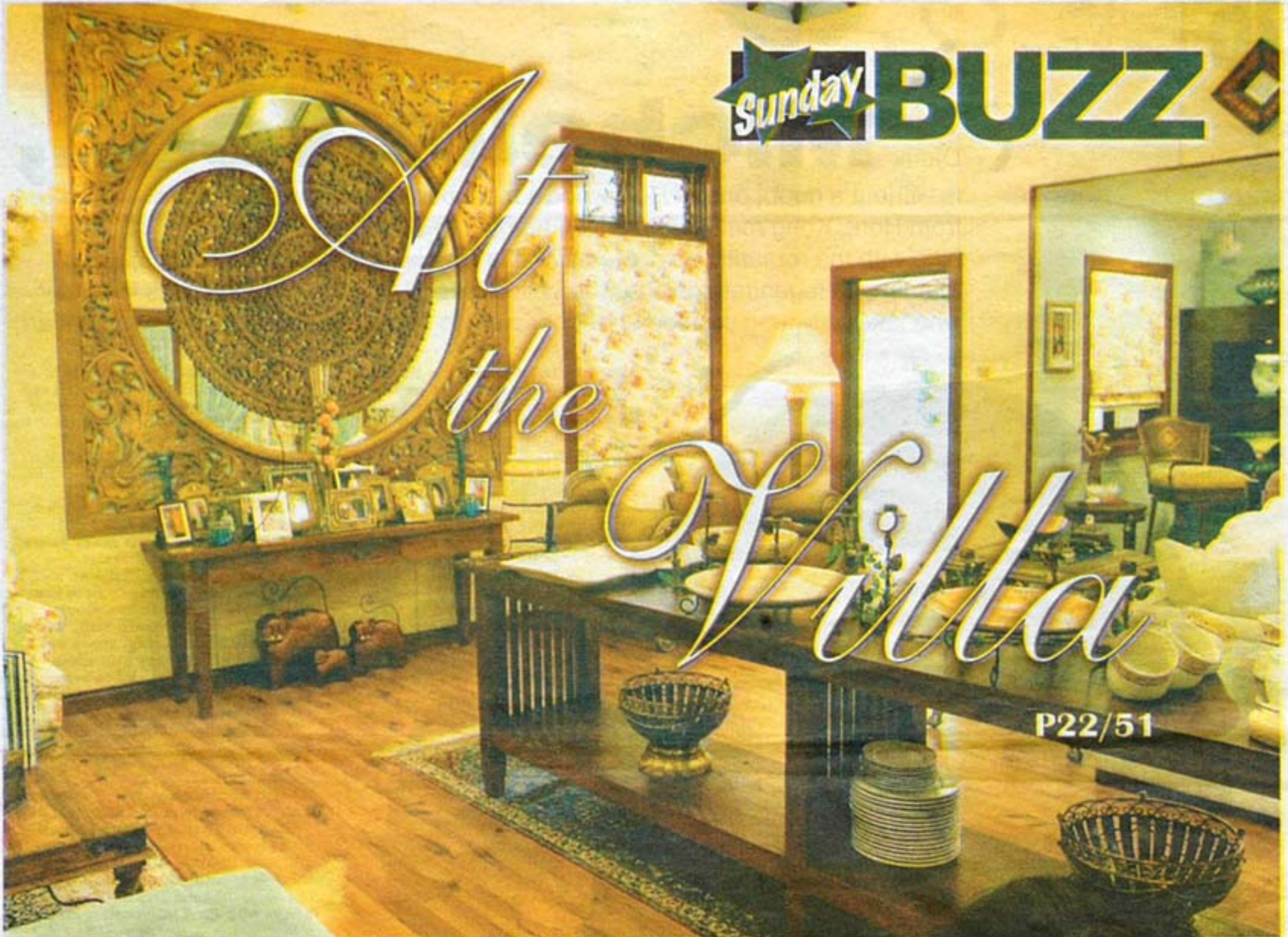


Sunday BUZZ

At the Villa

P22/51



A villa for the ladies

VillaMay provides all the trimmings of a luxurious spa and more, says BAIKURA AHMAD



OWNER: Puan Sri Akmal Abdul Salam

THERE is a bungalow in the residential suburb of Shah Alam, Selangor, that is a sanctuary strictly for ladies. This is where they seek personalised beauty treatment in the company of friends.

