

Suwannawong family finally beaten

March 1, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

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– March 1, 2004

Another regional political force was unseated over the weekend. The Suwannawong family, which has governed Hai Yai for 30 years, have been beaten by a candidate from the Democrat Party. TRT had vowed to unseat regional families—and spent a lot of influence in confronting parties in the South. So far though, the Democrat Party has reaped the benefits of TRT's aggressive moves in both Hat Yai and Songkhla.

TG LAX sales

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TG LAX sales –

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Dave pointed out some scuttlebutt from the aviation board Airliners.net: *Posted Thu Feb 26 2004 18:06:45: TG cuts LAX (Los Angeles airport) frequency just about every other year. The reason they lose so much money on the LAX flight is because their U.S. Sales management is completely inept. LAX seems to be the dumping ground for problem children of the Thai Air Force generals who run (or heavily influence) TG. They don't want their lazy brats hanging around headquarters in BKK, so they pack them off to the US where they can do the least amount of damage. But, unfortunately, they kill our market. I haven't met a bright spark in TG sales since 1989. The last moron they sent out as U.S. Sales Manager spent his sales calls presenting a pocket calendar he designed. He barely spoke English and had absolutely no clue how to sell TG. Unfortunately, TG always goes for the easiest sale... the thai ethnic market in LAX. Because of this, their yields are always crap. There is huge demand for travel to Thailand. Try to get space on CX, UA or NW... those flights are almost always full. If TG could ever get past the cronyism that has prevented the truly talented staff from rising to the top, it would be an absolutely fantastic airline.*

They envy us

March 2, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

They envy us

– March 2, 2004

2B often mentions the hysterical bashing of Thailand by superior foreigners (and even Thais themselves), but it is interesting to note that those from other developing countries greatly admire the rule of law and general orderliness in Thailand.

Khmer Intelligence has the following item: *National ID: Cambodia versus Thailand–The establishment of the rule of law in any country rests on two basic systems intended to identify the people and the lands. Cambodia has none of the two... 'Donor countries have technically and financially encouraged the government to issue a computerized and standardized "Cambodia Citizen Identification Card" to some 6 million citizens from 18 year-old up. But for political reasons and other reasons linked to corruption, the authorities are dragging their feet: only 2 million cards have been issued over the last eight years.'*

Not setting up the two basic systems entails the following consequences for Cambodia:

1- Land grabbing, land disputes, landlessness and increased poverty for the weaker segment of the population;

2- Increased government corruption with ghost soldiers and ghost civil servants; election irregularities with flaws in voter registration procedures; difficulty for the authorities to identify and arrest criminals.

In Thailand, as reported in "The Nation" on 23 February 2004, all citizens have been delivered a national ID for a long time. More strikingly, the country recalls how the project of a "smart card" started 20 years ago. Project head Surachai Srisaracam proudly declares: "All 1,077 offices of the Bureau of Registration Administration throughout the country have been connected via an online network, which allows information about the Thai population to be updated in real time (...). allows us to provide ID card registration for people in 15 seconds instead of three months."

Earlier: [India](#)
[admires Thailand's 'rich' sports infrastructure](#)

Subway Depot Development Controversy 2000-2004

March 7, 2004

Categories: Subway

What happened to the subway depot development plans?

2Bangkok.com has the only English-language mention of the attempts to develop expropriated MRTA land for commercial use. It was extensively covered in the Thai-language press.

This issue first came up in 2001 when MRTA (the subway company), attempted to develop some of the land they expropriated to be a shopping center and [residents complained that this would be prohibited by the Constitution](#). The constitutional ban is based on the earlier scandal involving the Central Lat Prao site (See [Was Central Lat Prao really built on a garbage dump?](#)).

From the articles below it seems the focus turned to lobbying the government to change the zoning first, but then MRTA would still have had to confront former owners to settle the issue (perhaps by giving them more compensation).

MRTA land development folded – translated and summarized from *Prachachart Thurakij* – March 4-7, 2004
MRTA decided to fold the plan for commercial development of MRTA Huay Kwang depot since it has to expand the maintenance facilities to carry the extended Blue Ring, the upcoming Orange line and future Purple line which will gobble most space available in MRTA land. This will need 300 rai for the current Blue Ring, 300 rai for upcoming Orange line and another 300 Rai for the Purple line—with only 100 Rai left for commercial development.

Therefore, MRTA has to beg the government for the budget to pay off debts until MRTA has gotten the revenue from the passengers, the nationalization, and the private space leasing from 18 stations as well as from future stations. Park and Ride facilities at Ratchada-Ladphrao and Brew pavilion are another source of income—though not much since MRTA collects a very small fee for parking tickets.

MRTA Development Plan Folded – BMA refuses readjust zoning – translated and summarized from *Prachachart Thurakij*, August 21-24, 2003

BMA and City Planning Dept. refused to readjust the color of the 691-rai MRTA Depot and Maintenance Area from Blue (Bureaucrat Office) to Red (Commercial Area) even though MRTA has tried to lobby hard to make such a change. BMA warned MRTA that if BMA changes the color from blue to red, MRTA must confront the former landowners who had surrendered their land plots for the depot.

Many people said the reason why BMA refused to fulfill the request from MRTA is due to MRTA's strong connection with CH. Karnchang. Therefore, Premier Thaksin might have ordered BMA not to change the color of the area to allow commercial development to starve Ch. Karnchang and force a merger with the Skytrain.

Even if those who surrendered their land to MRTA agree to allow commercial development on MRTA land, the development might not be worthy as they expected since SRT is going to develop the land around Makkasan Station with government support. By the time the MRTA plan would be approved, there might be no demand at the MRTA depot location. Therefore, MRTA could only be allowed to construct a park and stadium since they are considered a public good. Another usage might be a new SRT depot.

Senators Aiming to Kill the "Subway Business Center" Plan

Siam Turakij, May 27-June 2, 2001

A senator insists the MRTA land development plan on 700 rai has gone too far

Senator Seri Suwanphanon insists that MRTA cannot exploit the public utility land for commercial gain since it violates the expropriation law in the Constitution. Senator Seri is preparing to ask the Senate to set up a committee to investigate the MRTA land deal and ask the cabinet why the government let MRTA make a commercial exploitation. Pheeraphong Saleerattawiphak (Democrat MP from Phayathai Constituency) who was on of the Transportation Committee in the previous administration stated that the MRTA Act they passed had a provision allowing small shops and restaurants to facilitate subway passengers, not the big business area MRTA plans. If the Thaksin government allows MRTA to exploit the land, the government will be stamped as "Bandits Robbing People!" MRTA decided not to reveal the land development plan to the MRTA

committee since they felt the heat from the opposition even though they claimed that final plan is not settled. According to the land development plan drafted by RMJM (Thailand), CB Richard Ellis (Thailand), and PB Asia consultant companies, MRTA needs to invite the private sector to invest in the land so that it will meet the schedule of August 12, 2003 (the day the subway system is starting). Even though MRTA was planning to put the draft on land development to the MRTA Board on May 23, 2001, there was actually no plan discussion during the meeting at that day. The meeting was held at the Emerald Hotel with Dr. Suphachai Phisitwanit as the chair instead of the MRTA HQ. The meeting lasted from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM. After that, they had lunch in the Chinese restaurant.

