucks rattled past with machine guns. The soldiers were silent as the grave, and twice as chilling. The response had come.

But to what were they responding? In the days afterward and throughout the decade since, many people have accused the security forces themselves of arranging the looting and burning of Nang Lerng Police Station. Or “the third hand”, as the saying goes. Whether the truth ever emerges depends on the continued progress of Thai democracy that the brave and peaceful demonstrators tried to advance in those heady days of May 1992.

One Night at the Royal Hotel

Monday night at the Royal Hotel and the crowd outside was braced for gunfire. After several tense hours it came. Most of the soldiers shot into the air – it would have been a massacre otherwise. Many more would have died, too, if not for some courageous volunteer doctors and nurses.

They expected trouble so set up a makeshift emergency room under the chandeliers of the Royal Hotel lobby. Just down Ratchadamnoen Avenue was Democracy Monument. A little further on lay Phan Fa Bridge where violence broke out the night before, and where

Mick Elmore

the chaos. A few journalists and others were pushing against the crowd trying to get outside. People carrying the injured were screaming for space to get through.

Then two lines of volunteers locked arms, divided the crowd and created a passage from the outside, up the steps and through the lobby to the makeshift emergency room in front of the reception desk. For the rest of the night each time gunshots were heard, people made way for more injured. During the lulls, people wiped blood off the lobby floor with newspapers.

The number of injured swelled and began to cover the lobby. A city bus soon appeared to take injured to hospital for treatment. A red cross was drawn on a piece of paper and wedged between the windscreen and windshield wiper.

As 11 p.m. approached volunteers started carrying the injured to the bus. But before even five patients were aboard, the soldiers began their second of many volleys that night. More people fell.

Four volunteers with an injured man in their care knelt next to the bus door, one with the intravenous bottle held high.

As the volley stopped injured protestors were put on the bus. As it drove away, another took its place in front of the hotel.

About 1 a.m. a doctor said so far 10 had died. They tried but couldn't save them.

About 5 a.m. on Tuesday a particularly heavy burst of gunfire sent a crowd surging into the hotel lobby. Moments later soldiers were at the steps outside. The gunfire continued and people lay face down on the lobby floor.

Two soldiers cautiously walked up the hotel steps. They shouted in Thai. Protesters were booted. Thud, thud. A couple of soldiers quickly stepped over the people towards the stairway. There was shouting upstairs.

I lay with two other western journalists, our six cameras with us. A soldier standing over us yelled to his superior.

"Farang, farang," then he reached down and took a couple cameras.

We studied the lobby floor for about 10 minutes then were told in English to sit up. A soldier returned our cameras and told us to give him our film. A man behind him pointed a video camera at us and told us one at a time to state our names.

The Thais were still sprawled on the floor, studying the tiles.

The foreigners were led outside into the fire-lit dawn. Two buildings ablaze across the street created an eerie dawn. Outside, another 500 Thais were laying face down around the hotel. Within 100 metres of the hotel were pockets of male protesters, squatting with their shirts used to tie their arms behind their backs.

It did not take long for the first military transports to start taking the protesters away – and journalists were told to leave. A soldier pointed up the road toward Democracy Monument. With a wave of his hand he said that way.

the shooting started about 4 a.m. that same day.

On Monday night the crowd swelled to more than 50,000 and reached the hotel's main entrance. The doctors choose their hospital site well.

The crowd swelled before dusk and was tense. Just a few hours earlier several people had been shot dead.

From the soldier's side the crowd looked intimidating. When the first commandeered bus was driving towards their barbed wire barricade, nervous soldiers stood up and moved forward. Then the bus stopped near the wire and an uneasy stalemate resumed.

For the growing crowd the view was worse. They faced several hundred armed soldiers. They knew too, that just out of view were many more soldiers and the armoured personnel carriers that were used to disperse the crowd that morning.

Near 10:30 p.m. a line of soldiers wearing black berets came to the front line. A nervous energy worked its way back through the chanting crowd. Then the soldiers sat down and the crowd relaxed.

But then the seated soldiers fired above the protesters. The crowd was stunned and surged away from the troops. People dived to avoid overhead shots and others fell injured. The devastating volley lasted a couple of minutes.

In the hotel medical volunteers still organising their clinic soon had their first casualties.

Terrified protestors pushed into the lobby to escape



Mick Elmore has been a journalist 18 years, the past 10 based in Bangkok and Phnom Penh. In May 1992 he lived one block from the Royal Hotel.