Opening for business in May 5 this year, to take advantage of the 5.5.2006 date, and named VillaMay, the place looks and feels like a home. Except that in this case, what the occupants do is get one beauty treatment after another in the many rooms - sauna, a Reiki session or a simple foot massage. In between, they can take a break and have a meal prepared by VillaMay's sous and pastry chefs at the homely Papillon Cafe.

Yet another room serves as a boutique which offers glamorous party dresses and traditionally-inspired clothes fit for an audience at the palace. If you want to spruce up before a function at the bungalow, you can go for a wash and blowdry at its mini hair salon and then pick an ensemble from head to toe - shawl, clothes, handbags and shoes all under one roof.

If you want to chill out with your girlfriends after a relaxing full-body massage and facial, VillaMay offers karaoke too. The rosy room which is decorated English-style with plush floral-print sofas is equipped with hi-tech AV and sound systems.

The karaoke room can also be converted into a moderate-sized workshop venue for 20 persons.

There is also a dance studio if you feel like dancing. On other days, an aerobics instructor comes in for by-appointment only sessions of exercises or salsa lessons.

If physical exertions is not your cup of tea, there is also the gentler form of exercise - yoga.

If you just want to *lepek*, that too can be arranged. In the centre of the house, there is an enchanting courtyard and a gazebo-like lounge surrounded by a mini most populated by colourful fish. Guests sometimes sit here for hours for a *tete-a-tete* sipping green tea and nibbling dainty pastries.

Owner Puan Sri Akmal Abdul Salam, whose nickname is May, said: "The idea behind VillaMay came about because I wanted a place just like this - where a group of ladies can go for their beauty treatment, massage and spa, all under one roof in the privacy of a home."

"The place, which she called a 'gift of love' from husband Tan Sri Mohd Saleh Sulong, reflects her appreciation of femininity and things beautiful, joy of companionship and a holistic approach for the body and mind."

Akmal named the company which operates VillaMay, Beauty Unlimited, because she feels there should not be a limit to what we term as beautiful.

"Sometimes, all it takes is just a restful day at a spa to make ourselves feel beautiful inside, out. Other days, we want to go for the full measure and do it up."

"I appreciate beautiful things. I mean, which woman doesn't. Over the years, through my travelling, I have always made it a point to check out the local markets or stores for a variety of interesting items be it clothes, furniture or even a beauty service. That was for my enjoyment. Sometimes, when I started to buy things on these trips, my sons who accompanied me would

jokingly warn me not to expect them to carry the extra luggage from my shopping," said the mother of three grown-up boys with a smile.

"This place is decorated just the way I decorate my home. Each furniture, murals and even the plants have my personal touch," said Akmal as she gestured to the butterfly motifs on the glass walls of the 15-seater Papillon (French for butterfly) Cafe.

At the Mediterranean-style cafe, healthy food such as smoked salmon sandwiches go hand-in-hand with sinfully delicious varieties like curry mee and bread pudding because, as Akmal puts it: "One of life's simple pleasures is enjoying good food."

In the future, Akmal plans to introduce wedding packages. She is already working with Raduan Isdzahell, a well-known local designer who specialises in traditional wedding outfits, to come up with a collection. There are also plans to turn the adjacent badminton court-size parking bay into a garden fit for an outdoor wedding venue under swanky marquee or romantic star-dotted skyline.

But the spa, named Ifyuu Canteo, takes centre stage at VillaMay. Hayyu is a tropical tree that can live up to 100 years while *cantoe* literally means pure and sacred in Sanskrit.

"Beauty starts from the inside when you take care of your body. The most expensive clothes with the most skillful make-ups cannot hide a body's fatigue," said Akmal.

■ VillaMay is located at No 22, Jalan Baiduri 7/7B, Seksyen 7, Shah Alam. Tel: (03) 5510-4433.



GREENERY: The resort-landscaped garden



CHIC: The dance studio



TRANQUIL: In the courtyard, a mini moat populated by colourful fishes gives a soothing ambience to VillaMay



FOR THE SOUL: Matching shoes and handbags as well as embroidered telekung (Muslim women prayer outfits) sold at the boutique



SOOTHING: An hour foot massage preceded by a thorough scrub in scented salt water

Pictures by CHEE HAN CHIE DIN