Meeting results

The results from this meeting showed that the latest progress is 2% off the target, and there was a new subcommittee to make an internal audit headed by Mr. Thoedsak Setthamanop (MRTA Engineering Director). However, the land development plan was not on the agenda even though the MRTA Director was planning to push the plan on this meeting. After the meeting, MRTA Director told *Siam Turakij* correspondents that this meeting was a welcome meeting for the new MRTA Board, so they decided to change the meeting place and hold a banquet for the new committee. The reason why the MRTA director decided not bring up the land plan during the meeting was that MRTA and the consultant companies need to revise the land allocation according to the discussion with the Huay Kwang Civic Society two weeks ago. As soon as the revision is done, the land development plan will be brought up in an MRTA meeting in the future. However, an MRTA source has told *Siam Turakij* that MRTA committee has felt heat from the opposition, especially from the mass media and lawyers which saw that MRTA was going to commit crimes against the former landowners and violate the Constitution. Therefore, MRTA decided to suspend the land development plan for a while until everything is fine.

Seri Suwannabhanon (Bangkok Senator) Insists that MRTA Act Has No Right to Commercialize the MRTA Land

Senator Seri Suwannabhanon (Bangkok Senator and a Legal Expert) has continuously insisted that MRTA has no right to make commercial development of land expropriated from the people. He also told *Siam Turakij* correspondents that there must be some irregularities in the law approval process before MRTA Act became a reality on November 24, 2000 since the Act has so many sections and the sections relating to the land development are separated, so the Senate cannot figure out the actual intention of the law that allows commercial development on MRTA land even though there was nothing that mentioned about the land development in the previous Law relating to the MRTA land. Even though the MRTA Act has empowered MRTA to make a commercial development on their land, it does not allow MRTA to exploit the land for profit on their whim since the MRTA Act states that MRTA could make commercial development for service facilitation (in and around stations for passengers). The senator said "There are controversies about the actual meaning of the phrase 'According to the Necessaries that benefit MRTA services.' I can see no difficulties in defining such a term at all since it requires narrow interpretation on the terms to get the exact meaning. MRTA has no right at all to make a broad interpretation of the law (to allow the construction of a shopping center, hotels, markets, or so) for commercial gain since it violates the principals of this Act."

Revealing that MRTA Violates Royal Proclamation on Land Expropriation and the Constitution

Senator Seri also said that MRTA was violating the Royal Proclamation of the land expropriation if MRTA insists that they have full rights to make commercial development on the land they obtain through the expropriation since the land expropriation principles have explicitly stated that MRTA has the right to expropriate the land ONLY for the mass transit system. Furthermore, the 48th Article of the 1997 People's Constitution said persons have full rights to protect and preserve personal properties and the 49th Article in the 1997 People's Constitution also explicitly states that No Government Office has rights to expropriate land except for public utilities. Any attempt to make commercial development on the MRTA land expropriated from the local people is considered violating the 48th and the 49th Articles in the Constitution since MRTA has abused the rights stated in MRTA Act to "rob and violate" the land from the people for commercial gain.

Preparing to Tell the Senate to Set up an Investigation Committee and Ask the Government about the MRTA Land Development

Senator Seri said after perusing the commercial land deal of MRTA from the consultant companies, he slammed the conclusion that "MRTA is telling a lie and committing crimes against the former landowners since the MRTA land development plan has explicitly shown that MRTA is going to exploit their land

expropriated from the local people for profits even though those folks were willing to receive cheap compensation and sacrifice for the public good. Such action committed by MRTA is totally unacceptable." "If MRTA is starting the land development project, I (Senator Seri) will send the proposal to the Senate to set up the investigation committee to deal with MRTA and deliver the questions to the Cabinet to check if such action from MRTA is appropriate or otherwise. The government has to take the responsibility to deal with the former landowners, and I (Senator Seri) will volunteer to get the land back from MRTA."

Former Transportation Committee Member States that MRTA Has No Right to Make a Commercial Deal on Expropriated Land

MAP Pheeraphongse Saleerattawiphak (Democrat MP of Bangkok -> Phayathai Constituency), one of the former Transportation Committee which had reviewed the MRTA Act before approval told *Siam Turakij* correspondents that there were several arguments about land development before realizing the act. Therefore, the committee has stated in the law that the commercial development of MRTA land will be for the activities necessary for the MRTA services, not commercial development. "We (MAP Pheeraphongse and Transportation Committee) have made several reviews of the Act while MRTA keeps insisting that the new MRTA Act should have a provision allowing the commercial exploitation or the government needs to pay an annual bail out since MRTA becomes a loss-maker. We keep responding to the MRTA's request that we cannot allow MRTA land development beyond the activities that increase the travel convenience for the passengers. Any further land development must be done on the land MRTA purchases, not land MRTA has expropriated"

Advising the Government that "Allowing MRTA to Create a New Business City... (is like) Robbing People in Broad Daylight"

MP Pheeraphongse said that it is unacceptable for government offices to exploit legal loopholes to pay very low for expropriation while milking high profits from commercial rents. If MRTA insists that they have legal rights to do so, he will oppose such a deal at all costs. He believes that the mass media and the former owners of the land will never allow such a dirty deal to exist. Nevertheless, it depends upon the Thaksin government to make a decision on this issue. If the Thaksin government accepts the MRTA land development scheme, the Thaksin government will be condemned as "bandits robbing people."

Stealing 700 rai of expropriated land to construct a shopping center

Siam Business Weekly (AKA *Siam Turakij*), Vol. 7, No. 334, May 6-12, 2001

Note: This is a rather repetitive article from *Siam Turakij*, a newspaper that has been very harsh in its criticism of MRTA and their "dirty land deal."

MRTA acts as if it were a cowboy by drafting a land utilization plan to use almost 700 rai of MRTA depot land (more than 1 million square meters of office space) for commercial deals such as a giant convention center, commercial buildings, department stores, and a shopping center without delay. Furthermore, MRTA is going to send the plan to the MRTA Board on May 23 to approve the land utilization for commercial deals. The MRTA director said that the government will have to subsidize the subway and carry a heavy burden of debt from the operation unless the plan for commercial land utilization become a reality. On the other hand, the law experts point out that "the 90 billion baht commercial deal on MRTA land" is illegal and unconstitutional since it violates the land expropriation term which limits land utilization to activities relating to mass transit operation and the facilitation for the passengers. Therefore, such commercial deal is going to distort the MRTA act for their own gain. MRTA has no right to exploit their land by the construction of a shopping center, a hotel, and commercial buildings.

If MRTA insists that it has the legal rights to do so, lawyers said the former landowners can file lawsuits against MRTA to get their land back to prevent the MRTA land deal from becoming a precedent for other public offices to rob land from the poor and powerless by land expropriation for a bargaining cost and sell the land plot to capitalists with sky-high prices.

There are controversies about the law in MRTA Act of BE2543 (AD2000) which becomes effective on December 1, 2000 which states that MRTA has the power to develop the expropriated land for commercial uses so as to support mass transit operations despite the 1992 Royal Proclamation of MRTA Organization and 1993 Second Royal Proclamation of MRTA Organization. These do not state that MRTA had power to make commercial development on their land at all. MRTA has continuously attempted to pursue the

government to issue an act that empowers MRTA to make a commercial deal on their land with claims that it is impossible to profit from ticket fees alone.

Many people oppose such a deal. MRTA also said they have an "air right" to build high-rise buildings on their land for commercial development. However, the Council of State has explicitly stated that MRTA has NO RIGHT to make a commercial development on the land they expropriated from local people.

