



Expat Counsel

By James Finch and Nilobon Tangprasit

# CRIMINAL LAW IN THAILAND

## Part LIV: Beware of scams — the offer of a lifetime at the right time



Some visitors to Thailand are not here to enjoy the mix of fine weather and Asian culture. Rather they prey on other foreigners making honest livings in Thailand and they also victimise innocent Thais.

Here's how it can happen. Let's say you are working for a company in Thailand and you are approached by a potential buyer of what your company sells, for example, property.

The buyer says that he wants to buy six of a condominium project's most expensive units at the asking price.

Wow, you think. Here we are in the middle of a property slump, I haven't sold a single unit for a

month, and now I'm going to get full commission on six.

Is this too good to be true? Let's look a little deeper. The person will tell you, in the strictest confidence, of course, that he is acting only as a representative for a well known figure in a far-off developing country. He implies that the money for the purchase has been skimmed off a state treasury or earned without paying taxes. Hence the need for secrecy and speed.

Now here's your first important clue. The "representative" tells you he needs a small origination fee to make all this happen. He says he is a government employee in his country and has spent his own money to come here. He needs somebody to pay for his airfare, hotel and some other expenses. The amount is

minimal, just a couple of hundred thousand baht. Of course, he will say, if this is a problem, he can approach your competitors, but since his principal is looking for exactly the product you are offering and since from this conversation he can tell you are a savvy business person, he'd rather deal with you.

You tell him you have to think about it.

He says, of course, but you must understand that until he hears from you, he will be forced to look at other projects, because time is of the essence.

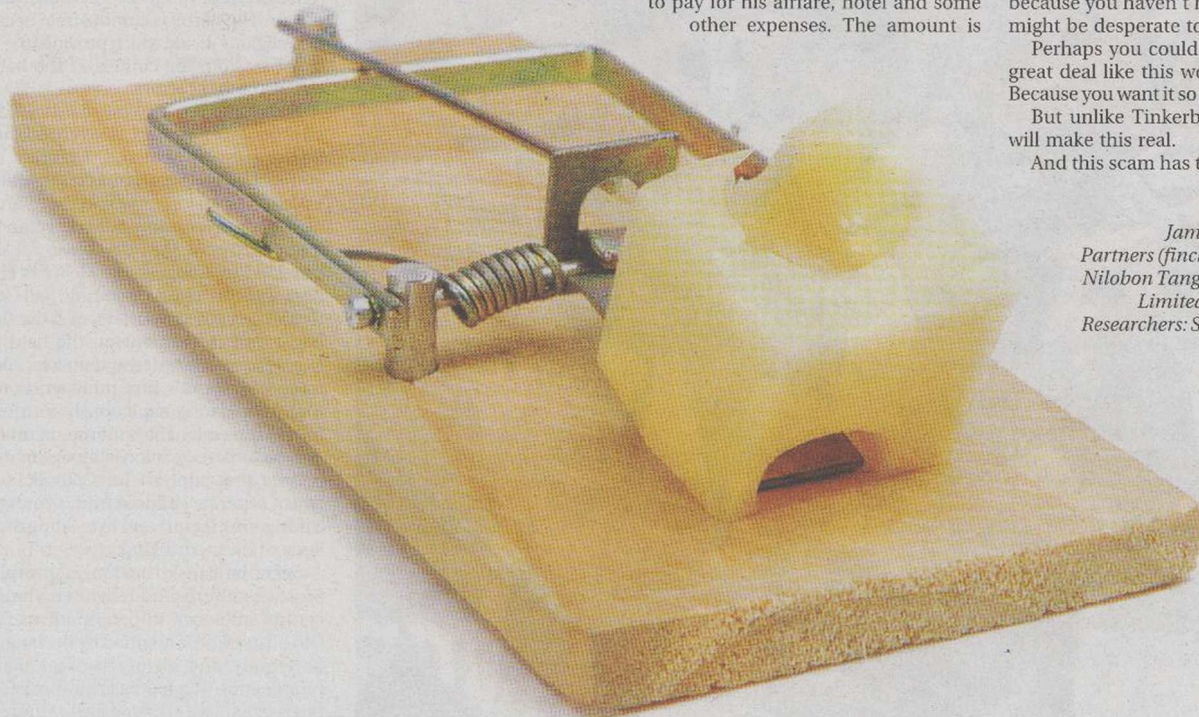
If you call him back, you will be given an account to send the money. If you send the requested sum, you will never see that money again.

This scam relies on exploiting human frailty. If you were in the above situation, you might be tempted because you haven't had a sale for a while and you might be desperate to pay bills.

Perhaps you could find a way to manage, but a great deal like this would solve all your problems. Because you want it so badly, the plan seems credible.

But unlike Tinkerbelle, no amount of believing will make this real.

And this scam has two parts. We'll talk about the bigger one next week. ■



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