

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WE WELCOME YOUR VIEWS ON ANYTHING NEWSWORTHY.

Please include your name and address on your letters to the editor. **We reserve the right to edit all letters for clarity, content and length.** Send your views to: The Nation, Letters to the Editor, 1854 Bang Na-Trat Road, Bang Na, Bangkok 10260.

An example to follow

The Thai Labour Solidarity Committee recently surveyed awareness of the impending Asean Economic Community and found few people have any comprehension of what the AEC is, let alone how it will affect them personally. This comes as no surprise. It is my view that most Thais are totally unaware of the AEC, or if they have knowledge of it, they are in a state of denial on how it will affect them.

The AEC, which becomes effective at the end of 2015, carries threats for Thai business, the economy and the labour market. Perhaps it is because of these fears that many Thais have lowered the mental portcullis and refuse to consider the ramifications.

But with threats come opportunities, which if played correctly could greatly benefit Thailand and make it one of the big winners of the AEC game plan. One shining example is IRPC Technological College in Rayong. Even before AEC was mooted, IRPC's goal was to be a leading player in the Asean community of vocational-education providers. It sees a future where its campus is

filled not only with young Thais but young people from the other nine Asean member-nations, studying and working together in harmony.

To turn this vision into reality it recognises that it must improve the English-language competency of its vocational teachers. So it launched free and voluntary evening English classes twice a week. Originally 25 teachers were targeted, but the news spread quickly across campus and at the first class more than 80 teachers, IRPCT managers and other staff turned up to enrol. At the second class that number increased to nearly 100.

Rather than turn the overload away, the college executive came up with the money to appoint another three English instructors. Management's faith in its staff paid off, for attendance rates are still above 95 per cent each week – and remember, this is in the students' own unpaid time.

If other Thai businesses and enterprises followed the inspired lead of IRPC, Thailand should have no fears regarding the AEC, but should stand open-armed to welcome the opportunities.

Carpe diem, Thailand!

DAVID BROWN
RAYONG

Truth with consequences

"If you want to control someone, all you have to do is make them feel afraid," said Paulo Coelho.

Israel's psychological warfare tactics, imposed to pressure opponents who dare to speak out, are depressing, demoralising and disheartening, featuring a history of disinformation propaganda and heavy-fisted intimidation. According to J Street founder Jeremy Ben-Ami, "Many American senators and congressmen 'keep quiet' and refrain from criticising Israeli politics because they 'live in fear' and are 'intimidated' by pro-Israeli groups such as the Emergency Committee for Israel."

Compiled under UN mandate, the Goldstone Report on the 2008-2009 assault on the Gaza Strip concluded: "Israel had launched 'a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorise a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity to work and provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever-increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability.'"

Israel's impunity from interna-

tional law must end – not only to provide justice to its victims, but also to promote durable peace in the Middle East.

Now it's up to the quartet, led by US President Brack Obama, to lay down the parameters of a civilised peace deal based on human dignity and mutual respect. It should include 1967 borders with modifications, Jerusalem as the shared capital of Israel and Palestine, no right of return, and an independent, demilitarised Palestinian state.

Negotiations must be conducted in a non-confrontational atmosphere for the sake of future generations.

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