Nevertheless, MRTA eventually succeeded in lobbying the government to pass an MRTA Act which states in Article 9(11) that "MRTA shall have rights to develop the expropriated land for MRTA services." Such a statement is therefore a hidden agenda to exploit expropriated land for commercial deals. The 900-rai area left over from the construction of MRTA depot and maintenance center (300 rai) is in Tiam Ruam Mitr-Rama IX Road area – a business area with a market price of 150,000 – 250,000 baht/square wah (400 square wah = 1 rai, 1000 square wah is about 1 acre). Such a treasure trove has a price of 90 billion baht (US\$ 2.25 billion).

Recently, Governor Samak Sunthoravet sent a proposal to rent 153 rai of MRTA land for the Bangkok Night Bazaar to sell famous product from all 76 provinces around the country to tourists and to comply with the government policy to promote the local products (1 commune, 1 product). Furthermore, MRTA is making a move on commercial development on their land by hiring Richard Ellis Co.Ltd. and BMGM Co.Ltd (consulting companies) to study the maximum utilization of MRTA land.

Plan for commercial exploitation of MRTA land ready to deliver to the board on May 23, 2001

Praphat Jongsa-Nguan (MRTA Director) talked to *Siam Turakij* correspondents about hiring consultant companies to study the masterplan for MRTA land utilization around the maintenance center. The preliminary masterplan is done and MRTA has delivered the plan to the Huay Kwang Civic Society led by Assistance Professor Pongporn Sudbunthud so that people around Huay Kwang area can participate in the masterplan drafting. Huay Kwang Civic Society want more land for a public park and MRTA does not object to the plan. After Huay Kwang Civic Society's response, MRTA will send the proposal of land allocation to MRTA Board headed by Dr. Suphachai Phisitwanit on May 23, 2001. Praphat said that the commercial development of MRTA land does not violate the 1987 Royal Proclamation of Land Expropriation since MRTA actually uses the expropriated land for mass transit affairs through the construction of a maintenance center. The leftover land will be developed for commercial deals which has been approved by the government, National Assembly (MPs and Senators) through the MRTA Act of 2000. The latest news is that Governor Samak Sunthoravet has issued a letter to MRTA about the 153-rai land lease for the construction of a "Bangkok Night Bazaar". Mr. Praphat said he considered such a plan would be a beneficial plan for both MRTA and the public, so he send the proposal to the MRTA Board and Governor Samak will report the land utility plan in front of the MRTA Board personally.

Praphat said the prohibition on commercial development of MRTA land will force the government to carry a heavy burden of debt and operational loss

Praphat said the commercial land development came out of the mind since the first days of the MRTA organization since they saw that most of the mass transit systems around the world have to carry heavy loss (Singapore MTA is an exception due to the strong connection with the government). Therefore, MRTA must find other sources of income which is commercial land development. If MRTA cannot make a commercial land development, the government has to carry a heavy operational loss from MRTA in the same way as they have to deal with SRT. Therefore, the commercial land development will reduce the operational loss. The land for commercial deal is the land left over after the MRTA Depot and Maintenance Center. If MRTA completes the Orange Line in the next 20 years, MRTA will need the second maintenance center next to the first maintenance center. Mr. Praphat said "MRTA needs to expropriate 1200 rai of land at that time since the MRTA masterplan said MRTA should have 300 rai of land for Blue Line, 30 rai of land for the Orange Line and 300 rai of land for Nong Ngoo Hao line after transferring the Skytrain operation from BTSC and Hopewell line to MRTA in the next 30 years. However, the current situation have trimmed down the land plot for MRTA. Therefore, the commercial development of land is a must no matter who is the MRTA Director. It is possible to prohibit MRTA from making commercial land development but the government has to deal with the consequence since the concession holder cannot accept the responsibility on operational loss."

MRTA allocating almost 700 rai of land for commercial exploitation

MRTA told *Siam Turakij* that the masterplan for commercial land development states that MRTA can use 1 million square meters (625 rai) of MRTA land for commercial deals without defining the types of business, and open for all type of legal business to grow on the land. However, the highest prospect will be a

convention center, the shopping center, and trade center. Dr. Sombut Kitjalux (BMCL CEO) said BMCL (the concession holder of Blue line subway) has a right reinforced by the MRTA Act to make a commercial development in the 18 stations. So far, the company is studying about the commercial development plan for subway stations, but the company will not rush the plan out since it still has time until the official opening of the whole system in July or August 2003. So far, BMCL found that they can make a commercial development in ONLY 9 stations. The other 9 either have very little space left or MRTA will turn them into a museum. Nevertheless, the commercial development of station is NOT the main source of income since they expect 5% of all revenue from the commercial development. The other 95% will come up from the subway fare.

The following stations will not have commercial development for the following reasons:

- 1) Hua Laphong (museum)
- 2) Silom (narrow space for interchange station)
- 3) Bon Kai (narrow space)
- 4) Queen Sirikit National Convention Center (Thai design inside)
- 5) Asok (narrow space for interchange station)
- 6) Rama IX (narrow space)
- 7) Lad Phrao (park and ride)
- 8) Mochit (narrow space for interchange station)
- 9) Kamphaengphet (narrow space and the weekend market)

Huay Kwang Civic Society's opinion of the MRTA commercial megaprojects

Mr. Prasit Krairoek (Deputy chairman of Huay Kwang Civic Society) told *Siam Turakij* correspondents that Assistant Phongporn (Chairman of Huay Kwang Civic Society) has discussed with MRTA about the masterplan for the land development and found that MRTA will use the land for a giant convention center which is much bigger than Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, as well as department stores and hotels. The height of each project is not defined yet but should be high enough to gain enough revenue to sustain the operation with little or no government subsidy.

So far, Huay Kwang Civic Society does not object to such a land development per se. However, Huay Kwang Civic Society told MRTA that it should allocate the land for a new cultural center from the four regions of Thailand (Central, North, Northeast, and South), with folk products from all parts of Thailand to show Thai traditions and culture to foreign travelers. Furthermore, Huay Kwang Civic Society asks MRTA to allocate the land for a new public park with a Public Relations Center to facilitate connections with other mass transit systems. After the discussion, MRTA said they feel very glad with the ideas from Huay Kwang Civic Society and they will add the ideas into a revised masterplan for the land development before MRTA make an official act of the masterplan.

Cheap land expropriations/expensive commercial land development is totally unfair!

Law-expert senators advising the former landowners to file a lawsuit against MRTA to get their land back

Law experts have reached the consensus that MRTA Act of 2000 intends to empower MRTA to develop the land to facilitate passengers' convenience or other reasonable necessary matters relating to MRTA services, but not for commercial exploitation to gain profits which are not the main activity of MRTA. Furthermore, the lawyers feel worried that the MRTA dirty land deal through the legal distortion will result in chaos in the future since other government offices will follow MRTA examples (Actually SRT is the mother of all dirty land deal -> [Central Plaza Lad Phrao is a good example](#)).

Senator Seri Suwanphanon (a law expert) told *Siam Turakij* that the Article 9(11) of MRTA Act which empowers MRTA to deal with the land development for mass transit service has opened a loophole which allows the commercial exploitation of expropriated MRTA land. However, the actual principles of such authorization is that the commercial development on MRTA land is not the main activity of MRTA. Therefore, the commercial exploitation on the land for profit is unrelated to mass transit system activities. MRTA cannot sell or rent their land for profit since the land plots are reserved for public activities mentioned in the Royal Proclamation for the land expropriation.