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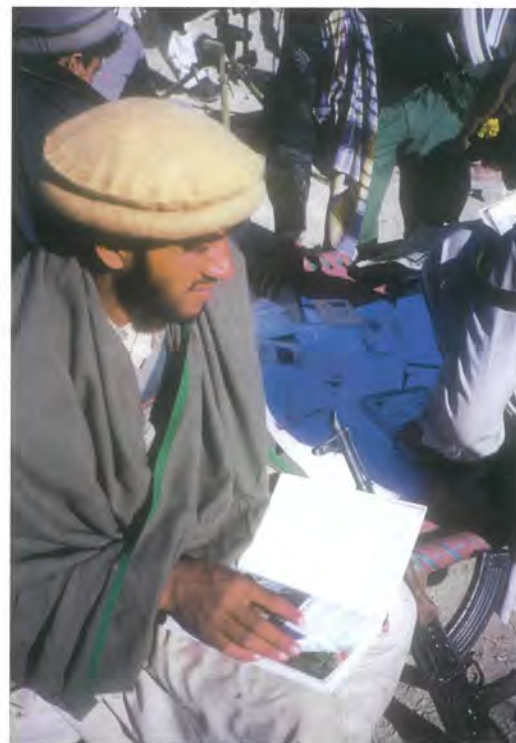
Afghan Al Qaeda Houses

During the U.S. bombardment, Arabs who fled their expensive homes abandoned all sorts of things of interest to the media: a bullet-punctured target of a person's head and shoulders, bomb schematics, foreign passports, forged visas and news clippings of hijackers who crashed planes into the World Trade Center.

"Osama bin Laden spent a lot of time in Jalalabad during his stay in Afghanistan," said Nangarhar Province's Police Chief Hazrat Ali. "He knows the city well. More than 5,000 or 6,000 Arabs were living in this city and they had their own bases and training camps in this city. Jalalabad was very much used by the Arabs during Taliban time," Mr. Ali added.

Mr. bin Laden, born in Saudi Arabia, is suspected of financing al Qaeda, an international terrorist network which attracted Arabs, Pakistanis, Chechens, Sudanese, Somalis, Europeans, Afghan Taliban officials and others. They waged a worldwide Islamic holy war to oust U.S. forces from Saudi territory, end Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and achieve other goals. Exploring the Arabs' former homes revealed intriguing aspects of how they prepared to kill their enemies while dwelling in this otherwise dull provincial capital 146 kilometers (88 miles) east of Kabul.

Afghan officials said Arab homes linked to al Qaeda were also maintained in Kabul, Kandahar and elsewhere in Afghanistan. Anti-Taliban troops with Kalashnikov assault rifles now guard these homes, though most things of value were stripped after the inhabitants departed during the first two weeks of November. Inside one sprawling white-walled complex here in Jalalabad, a half-filled notebook handwritten in French displayed



Afghans display passports, identification cards and other documents they claim to have discovered in al Qaeda homes and camps in Jalalabad.

a student's attempt to learn military lessons and how to stage attacks.

"Airplanes. Number one: Bomb with big explosive power for immediate explosion," read one entry in French. "Protect yourself from cannons and missiles.



Richard S. Ehrlich with Afghan fighters from the U.S.-backed, anti-Taliban Northern Alliance inside Bagram Air Base just north of Kabul.

Richard S. Ehrlich is a Bangkok-based special correspondent for *The Washington Times* and international media who first went to Afghanistan in 1972. He has reported from Asia for the past 24 years, including the 10-year Soviet occupation and mujahideen victory in Afghanistan. His website is ehrlieb.tripod.com/news.html

Avoid missiles after they hit the target because they can explode later," read another entry.

A page torn from a notebook written in Arabic listed chemical formulas and the initials "TNT" and "RDX" - shorthand for trinitrotoluene and royal demolition explosive. Several pages were illustrated with hand-drawn schematics of large bombs and detonators, complete with "on" and "off" switches. Another page discovered in a yard amid debris showed someone repeatedly printed the official rectangular rubber stamp of the "Consul General, High Commission for Pakistan, London" and a circular rubber stamp for the "High Commission of Pakistan, London".

They also repeatedly printed the rubber stamp of "Islamabad International Airport, Islamabad, Pakistan" confirming an "entry" for "10 Aug 2000". One of the Pakistani rubber stamps lay in the dirt. Entry and exit stamps for Istanbul, Turkey, were also printed on scraps of paper.

A photographic negative cut from a larger sheet of film showed an official departure stamp from Jordan's international airport, with a blank space where a date could be filled in. Food spread on tables and in the kitchen indicated the Arabs and their families escaped in a hurry.

After the Taliban fled Kabul on Nov. 13, the Taliban were forced to peacefully leave Jalalabad. Their Arab comrades left clothing, Islamic textbooks, documents, several rabbits in a cage and personal letters including the address of Sliti Fatma in Brussels, Belgium. One housing complex included its own school for boys who studied Arabic and English vocabulary plus Islamic subjects. "A gun, a girl, a glass, a goat," read a page from one illustrated English language book. In the school's small yard, a square plank of wood was painted black to depict a person's head and shoulders, for target practice. About 100 bullets peppered the target hitting the face and upper body. Dozens of missed shots gouged the tan wall made of mud and straw next to the target. In the housing complex's main yard, a brick shed held stacks of rockets and other live ammunition.

