AO communist offic-

ials fear the effects of

an invasion of Thai

television, radio, tapes and

books on their small

landlocked country. Since

the government cautiously

river border in Laos.

many people.

statement.

lation.

controversy.

during the Indo-China war.

programme. Teh denied the

government in the capital

Vientiane calling for an offi-

cial apology. Although it is

the incident touched a sen-

sitive nerve in the Lao popu-

fected many parts of the

country. In the ancient capi-

tal in the north, Luang

Prabang, life continues in the

slow lane, a world away from

hectic, brash Thailand and

play the latest Thai pop

songs. In shops in small re-

mote villages Thai fish sauce

and talcum powder compete

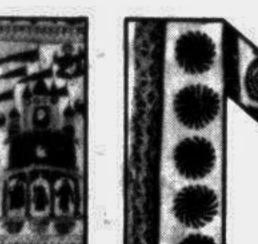
with often inferior Lao prod-

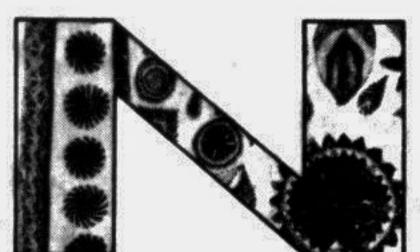
The Thai invasion has af-

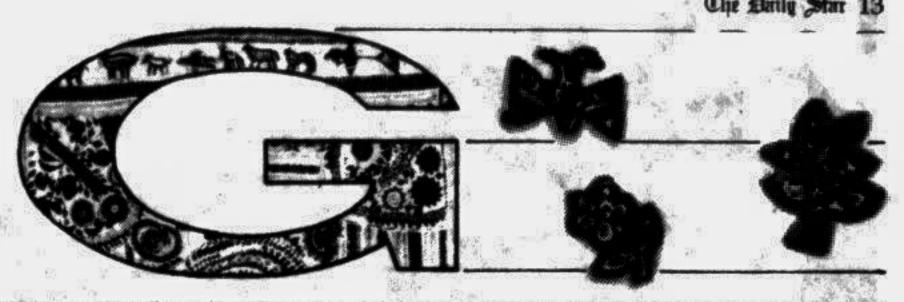
The incident sent shock-











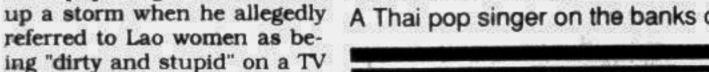
Brash Thais Open up Nervous Neighbour Laos

Julian Gearing writes from Vientiane

Laos, which laid low during the Indo-China wars, has opened up to its thrusting marketoriented neighbour, Thailand. Now it is becoming nervous that its four million people will be swamped by the brash Thai way of life. The new open-door policy may be bringing benefits but, reports Gemini News Service, there are cultural worries. Even night clubs in remote areas of Laos now play the latest Thai pop songs.



CHANGE OF TUNE Thai pop singer Teh kicked A Thai pop singer on the banks of the Mekong up a storm when he allegedly referred to Lao women as be-



Ever since Thai Prime Chatichai waves through Laos with the Choonhavan launched his plan to change Indo-China from a battlefield into a marketplace in the late 1980s, unclear as to whether the Laos has seen significant inprogramme was sabotaged to vestment by Thai companies. put the singer in a bad light,

One of the most visible projects is the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, a joint venture between the governments of Thailand, Laos and Australia. This massive road and rail link is set to span the Mekong river near Vientiane by 1994. It will replace the small, rickety motor-boats which make the crossing at present.

Even here the night clubs Other infrastructure projects are underway with the help of the Thais, including the improvement of roads linking not just the hinterlands of Laos but also opening

generating force.

up the possibilities for trade across the country with Vietnam and China.

The twisting red dirt road which forms Route 13, the main north-south artery, is also being improved, with the help of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Recently a small Thai government expedition explored the muddy backroad of a route which could link northern Thailand with the southern Chinese province of

Trade with Thailand is not all one-way traffic, however. A key earner of foreign exchange for Laos is electricity. which it exports to Thailand. potential growth sector. Minerals, mainly gypsum and tin, and wood products are also valuable exports.

Laos has had little choice

but to accept foreign aid. For much of the last 18 years the country has lived an isolated existence, with its communist government relying on Vietnamese and Soviet help.

Laos

With the collapse of communism around the world and an end to the old certainties, the Lao leadership has been forced to open the country, if rather cautiously, to market reform, new ideas and foreign investment.