"Even though the law has authorized MRTA to develop their land, it defined that the development will have to be useful for mass transit system to ensure the passengers' convenience. Other forms for land exploitation for profit are too much since it goes against the principle of land expropriation" If MRTA insists to make commercial exploitation for profit through the loophole, Mr. Seri considers such action as a total injustice to the former landowners since MRTA paid very little to buy the land while they will collect a good profit from

the land development. Therefore, the former landowners can file a collective lawsuit at the Administration Court to get their land back if MRTA insists to sell or rent those land plots for profit since it is the case that the government office causes heavy damage on people through the mishandling of land and shatters the people's trust in authority. The Administration Court will set a precedence by ruling that the government offices and state enterprises abusing their power by developing the expropriated land for the public utilities for profit is illegal since the expropriation is for public goods but not for business.

Feeling afraid that the dirty land deal will set an example to other government agencies

Seri notices that MRTA, which is a government agency, had used its power to expropriate the land via the Royal Proclamation, and the agency had lobbied the National Assembly to pass the MRTA Act to open a channel for the land development unrelated to mass transit activities. Such an illegal action will set a precedence for other agencies to follow the example.

Before passing the act, there were hot debates about this issue in the Senate. However, the Senate decided to pass the act since they consider that the principle of this act is for the facilitation of mass transit services. However, the MRTA had claimed the law to exploit the land for profit will set the precedence for other government agencies to abuse the law. "The former landowners will deeply involve in such a case by filing a collective lawsuit to get their land back at the Administration Court. If the Administration court found the legal controversies, they can deliver the issue to the Constitution Court to get the final decision since the 1997 Constitution explicitly states the land expropriation is only for the public good, not for profit." Furthermore, the Ombudsman of the National Assembly could tell the Constitution Court to decide whether the MRTA Act has any articles that go against the 1997 Constitution.

Chairman of Lawyers Association of Thailand points out that MRTA cannot make a commercial deal

Sak Kor-saeng-rueng (Senator from Bangkok and Chairman of Lawyer Association of Thailand) told *Siam Turakij* correspondents that MRTA have rights to develop their land only for activities relating to mass transit systems. The commercial development of their land will depend on the necessities relating to mass transit system. It is ACCEPTABLE if MRTA decides to construct stores and restaurants or other things for passengers' convenience. However, it is TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE to exploit the land for profit since it violates the principles of land expropriation "If MRTA insist that they can exploit the land for profit, MRTA are going to violate the law. The former owners can file lawsuits against MRTA at the Administration Court to get their land back since MRTA are going to develop the land for activities unrelated to mass transit systems. If the former owners have little money for the lawsuit, the Lawyer Association of Thailand will help them without charges."

Law experts from Democrat Party pointing out that the unused MRTA land has to be returned to the former owners

Mr. Preecha Suwannathat (a former Bangkok M.P. from Democrat Party – an opposition party and law expert) told *Siam Turakij* that the consideration of MRTA land deal will have to be a case-by-case basis since it is acceptable to use the land to construct shops and stores for the passengers' convenience. Furthermore MRTA can make commercial development some parts of their land for their survival since other countries have done the commercial land development on mass transit land plot.

However, MRTA have to make serious consideration about the land development for activities relating to mass transit system. So far, only about 300 rai of land is used for depot and maintenance center but MRTA has expropriated 1200 rai of land. Therefore, MRTA has to come up with clear and transparent projects on the other 900 rai of MRTA land. If MRTA still have the unused land after finishing the projects, they have to return the land back to the former owners. However, MRTA violates the law if MRTA plan to exploit commercial deal on their land for profit which is DEFINITELY NOT the main activities of MRTA. The former owners can file a lawsuit against MRTA to get their land back if MRTA insists to exploit the commercial land deal.

Pointing out to the Minister Supervising on MRTA Not Letting MRTA Take Advantage of the Folks

Deputy Professor Natthaphongse Posakaputra (an instructor in Dept. of Law – Ram Khamhaeng University) told *Siam Turakij* that the government can expropriate the land only for public utilities according to the land expropriation law. Even though MRTA Act empowers MRTA to develop the land they have, those land plots will be developed only for activities relating mass transit system. Commercial development on MRTA land is WRONG since it violates the principles of land expropriation and the people who surrender the land to MRTA can file a lawsuit to get their land back. "The Minister who supervises on MRTA will have to control the land utilization to ensure that the land utilization is for activities relating to mass transit services. It is

totally UNFAIR and UNJUST to let MRTA exploit the commercial deals on the land they had expropriate from the local folks with a dirt cheap prices since those who had sacrificed their land plots expect that MRTA will use them for mass transit systems"

MRTA Lobbying to Amend the Act – Snapping 90 Billion Baht Profit from Real Estate Deal

Siam Turakij Weekly (www.siamturakij.com), Vol.7 No. 333, April 29-May 5, 2001

From the Correspondents at MRTA/National Assembly/BMA

Unbelievable! A treasure trove inside 1200-rai MRTA land (about 480 acres) around Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road with a price of 90 billion baht – is found! Thanks to the new law, MRTA can develop the land they got from expropriation into commercial deals despite of heavy and bitter opposition from many people who surrendered the land only for public utility purposes. MRTA has spent their energy to lobby MPs and Senators since the first days they expropriated the land for public good to pass the MRTA Act of 2000 which became effective on December 1, 2000 – after 14 years of efforts. Now, the Huay Kwang Civic Society has jumped to oppose such dirty commercial development plans by asking MRTA to turn unused areas into a big park or green area since Bangkokians are desperate for green areas. On the other hand, Governor Samak would like to make a deal with MRTA by renting a 153-rai land for a night bazaar.

Governor Samak told the Siam Turakij correspondent that BMA has rented a 153-rai area around Tiam Ruam Mit Road next to Meng Jai Intersection (the land for MRTA depot and maintenance center), for an international night bazaar which will become a marketing center for products from all 76 provinces in Thailand. However, many people feel doubt as to whether BMA can make such a deal on public utility land. The land MRTA has is for mass transit matters (e.g. depot, maintenance center, park and ride or other relating matters), but not for commercial matters. Nevertheless, the new MRTA Act has empowered MRTA to develop the area around the depot and maintenance center for commercial purposes.

The Previous Government Passed MRTA Act Enabling MRTA to Strike a Dirty Deal

The previous administration passed the MRTA Act of 2543BE (AD 2000) which became effective after publishing on the Royal Gazette on December 1, 2000. The MRTA Act of 2543BE (AD 2000) has stated that: "Article 9(11): MRTA shall have an authority to develop the areas and buildings belonging to MRTA for the MRTA service administration."

Such an article empowers MRTA to develop MRTA land for commercial purposes despite the fact that the ad hoc MRTA Act Committee had stated that "MRTA Shall NOT have an authority to use land and other unmovable properties for commercial purposes."

The issue has become a controversial issue since many consider such that a commercial deal breaches the law that prohibits MRTA from commercial development. MRTA has attempted to strike a commercial deal on the land they have expropriated from Bangkokians living around Ratchadaphisek-Rama IX-Tiam Ruam MIT Road since they first days they expropriated the land 14 years ago (the year 1987). However, the 1992 Royal Proclamation of MRTA Organization and 1993 Second Royal Proclamation of MRTA did not mention the authority for MRTA to develop the land for commercial purposes. Therefore, MRTA decided to play evil tricks to enable them to use their golden land for commercial purposes which eventually resulted in the successful 2000 MRTA Act.