Some anti-Taliban guards held out stacks of foreign passports they said were from various Arab houses. It was impossible to determine if the passports identified the residents, or if the documents had been stolen to sneak across borders.

A man from Yemen named Naseem Abdulqader Ahmed al-Sakkaf was listed on passport number 00345350 with a Pakistani "business" visa issued in Yemen on July 8, 1999. An Italian passport of light-



Ammunition lay abandoned in a home used by Arabs who occupied a home in Jalalabad.



haired woman named Rafaella Palpacelli, born in 1975, bore a Tanzania "employment visa" but she apparently only spent two weeks there in 1998. A passport from the former Soviet Union showed a heavy-jowled Russian man travelled from Turkey into Iran in 1993. In the back yard of one house - scattered among trash which included a bra, software manuals and cookbooks - lay a bunch of family photos. The pictures portrayed happy men with bushy moustaches posing with women, boys and girls in comfortable living rooms. Small photographs of men's faces, apparently for visa applications, were stuffed in an enveloped marked: "Afghan Photo Studio."

Pieces of new, carefully cut camouflage cloth alongside tailoring instructions proved domestic chores included sewing military uniforms. Color downloads from Internet showed several portraits released by U.S. authorities of men suspected of crashing passenger planes into the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11 killing more than 3,000 people. Apparently short of paper, the news clippings were printed on pages already covered with Arabic script, including an email address of "shubeilar" in Jordan. For entertainment, the occupants played an interactive computer game titled, "Commandos Behind Enemy Lines."

The wall of one home was decorated with a postcard of Medina, a city now in Saudi Arabia where Islam's prophet Mohammad lived after fleeing Mecca in the year 622. Medina is also the site of his tomb.

A bullet-riddled target used by Arabs who occupied a home in Jalalabad

Cultural Refugee



Art critic *Thanom Chapakdee* discusses cultural paradoxes, conflict and the art of “seeing” as he weaves his way through the comedic decay in **Bob Garlick**’s latest exhibition, ‘Rust’.



Bob is a stranger. But then we are all strangers - in every minute of every day and in every moment of our lives. We are always searching for ourselves so that we feel settled and secure in our environment. In many ways we are like refugees crossing landscapes in our minds trying to install ourselves in a stable land.

After we have been able to stabilise ourselves, we search for our identity through media - we look for interpretation. But once we have found a level of understanding about who we are, many of us simply slip into a routine existence, comfortable in our enclosure.

We always secretly dream of a beautiful land - about what is on the other side of the mountain. But in reality it is no different from what we experience now, as our environment cannot change who we are. What we need to do is create our own identity and consume ourselves. Bob has rejected routine and comfort, constantly searching for more meaning and context for his life. But he always stays outside. He is “seeing”.

The ‘Rust’ exhibition is an extension of his visualisation of Thai society. His work does not necessarily demonstrate what he believes in, but what he observes. He is standing outside - looking in.

In this way, he is protected from Thai society. And this is to his advantage as if he was inside it he would be blinded and consumed by the paradoxes and chaos. He sees the form.

I don’t even think he is interested in the root - like the root of Buddhism, as he is happier standing in front of it all, watching a crazy society unfold. He is like a lot of other people in one way. He does not know when he is Bob or when he is not - but it is only when he works that he can visualise what he sees.

Take the ‘Telephone Buddha’ piece. A ruined and

decayed wooden Buddha attached by strands of copper wire to golden mobile phones in a round shape - symbolising thammajak or a dhamma wheel.

With it he simultaneously explains and criticises Thai society and focuses our attention on the conflict between consumerism and Buddhism. It may scare people as it visualises an on-going conflict in our society which some may prefer not to “see”. In another way it is a very romantic view, symbolising social decay and harking back to a time that was more pure.

The piece that most clearly demonstrates this is ‘The Decline of Lust’. Dried hanging roses confined in modern acrylic tubes on a background of rust represents a society blinded by its commercial cravings.

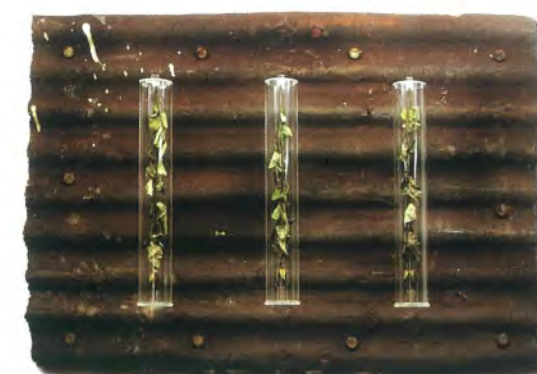
Then there is ‘Elephant Profit’, which takes on the Thai icon. Found in a broken down spirit house, Bob offered the local motorcycle taxi drivers parked outside a new wooden elephant if he could take the old one. They accepted. And after finding the eldest in the gang, resurrected it.