While it is still coordinating domestic and foreign policy with Vietnam there is now little in the way of direct aid coming from Hanoi. "Special relations" today means a more commercial relationship, with the Vietnamese government investing in a number of infrastructure projects.

Laos is keen to improve its friendship with Thailand, but as an Asian diplomat in Vientiane put it: "The Lao government does not trust the Thais."

Thailand

Cambodia

China

Thai culture remains the official enemy, despite the resolution of a serious border dispute in 1988 and an exchange of official government visits.

Laos and Thailand still have to tackle two unresolved issues : several disputed points along their long border and the 40,000 Lao refugees that continue to live in camps in Thailand. Bangkok wants to send the refugees home or to resettle them in a third country by 1994. Most refugees are reluctant to move.

With the opening up to the outside world, many peo-

ple in Laos are worried about foreign influence. Lao writer Outhine Bounyavong says Thai television threatens the future of Lao literature, adding : "Lao children watching TV are learning more Thai than

A Thai hotel manager in Vientiane said the Lao people are susceptible to Thai entertainment and the glossy advertisements. He warned: "In the end Lao people will be swallowed up by Thai soci-

Partly to offset the overwhelming Thai influence, the Lao government has been more receptive over the last couple of years to Chinese inroads into their country. The authorities appear to be looking to China as the last communist state they can turn to for protection.

China supported the Lao communists in their war against the former Vientiane regime. Relations soured when Laos sided with Vietnam following its 1978 invasion of Cambodia, ousting the Chinese backed Khmer Rouge. Relations began to improve when the late Lao party chief Kaysone Phomvihan visited China in 1989.

Chinese investment has so far tended to benefit the north of Laos which has largely been ign ed by other foreign investor John Laird, a Western journalist who recently visited the Lao-China border, said business was brisk with truckloads of Chinese goods entering the country.

Brash consumerism is replacing a gentler culture. An open-door policy may have brought benefits, but the Lao culture and way of life could suffer in the long-run. -GEMINI NEWS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR JULIAN GEARING is a British freelance Journalist based in Bangkok. He specialises in political, military and aid issues in the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East.

Indian legislators declare war on foreign consumer goods brands. Mahesh Uniyal of Inter Press Service reports

TNCs Take a Licking

ANY members of India's affluent community today wake up to Kellogs breakfast cereals. gorge on Kentucky Fried Chicken and quench their thirst with Pepsi and Coca-

Four years of economic liberalisation have deluged India with foreign consumer goods brands that are changing lifestyles across the coun-

But a growing body of critics question the wisdom of allowing foreign consumer goods companies into a mainly rural nation where tens of millions of people are too poor to eat properly.

Indeed, in July, the antiforeign business campaign targeting the most wellknown transnational consumer giants marked 500 days with protesters hitting out at Coke and Pepsi.

"The (Campaign) for the ouster of Pepsi and Coca-cola was launched as a symbolic protest against the entry of TNCs (transnational corporations)," said a declaration issued at the end of a meeting here to mark the occasion.

"Their ouster from India will give a clear signal to other exploiting TNCs to pack up or face the united might of the Indian people," it added.

The freedom to TNCs to open shop in India was meant to expose long-protected local industry to world class competition and knowhow, thereby making it globally competitive.

But firebrand parliamentary opposition leader George. Fernandes scoffs at such reasoning, and has been the driving force behind the anti-TNC movement in India. As a government minister 18 years ago, Fernandes had booted Coca-cola out of India.

Just two months before. politicians from centrist parties — including even some ruling Congress Party legislators - joined the maverick politician in his strident attack on TNCs.

The May session of parliament saw angry lawmakers blasting the twin symbols of western consumerism here in India: Pepsi and McDonald's. The provocation was the forthcoming launch of fast food outlets by Pepsi subsidiary. Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and the

The first of 30 KFC parlours opened in the southern city of Bangalore in June. McDonald's will open the first of its 60 outlets next

burger giant.

Professor Arun Kumar of the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning of New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University also has doubts about the know-how consumer TNCs are supposed to

"Are they coming in critical areas where technology is desperately needed? This is not really the case," he says. India could have done without such know-how, argues Kumar, adding that in several cases, the TNCs are bringing dated technology.

Moreover, the TNCs have freedom to repatriate profits from their Indian ventures. The drain from the economy could increase unless they start exporting in a big way. he says, citing the example of Pepsi's well-publicised export obligations.