MRTA Anxious for Commercial Deals on Their Land

MRTA has attempted several times to develop their 1200-rai land around Tiam Ruam MIT Road which is supposed to be a depot and maintenance center for commercial purposes. For example, Mr. Theeraphongse Atthajarusit (MRTA Director in 1993) insisted that MRTA could use the land they expropriated for commercial purposes and called a bid to construct the MRTA depot and maintenance center. At that time, Bangkokland PCL owned by Mr. Khiree Kanchanaphak (now BTSC CEO) won the bid. Mr. Khiree planned to construct a big building which would have been the highest building in Asia. The 90-floor Grand Station City would have had department stores, stadium, apartments and condominiums—with a price tag of 100 billion baht (then US\$ 4 billion). However, Bangkok Land PCL became cash strapped and the project was canceled.

After that, Mr. Sukhawit Rangsitphol (then Deputy Premier) stated that MRTA could turn the area around MRTA Depot and Maintenance Center into a Sport Complex for 1998 Asian Games after the purposed sport complex had problems finding an area to be located in. However, the project was killed after they found a places for the sport complexes at Hua Mark Stadium, Muangthong Thane, and Thammasart University.

Nevertheless, the plan for commercial development was always in MRTA's plan, so MRTA hired Deleuw Cather Co. Ltd. to study investment potential for commercial purposes and Richard Ellis Co.Ltd. to study land potential and plan for a guideline for commercial purposes. Such procedures caused strong opposition and fury from Bangkokians who had been duped into surrendering their lands to MRTA for the public good, and not for commercial purposes, and received low payments for the land expropriations from MRTA. The market prices for the land in Ratchadaphisek-Rama IX area was approximately several hundred thousand baht per square wah (then US\$1,000,000/acre), but the ETA (then the owner of MRTA) payment rate to those who surrendered the land was only a few ten thousands baht per square wah (then US\$100,000/acre). Most of the land owners felt that they received unjust payments and have filed collective lawsuits at the Civil and Criminal Court to get better payments from ETA and MRTA.

MRTA's attempts to get the authority to develop the land for commercial purposes

In 1996, MRTA drafted the new MRTA Act to enable it to organize mass transit systems in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, Suburban Bangkok, and other provinces and authority to use the land for commercial purpose as additional revenue to provide good mass transit service for people which is a loss-ridden business.

In 1997, Premier Chawalit Yongjaiyut approved such a draft so he forwarded the draft to the Council of State.

In 1999, MRTA Act was under the consideration in the National Assembly which resulted in an ad hoc committee for MRTA Act headed by Air Marshall Sombun Rahong (the Minister of PM Office) who was assigned by Premier Chuan as a superintendent for MRTA.

May 1999, the ad hoc committee had a resolution to prohibit MRTA from developing the land for commercial purposes.

However, the MRTA Act which has become effective on December 1, 2000 explicitly states in Article 9(11) that "Article 9(11): MRTA shall have an authority to develop the areas and buildings belonged to MRTA for the MRTA service administration"

However, the 1992 Royal Proclamation of MRTA Organization and the 1993 Second Royal Proclamation of MRTA Organization did not state that MRTA had a right to strike a commercial deal on their land.

Lawyers Vehemently Stating to MRTA "You have no right at all to strike commercial deals on your land!"

Many lawyers oppose MRTA from making commercial deals on their land since they consider such action is illegal since it directly violates the 1997 Constitution. The 1997 Constitution explicitly states that: "The expropriation is considered illegal and unconstitutional unless the expropriation is for public utilities set up by the government."

The MRTA's attempts to develop the land for commercial purposes appears to violate the law of the land and thus unconstitutional since the Royal Proclamation for the land expropriation explicitly states that MRTA will use the land only for mass transit services and relating matters.

Dubious and Unnecessary Land Expropriation – Hoarding 1,200 Rai of Land while Needing only 300 Rai

According to the act for the establishment of MRTA (1992 Royal Proclamation), the law did not grant any rights to MRTA to strike a commercial deal on the land. Even though MRTA stated that the commercial deal has been granted via the Air Right, we considers such a claim as nonsense. Even more important, MRTA has expropriated more land than necessary. 300 rai of land (120 acres) is enough to handle the mass transit lines from different networks after the private concessions expire in 50-60 years from now. Therefore, the former

owners of the land decided to file a lawsuit against MRTA to get their land back or at least get better payment.

The MRTA depot and maintenance center area around Rama IX and Tiam Ruam MIT Road is close to Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road, the golden area in downtown Bangkok which real estate developers are hungry for. So far, the current price of the land is about 150,000-250,000 baht/square wah (US\$ 3.75-6.25 million/acre) So far, MRTA has used only about 300 rai of land for mass transit purposes while leaving almost 900 rai of land around the depot as well as the land around the subway stations for commercial purposes—with a price tag of 90 billion baht (US\$ 2.25 billion).

Huay Kwang Civic Society Opposing the Commercial Deals while Asking MRTA to Spare Land for Green Purposes

Mr. Ronnachit Yaemsa-ard (MRTA Assistant Deputy) said to Siam Turakij correspondents that MRTA had hired Richard Ellis Co.Ltd. and BMJM Co.Ltd. (consultant companies) to make a second study about the land utility around Rama IX and Huay Kwang area after receiving strong opposition from the Huay Kwang Civic Society a few months ago. Huay Kwang Civic Society asked MRTA to include the green area (e.g. a public park) in the MRTA land utility masterplan while limiting the commercial uses of the land to low-rise buildings. Thus hotels and department stores are prohibited from this area to minimize detrimental effects on those who live nearby (e.g. suburb villages around Huay Kwang-Sri Wara-Rama IX Road area). The study results from the consultant companies will come out in the next few months. Mr. Ronnachit said the MRTA Act of 2000 has empowered MRTA to strike commercial deals on the land MRTA has, but only on the land leftover after the construction of depots and maintenance center.

History of the MRTA Project

1971-75 – Thai government received cooperation from the German government in the form of the experts to survey and draft the Bangkok traffic and transportation masterplan and ask the government at that time to construct a Bangkok Mass transit system. Therefore, the government at that time asked the Expressway Authority of Thailand (founded in 1972) to deal with mass transit services while planning expressway construction.

1978-79 – The Gen. Kriangsak Chamanan (Premier at that time) government had a policy to let the private sector deal with mass transit projects.

1981 – The Gen. Prem Tinnasoolanon (Premier at that time – now the Statesman and the head of Privy Council of His Majesty) government came up with the first three mass transit lines (Governor Samak's pet project – at that time Governor Samak was Minister of Communication) which were as follows:

- 1) Phra Khanong-Hua Lamphong-Bangsue (Rama IV Line) – 23 km
- 2) Wongwianyai-Sathon-Lad Phrao (Sathon Line) – 20 km
- 3) Dao Khanong-Memorial Bridge-Makkasan (Memorial Bridge Line) -16 km

However, no private sector had any interests in the project since they considered none worthy to invest in. Therefore, the readjustment in 1984 resulted in a joint venture between the public and private sector (SN Lavalin Co.Ltd. from Canada) and the scaled down version of the mass transit lines which were as follows:

- 1) Phra Khanong-Hua Lamphong-Bangsue (Rama IV Line) 23 km
- 2) Sathon-Lad Phrao (Sathon Line) 18 km

However, such projects failed to materialize since SN Lavalin Co.Ltd. had no financial resources to back up the project and this resulted in the no-confidence censure in 1985-6. Eventually, the Lavalin deal was canceled in 1992.

