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**‘THINKING GREEN IN GREY TIMES’**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ASIAN HONDA MOTOR COMPANY

**WASTE NOT, WANT NOT:** At Wat Norng Lome School, Lamphun, students learn to produce energy from pig waste. The waste is fermented and used for heating and cooking.

## THINKING GREEN IN GREY TIMES

Some corporate projects go against the economic grain and are aimed at highlighting the environment, but sometimes at a cost **By Anchalee Kongrut**

In the wake of the economic recession, there has been concern that companies will cut their budgets on social activity projects. That concern is somehow understandable, since it makes sense for profit-oriented businesses to cut down their spending on non-profit sectors.

But some corporations have been surprising me by continuing their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects, which have been getting better and better.

I recently visited both the community forestation programme funded by Ratchaburi Electricity Generating Holding PLC (Ratch) that not only added trees but encouraged communities to use the forest in a sustainable way, and the wonderful wetland and park at the Agricultural Museum at Khlong Ha in Pathum Thani funded by tyre-maker Bridgestone and HSBC.

By making donations, many companies have become more progressive in their CSR activities. For instance, Lacoste, France's famous polo shirt brand, recently launched the "Save Your Logo" campaign to preserve biodiversity and wildlife, particularly the crocodile. The Green School Project, financed by Honda (Thailand), also came out with some cute and clever projects. For instance, students at Wat Norng Lome School, in Lamphun province, harnessed energy from fermented pig excreta. The energy — in the form of methane gas — is used in the preparation of lunch in the school's kitchen. San Pah Rai School in Mae Ramat district, Tak province, takes dried leaves and turns them into compacted fuel that can be used for cooking and heating.

In terms of carbon emission reduction, one of the major movers in CSR for the environment is Tesco-Lotus, which has decided to follow the head-office in the

UK by measuring carbon emission from their operations, starting with its branch in Mahidol University, Salaya campus.

The company will install solar panels, plant trees, reduce waste, recycle garbage and introduce car-pool for staff, among many other actions.

This retail titan had been criticised for its rapid expansion in local communities to the detriment of small local retailers. But this time, its

attempt to reduce emissions has received a thumbs-up from me. It sets a good precedent for many businesses to follow. I wish to see the company expand this campaign at the same speed we see Tesco-Lotus stores mushrooming across the country.

The "Bangkok Big Switch" SCR programme, which aims to cut down emissions, was introduced by HSBC and an alliance between The Mall Group, LA Bicycle and LG Electronics and non-commercial sectors such as the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), the Metropolitan Electricity Authority (MEA) and the British Embassy.

Bangkok Big Switch invites homeowners in Bangkok, Nonthaburi and Samut Prakan provinces to join an electricity-saving competition, which will run until October. Over the three months, the month having the least electricity consumption will be identified and compared

with the base month (measured in June).

The ingenuity of this campaign is that HSBC will calculate the amount of electricity all households use in terms of carbon emissions and pay one baht per kilogramme for every unit of reduction. The money from this carbon trading will be used to build a "Green Library" to promote environmental-friendly lifestyles for residents in the greater Bangkok area.

The campaign is almost perfect, saved for the fact that its reward for the 200 winners turns out to be LCD televisions, refrigerators and air-conditioners, albeit described by organisers as "energy saving models".

Protecting the environment can be done in more than one way — at the receiving end, for example energy saving appliances, or at the preventive stage, for example changing the way we consume and our lifestyle. You decide.

For me, the most memorable carbon reduction project turns out to be Bangkok Post's own Green Rally 2008. This so-called environmental-friendly campaign featured 80 cars driving to Hua Hin in order to plant trees to offset carbon emission.

This do-good and fun-filled campaign drew a not-so-good reaction, however.

One displeased reader, Saranarat Kanjanavanit, secretary-general of the Green World Foundation, wrote to the Bangkok Post's "Post Bag" column noting that the Green Rally would add 16 tonnes of carbon, which would require 800 tropical trees to offset that amount in one year. So again, you decide.

In the business world, the end justifies the means — what you get is more important than how you get. But in ecological terms, the means must be carefully thought out and appropriated, so the end of one problem will not be the beginning of another, such as 16 tonnes of carbon or electronic garbage from winners of the Bangkok Big Switch campaign. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF LACOSTE (THAILAND)

**JOINING HANDS:** A campaign poster for "Save Your Logo". Lacoste will assist international NGOs, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature, World Bank and Global Environment Facility to help preserve biodiversity.

**BIG SWITCH:** British Ambassador Quinton Quayle examines the model of a green library to promote the "Bangkok Big Switch". HSBC and its partners will donate one baht for each kilogramme of carbon emission reduced by participants to the construction of the library. Winners will receive rewards, which include electricity saving LCD TVs and refrigerators.



PHOTO: PATIPAPONG HIRANARO