Pepsi was allowed in India in 1989, two years before the liberalised economic policies were announced, on condition of exporting a part of its produce, creating local jobs and technology upgrades.

Sex Symbols: Not Always Dumb Dolls

by Fayza Haq

AY be fifty years ago when sex symbols were nothing more than mere oomphs and ooohs, the heroines on the screen were expected to do nothing less than to display their overblown and over-grown curves and be finished with it. To show off their raw flesh that's what they were expected to do. Now the sex symbol rep-

resents a changed concept. It's not the body which matters but the motivations which manifest the implications of the rich anatomy.

Or to be more elaborate, it is the character which evolves itself into a multi-dimensional personality in



Model stars to movie stars?

which sex remains the prime not complex, but flat and type and may have been pro-It's not just brawn but jected with mere gestures.

Ursula is the typical stunbrain as well which matters now. Or to more precise, it is ning blonde who does not the sex-ridden psyche which have to make much of an ef plays the trick. fort to attract attention. She Now take for example fits into the fights — personal and group as much as in the Ursula Andress, who appears role of the beauty in the tart

as a wayward moll in the Red Sun. She is naturally a gorgeous model who looks ravishing in every possible camera angle, as clad from the finest of silks and fur to mudsplattered rags and leather thongs.

draws crowds from every

and bitter memories. She is Her sexy voice, tantalising seen fighting tooth and claw pose and hour glass figure in a man's world. Her cat on a hot tin roof act clearly dominates the antagonists, who are little else besides male chauvinists who consider a female almost like some cattlehead - to be bought and sold at the male lancy.

Raquel with his spitfire ways survives the struggle of the fittest and comes out the victorious golden girl with all honours.

But Raquel Welch in

'Hannie Caulder' is different:

She is a magnificent figure of

a woman who has a hot

seething temper, cynicism

Genevieve Bujold, in 'Anne of The Thousand Days' as the quick-witted and hot-tempered willful minx, the second wife of Henry VIII, as played by Richard Burton. wins the audience over with her spontaneity, vivacity and initial joie de vivre.

Her tricks and tantrums are lapped up by our audience as was Elizabeth Taylor's in 'The Taming of the Shrew Genevieve's face and figure

are more that of a pixie's than a Miss Universe's but she certainly queens it over the entire story. Even her beguiling way-

wardness as an adolescent Anne has a charm of its own. Barbarella and more re-

cently Klute has Jane Fonda in different and difficult roles, both as sex sirens of a form with diverse psychological overtures. It is not mere curves and a

cute face or even an Oscar award, but acting with feeling and a genuine pitch which go to make much difference Glamour and prostitution had been dealt with endlessly on the screen but Jane Fonda does it with a flare and flamboyance of her own.

Soldier Blue has Candice Bergman with her sunburnt blonde and soap-and-water appeal despite the volley of her sailor's lingo which gave her the tang of a Spanish pepper rather than the character of just a 'white woman with an Indian lover who is naive, well-meaning and raw young ingenue in tow.

Fresh, frank and full of vi tality Candice Bergman overshadows the rest in the cast only too easily.

More recently, Sarah Miles in 'Lady Caroline Lamb' depicts the liberal and liberated spirit in women that will not be cowed down by hypocrisies and prejudices of the society. Misunderstood and mishandled, she still comes out of the trials and tribulation like some lost and wounded sparrow rather than a bold brazen hussy, as accused by hundreds.

The sex symbols today are no longer dumb. The dolls are essentially walkie-talkie by conception of the direc-



Walk like an Egyptian

Strangers in Our Life

by ASM Nurunnabi

EW of us realise that strangers can enrich us which makes us tonguetied in front of people we don't know. Except in situations which clearly demonstrate that any initiative on our part to get to know a stranger who comes our way may be detrimental to our interest in some way or other, it is felt that knowing how to meet people with ease, even though they are strangers, enables us to widen the circle of our acquaintance and enrich the fabric of our lives. Life is so full of variety and surprises that an encounter with some strangers may rank among the most memorable events of one's life — a constant opening of gift boxes, with no idea of what is inside. Indeed the charm of a stranger may lie precisely in the fact that

we don't know him. I remember an event in the past on board a ferry's dining compartment when there was no ferry on the Meghna river. At a table sat a foreigner who beckoned me to sit on a vacant chair before him. After prelimentary introduction, I came to know that he was a Canadian engineer connected with a foreign-aided chemical project in a rural area through which a beautiful and serene river flowed. In course of conversation, he was effusive about the scenic beauty of that place with small sail-fitted boats sailing in the calm waters. To prove his point, he showed me a number of colour photographs depicting some beautiful aspects of the riverine scene. Those photographs testified to his sensitive and artistic mind. complimented him on his keen artistic outlook. Thus the person I never met before enabled me to appreciate some aspects of the natural beauty of our country side. which we normally take for granted.