After that, Mr. Anand Panyarachun government established MRTA by 1992 Royal Proclamation to take over responsibility of the mass transit project from the Expressway Authority of Thailand and drafted the development plan for MRTA as "the First MRTA Project". On January 19, 1993, the cabinet had a resolution to allow the private sector to deal with the project. If the private sector declined the invitation, MRTA would take over the project. After that, the government invited three private firms to compete for the project:

- 1) Bangkok Land PCL
- 2) Thanachart Holding PCL
- 3) Thanayong Co.Ltd.

Bangkok Land PCL won the bid, but the financial problems killed the chance to realize the plan since the subway requires much more dollars than that of a skytrain at the same distance.

Comments: Bangkok Land PCL and Thanayong Co.Ltd. are closely related companies since they belong to the Kanchanaphak clan – Bangkok Land CEO is Anant Kanchanaphak and Thanayong CEO is Khiree Kanchanaphak.

MRTA will have to follow the new consultant's result which includes a public park area on the 1200 rai of land and prohibition of high rise building construction. Otherwise, MRTA will be in very serious trouble from former landowners and residents around the Huay Kwang area. Several people who were adults during the 1960's witnessed the dirty land deals of SRT which fooled gullible farmers and Bangkokians in the area around Chatichak Park, Central Lad Phrao, Queen Sirikit Park and Rotfai Park which are close to Bangsue Junction and would have become a new Bangkok Railway Station. So farmers decided to surrender their land for such noble ideas without bargaining prices. However, SRT leased the land to construct Central Plaza Lad Phrao and Central Lad Phrao since they could not resist a good deal from the Jirathiwat clan. Furthermore, such leases did cover heavy operational losses SRT had (and still has). There were several dirty deals like the SRT deal during the 1950-70's which resulted in landless farmers and sharecroppers. Therefore, 1997 People's Constitution prohibits the expropriations except for public utility and related matters.

If you notice the three mass transit lines which were a pet project of Samak, you will see the similarity between the 1981 plan and 1995 masterplan. However, the difference is the route redirection to major roads like Sukhumvit, Silom, Rama IV, Phaholyothin Phyathai and Ratchadaphisek inner Ring Road. The third line resembles the Northwest and Southwest section of Hopewell and MRTA Orange line.

Old structures disappearing

March 8, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

August, 2003

Old structures disappearing

– March 8, 2004

Songkhla's Old Town has over 100 beautiful and unusual structures clustered along a few narrow streets. Recently, one atmospheric cluster of wooden huts (above) located on a prominent corner across from a wat disappeared and was replaced by a sterile parking lot and cement buildings (below). Even before the huts were removed the front yard was being used as a dumping place for used oil (some of this is visible in the above photo). 2Bangkok.com recently took over 200 photos of the historic buildings in Songkhla's Old Town and will be posting them soon.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
March, 2004

The Thai press has lost its vibrancy

March 9, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[The Thai press has lost its vibrancy](#) – *The*

Nation, March 9, 2004

The Nation points out the silence in the Thai press over political interference: ...*This was true until Veera himself broke his silence in public on March 4 to confirm that his removal was a result of political interference. Yet the Bangkok Post made no allusion to it... To be sure, there was dissent at the Bangkok Post, as 77 editorial staff signed a petition addressed to its board of directors and dozens later dressed in black for a few days – but all this took place without the Post itself acknowledging that it had occurred.*

...Nowhere did Wasant mention the recent interference at the Bangkok Post or at any other media outlet in Thailand. This despite the fact that Veera's removal was widely reported in the international media, including the International Herald Tribune, the Asian Wall Street Journal, and even the satellite version of the Yomiuri Shimbun.

...At a recent international seminar in Manila, I was reminded by Cambodian and Indonesian journalists that perhaps their media was now more free than Thailand's.

Academic turns city into a social experiment

March 11, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Academic turns city into a social experiment](#) – Harvard

Gazette, March 11, 2004

Former Bogota Mayor Antanas Mockus implemented some unusual activities to modify city behavior. Halfway down the page is a list of the mayor's other unusual initiatives.

Also

[here](#): *Pedestrians are also targets for "mime behavioral therapy." Pickpockets, jaywalkers, and other lawbreakers are liable to be followed down the street by the mime artists, who imitate their every move. The idea is that they will be embarrassed into changing their ways, much to the hilarity of the large crowds that gather to watch the antics.*

Also: Current Bogota Mayor Enrique Penalosa [visited](#)

[Bangkok last March to promote Bus Rapid transit.](#)

Spill on the expressway

March 12, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Spill on the expressway

– March 12, 2004



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

At 11:28am on March 12, 2004, drivers on the expressway were getting out of their cars and running back down the highway.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Half a kilometer up the road, a truck had crashed, spilling some kind of gas on the expressway (upper right hand corner).



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The initial panic was probably caused by radio reports that mentioned the 1990 gas disaster on Petchburi Road.
(On September 24, 1990 a liquefied petroleum gas tanker crash and explosion kills 63 and injures 90.)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Most people quickly returned to their cars to wait and watch.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

A taxi driver gets impatient,
and despite the protests from an orange-suited road worker,
drives through the spill (upper right
hand corner).



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Within 5 minutes, a cleanup
crew arrives and spreads white powder over the spill area.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

As soon as the spill is covered...



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

...traffic is allowed to proceed.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Bangkok's colourful street life to come to an end

March 12, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Bangkok's colourful street life to come to an end](#) –

MCOT, March 12, 2004

The end of an era for Bangkok's street vendors is set to come as early as the end of this month, when, in the interests of civic order, vendors will be banned from selling their goods in all but specially designated points in the capital. Announcing the move yesterday, Mr. Thanakorn Khunawuthi, director of the Office of Municipal Affairs, said that from 31 March, street vendors would be forbidden from displaying and selling their wares in any area other than the designated zones. The move follows a moratorium on street trading in five special zones announced on 2 March, which bans street vendors from selling their goods near bus stops and footbridges. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) says that the measure seems to have been implemented successfully. Mr. Thanakorn conceded however that some areas were still experiencing problems, most notably Minburi, where street vendors were resisting the moves. Although he said that the BMA would consider requests to designate areas as trading zones, he also warned that district chiefs would have to take responsibility for any continuing problems. Local residents have often opposed the ban on trading, complaining that they no longer have anywhere to purchase food.

Heightened risk?

March 16, 2004

Categories: Terrorism

Heightened risk? – March 16, 2004

For the first time, a terrorist act (or the reaction to it) has impacted a democratic election. If the Spanish bombings are indeed connected to international Muslim extremists, it would be the first time since 9/11 that terrorists acts resulted in any political capital for the bombers. The success of the Madrid bombings in getting Spain to pull out of the Iraqi occupation forces puts other coalition partners (such as Thailand) at greater risk of similar terrorist acts.

Comedians' view of the U.S. campaign

March 17, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Comedians' view of the U.S. campaign](#) – Reuters,

March 17, 2004

Reuters had a small space-filling article recounting late-night talk show hosts' jokes about the US election campaign. In one Thailand popped up: *NBC's "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno": "President Bush was out touting his economic record in Ohio last week. Now this is a state that lost 225,000 jobs since Bush took office. If Bush wants to tout his record he should do it somewhere where the Bush economy has actually created jobs, like India or Thailand or China."*

Saturday Night Live Thailand Skits

March 18, 2004

Categories: Humor, Thailand in the International Media

Rapee writes: I'm a big fan
of the [Saturday
Night Live](#) aired on NBC, Saturday nights at 11.30 pm.