Bob dares to criticise the beliefs of Thai culture by using it as visual art. He understands the visual culture in the context of Thai society and that’s why he is able to produce work that strongly satirises the society we live in.

The work has two sides. One is like a painful, or black comedy, the other is the paradox between Buddhism and consumerism. In many ways it is like Thai society itself - a land of super post-modernism.

Text edited by David Johnson

Opening party, with special performance piece, at 8pm Wednesday August 1. The ‘Rust’ exhibition will run until August 30, 2002. Open Mon-Fri 10am to 12 midnight.



“ His work does not necessarily demonstrate what he believes in, but what he observes. He is standing outside - looking in. ”

Struggling in Cambodia

Cambodia has 173 newspapers, according to the Ministry of Information. But of these only a few dozen still operate regularly. Others have gone bankrupt or faced closure by the authorities. Indeed, Cambodia's media freedom has taken a step backward since the 1993 UN-sponsored general election when the media could boast of its most liberal era.

There were 24 newspapers competing then. The newspaper market was thriving, with a bubbling economy brought about by the presence of the US\$1.2 billion Untac operation. In the run-up to the polls, local newsstands were always emptied as enthusiastic Cambodians anticipated the election, which promised them a better life in a new peaceful climate.

Nevertheless, it wasn't quite so promising after the UN pull-out in 1994. Cambodia still faced poverty and entrenched factional politics. While the political tension eased with Hun Sen gaining full control over the administration after the 1998 election, media politics intensified. Rather than performing as a social watchdog, the media has become embroiled in traditional political infighting. Rival parties employ the media as a tool to lambaste each other.

Journalists, too, have become victims of their own greed for power.

At a recent media workshop in Cambodia, journal-

ists conceded that the lack of unity among themselves posed a major threat to their hard-won freedom, in addition to legal intimidation by authorities and political opponents. At least 32 journalists representing two different press associations managed to sit and talk out the problems confronting them. They also identified other difficulties confronting the Cambodian press: a lack of professionalism and responsibility and a scarcity of resources.

They pointed out the ambiguous terms in the 1995 Press Law which authorities can exploit to place charges against journalists.

They were very much concerned with the draft amendment to the 1992 Penal Code, which will increase fines and jail terms for the publication of false information that disturbs public order, defamation and libel. The draft amendment, pending parliamentary approval, provides a basis for authorities to detain journalists for up to six months without trial, up from 24 hours at present.

Since 1993, half a dozen local journalists have been killed, either over their reports of authorities, malpractice or involvement in Cambodia's factional politics. Nevertheless, no investigation into these cases has been concluded. Nor have the killers been caught. The latest

case is that of Cheng Sokha, publisher of Khmer Children's Idea, who was killed last January, according to Um Sarin, president of the Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists (CAPJ).

In August, the English-language Cambodia Daily was ordered by a lower court to pay a fine of 30 million riel (about Bt30,000) for allegedly defaming Foreign Minister Hor Nam Hong on his past involvement with the Khmer Rouge, and in December was temporarily closed for 15 days.

Journalists, especially those in the provinces, also face constant harassment by government authorities and mob attacks for their reports on graft at the local administration level. In some cases, journalists were jailed.

Nevertheless, there was some improvement in the professional standards. Rasmei Kampuchea (The Light of Cambodia), the best-selling vernacular daily, and its rival Koh Santepheap (Island of Peace) are competing for readership by improving their printing quality and their choice of articles and photos.

Om Chandara, president of the League for Cambodian Journalists, however, offered a different perspective. The threats against the Cambodian press were minor, mostly concerned with telephone and faxed threats. Chandara said what matters is the lack of professional standards and the low-income of Cambodian journalists.

He admitted some Cambodian journalists published baseless stories with no evidence to support them or took advantage of being journalists to do business. He said it was an open secret that journalists had no qualms about taking "petrol money" from their news sources or the political parties they support since most of them were low-paid and could not rely on their profession to support themselves.

This question drew a general debate which pointed to the fact that most publishers, due to the small-scale economy, could not rely on advertising to feed the exorbitant production costs of their newspapers.

The LCJ president also said journalists had not fulfilled their role in reporting on rural development. This was, however, partially due to the difficulty in getting access to information in the rural areas.

Participants also noted there was a great demand for professional training in Cambodia but they felt this received little attention from the donor community. Phnom Penh University opened a Mass Communications Department in September but could take only some 40 students out of 1,700 applicants.

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Kulachada Chaipipat
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