friends and thus see our- tell?

selves through new eyes. With luck, a chance meeting our life. There is some- with a stranger can also retimes a lurking suspicion in sult in a life-time friendship. I felt extremely intrigued when I read a sign in a park of a foreign country: "There are no stranges in the world; only friends waiting to

> We can learn to make the most of an encounter with a stranger if we adopt some of the following approaches:

> 1. Ask questions. Many interesting conversations ensue with a query. If you ask a stranger "What is a day in your working life like?" he will usually respond enthusiastically.

2. Talk about surroundings. If you have an active curiosity, you will always see something to remark on.

3. Say something about your companion. Once I sat beside a smart young man in a doctor's chamber. I casually remarked: "How can such a healthy fellow like you be ill?" He said that he was suffering from an eye infection and since he was an amateur pilot, he thought it urgent to have it treated quickly. He even invited me to fly with him in his plane on a joy ride. I took him at his word and thereby got the unusual experience of thrill by flying over the city in a small plane of the flying club.

4. Be a good listener when the stranger talks. Half of a good conversation lies in the listening and there can be no real dialogue without it.

5. It is important to remember that people are as curious about you as you are about them and you can add to their lives as they add to

6. Comment honestly on how you are feeling. If we speak honestly about ourselves, the other person will feel free to say what he is thinking. In this context, a psychol-

ogist remarked: "There really is something wonderful about every imperfect, mixed-up, There is also another side uncertain human being. "In to an encounter with a the light of this remark, stranger. It may so happen when you talk with a that we may say things to a stranger, you have before you stranger that we have always a marvellous puzzle. What wanted to say, but never kind of person is he? What dared mention to family or sort of story does he have to Wild West bombs and other weapons locking into a fierce fight in one of the buildings.

by Nico den Tuinder

Recreation of the

Y editor is quite a headache. She always wants me to write. even when I am too busy Everywhere they leave heavy (obsessed, she calls it) with blood-stains and bullet my own routine work. I marks. The real thing! usually tell her I have no In the Latin Quarter surinspiration. Write about this. Write about that, she then almost orders me. Write

Bangladesh. Cox's Bazaar? No. A bizarre place: a beach resort without a night life. The Sunderbans? No. There is a ban on it: the travel agent first reduced the number of days of my trip. and then raised its price. Mainamati? Hum. Impressive piece of rubble. Eastworld? Yes! The famous themepark. A re-creation of the Wild West: free enterprise and the rule of lawlessness. Entrance fee: Taka 0.00. Opening hours : round the clock. Where : along the banks of the river Buriganga. Also known under its histori-

bomb attacks. After entering the park, you should take its toy train. The armed gang of robbers numbering about 30 to 40 men will stop it by blocking the tracks. For about one hour, they will loot the valuables of all the daytrippers.

cal name Dhaka. Main attrac-

tions: shootouts, lynchings,

train robberies, mob fights,

Genuine gun-battles are regularly staged around the Lake of Pearls. When you are lucky, you can witness scores of youths armed with cut-rifles, revolvers, home-made newspaper reporting.

vival of the fittest is the rule. That is what the inhabitants learn from their books. In about the tourist places of between reading them, they apply the noble principle. At the House of Justice

the gang of about ten armed men will be waiting for you. They take the law into their own hands, and shoot at pleasure. When you have an enemy, just invite him to Eastworld, Customer satisfaction. That is the park's motto.

The dreadful price of demanding toll is the theme of Monik's Corner. Every day about 12 o'clock, a mob will seriously beat up a supposed extortionist.

The poor clash with their oppressors in Narayan's Market. Every day about fifteen persons, including two policemen, are injured in clashes between the two par-

When you want to take a break after all these excitements, go to Garden City, at the outskirt of the park. You can have lunch in one of the many restaurants there, or go shopping for a needful thing. However, the gang of extortionists may explode several bombs, injuring several shop assistants. The price of your shopping can be high.

Courtesy two days of