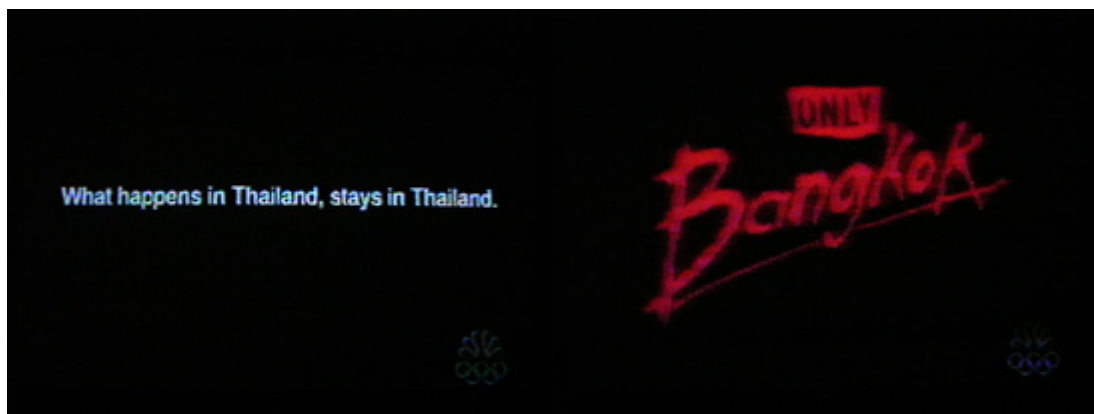


On the 03/13/04 episode, hosted by Ben Affleck, they were poking fun at Bangkok, Thailand by mimicking a



famous ad campaign of [Las Vegas Convention and Visitor Authority](#):

["What happens here, stays here : Only Vegas"](#)



Not only one, but they did 3 sketches on this. They were hilarious. On the other hand, these sketches are, sort of, reflecting what American media think of us.



[Sketch
#1](#)



[Sketch
#2](#)



[Sketch
#3](#)

Source: Saturday Night Live on NBC, Mar 13, 2004

Saturday Night Live: Dead Hooker

March 18, 2004

Categories: Humor, Thailand in the International Media



(Ring tone...)



Man#1: Hey, dude, it's me.

Yeah, I know. You were right. Thailand is crazy.



Man#1: Listen, there is a ... a situation.



Man#1: I took your advice. I got a hooker.



Man#1: No, Kevin, it was not awesome!

She came to my room and we started drinking this bottle of vodka with a coiled snake in it.



Man#1: The next thing I know, I woke up in the closet and she is not moving.



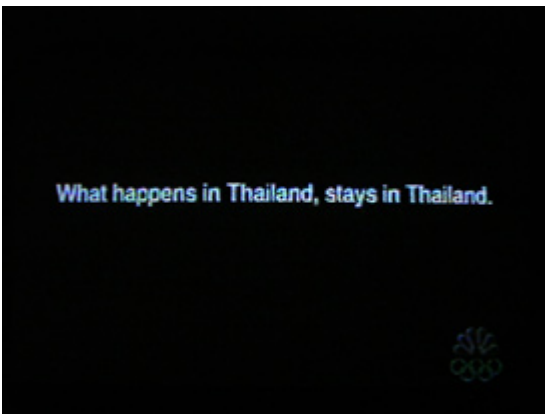
Man#1: Look, just shut up!



Man#1: What is the name of that guy?



Man#1: You know, that Dutch guy who helps clean up messes.



Man#1 (voice over): Thank you.



Man#1 (voice over): That's all I needed to know.



(applauds)

Note: Notice Singha beer bottles, some Thai bank notes and a bottle of liquor with a snake in it on the nightstand in frame #1.

Saturday Night Live: You're selling me to these guys?

March 18, 2004

Categories: Humor, Thailand in the International Media



(no audio)



(no audio)



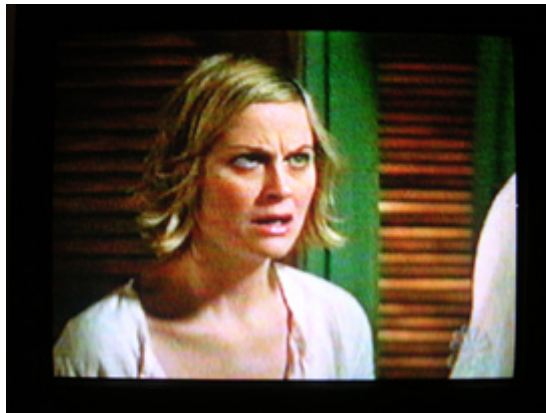
Woman#1: Let me get this straight.



Woman#1: You're selling me to these guys?



Ben Affleck: What? Nobody is selling anybody, ok?



Ben Affleck (voice over): I'm giving you to these guys
to cover some temporary losses.



Ben Affleck: I've incurred from gambling on Russian roulette!



Woman#1: You've been gambling on Russian roulette?



Ben Affleck: My guy wasn't supposed to die!



Ben Affleck: I had a system!



Woman#1: You're high again!?!



(Woman#1 screaming)



Ben Affleck: Alright, I may have socially injected some komodo dragon venom.

Just because everyone else was doing it!



Woman#1: Let go of me!?!



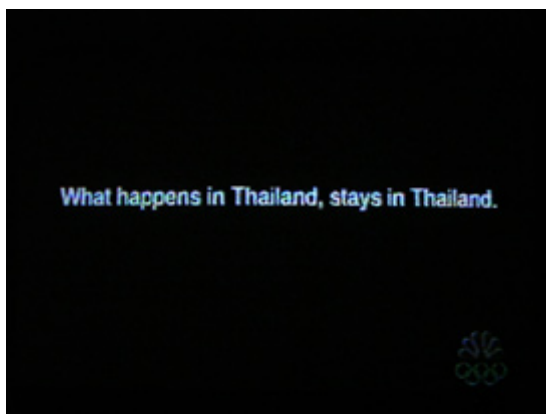
Ben Affleck: You're being selfish! You don't need both of your kidneys!



Woman#1: This is not my idea of honeymoon!



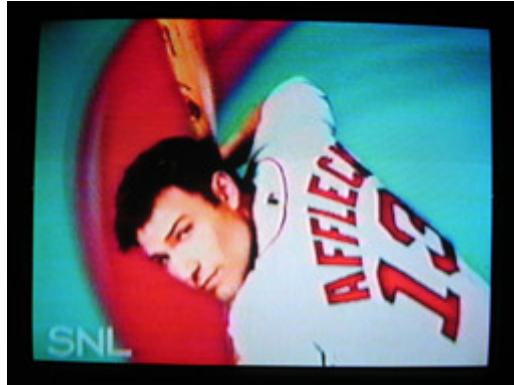
Woman#1: Ben Affleck!?!



(no audio)



(no audio)



(applauds)

Note:

- 1) I guess we are famous for organ trafficking.
- 2) Russian Roulette? That is so [The Deer Hunter \(1978\)](#).
- 3) Ben Affleck is making fun of his, reportedly, gambling problems.

Saturday Night Live: Dead Dude

March 18, 2004

Categories: Humor, Thailand in the International Media



(dialing)



Man#1: Hey. It's me. It... umm... happened again.



Man#1: Well, this time, it's a... umm... dude.



Man#1: No, I didn't kill him!



Man#1: The Lizard killed him and then Ben Affleck killed the Lizard.



Ben Affleck: It was self-defense!



Ben Affleck: That thing was making fun of me.



Man #1: Yeah! Ben Affleck. I don't know why he's here.



Man #1: He crawled in the window at 6.30 this morning carrying a baby Komodo dragon under one arm and Kelly Ripa under the other.

Yeah. Kelly Ripa from 'Regis and Kelly'!



Kelly Ripa: We've got to cut this dead body up and put him in a bag.



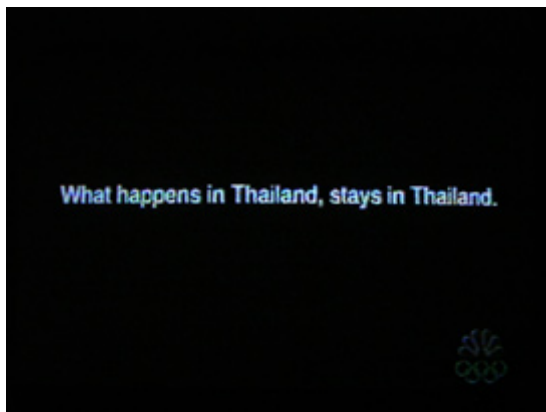
Kelly Ripa: This is bad, man. Bad.



Man#1: Ripa! Chill. I'll handle this.



Man#1: Dude! Stop judging me. Just give me that phone number again.



Man#1 (voice over): Because that number is in my wallet.



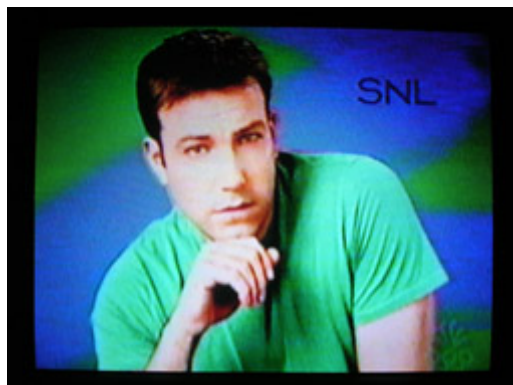
Man#1 (voice over): And the wallet is "in" the dead dude!



Man#1: Yeah, he is on the bed.



Ben Affleck: Yo, man. Do you know anyone who wants to buy a suitcase full of panda meat?



(applauds)

Note:

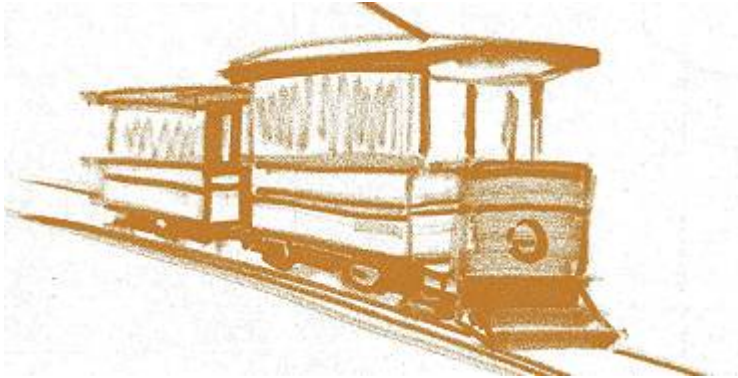
- 1) Notice a Singha beer bottle in the hand of Man#1 in frame #1
- 2) In frame # 7, Ben Affleck is holding a Sawasdee Magazine with letters read Bangkok on the front page (only a k appears in the captured frame)
- 3) Kelly Ripa is a daytime talk show host, ["Regis and Kelly"](#)

Bangkok Tram Accounts from Famous Writers

March 20, 2004

Categories: Trams

By Nai Hon Huay, Ajin Panjaphan, Sornsan Phaengsapha, Yutthisathian, and
Thepchoo Thubthong



There is
a great deal of material here, but do not let that stop you. Here are
some shortcuts to the most fascinating info.

[Cost of living in 1941-1942](#)

[Cost of living in 1946](#)

[The Japanese arrive in Bangkok](#)

[Allied bombing of Bangkok & bombing
of power plants](#)

[The Great Flood of 1942](#) (with tram-boat collisions)

[Tram drivers' strike](#) (with old-time strike busters!)

[The Thai people sue for libel](#)

[Bangkok Triad War!](#)

Return to [the Bangkok Tramways main
page](#)

What it cost...

Winyoo Angkhanarak (former Permanent
Secretary, Minister of Interior from October 1, 1977 –
June 6, 1980)
mentioned that during the time he was studying at
Thammasart University
(circa 1937-40), Bangkok Tram tickets were 3 copper
satang – enough
to cover 3 rides from Suan Mali to Thammasart
University.

Nai Hon Huay

AKA Slipachai Charnchaloem – famous radio news anchor with an Isan accent
from Ubon Ratchathane and founder of Radio 909 from Kor Ror Por Kalong
Circa 1946

Line routes

Just after WWII, everything was still in short supply even though

the tram lines services were restored after heavy damage from Allied air raids. The fares were: 20 satang flat rate (then 1 US cent – paid in form of a thick tin 20 satang coin) for the 2nd class trams ticket and 50 satang (then 2.5 US cents – half a nickel – paid in a wrinkled 50 satang banknote – defaced from a 10 baht note printed in Java) for the 1st class from the City Pillar to Thanon Tok (Lukmuang Line), City Circle, Bangrak-Pratunam-Yotse-Silom (Pratunam Line opened during the 30's), Hua Lamphong line and and Bang Krabue to Wireless Road (extended from Hua Lamphong to Wireless Road near Cadet Preparation Academy during the 1930's and later on to Klong Toei during the early 1950's – parallel to Paknam Railway which was electrified during the 30's). Samsen Line went from Wireless Road to Saladaeng, Sam Yan, Hua Lamphong to Yaowarat Road, Wang Boorapha, Ban Moh, and turning right along Koo Muang Doem Canal (the 1st City Moat dug in 1771) to Sanam Luang and then go along Sam Sen Road to Kiao Khai Ka pier in Bang Krabue.

Prices of things circa 1946

ax	70 baht (up from 1 baht before the WWII)
a cup of black coffee	50 satang
a cup of milk coffee	1 baht
dish of rice with curry	1 baht
cup of confectionery (khanom thuay talai – a sweet dessert made of coconut milk, sugar, and sticky rice flour)	25 satang
bowl of rice noodles	1 baht
ball of Salapao (stuffed Mun Thou made of wheat flour)	5 baht
bowl of wheat noodle soup sold only at Hoy Tian Lao (one of the most famous Chinese restaurants at Sua Pa Road in Yaowarat Area – now defunct), thanks to wheat flour smuggled from Singapore	10 baht
4-page local newspaper	50 satang
8-page for a weekly local tabloid	50 satang
pork chop (bake pork rib) at Silom Phattakarn (Silom Restaurant) – very tasty though expensive	10 baht
bull tongue stew at Silom Phattakarn (Silom Restaurant) – very tasty though expensive	10 baht

Newspaper and book distributors were along the tram lines. Eastern end is at Bang Kapi commune (now Sukhumvit area) near Ratprasong intersection, and Pratunam Flea Market. Victory Monument was then too far away and remote. Northern end was at Bang Krabue. The city circle was at Thewet Market, Yod Phimarn Market, Chaloemkrung, and Thieves Market. Southern end was at Thanon Tok. Thonburi end was at Wong Wian Lek (not far from Wong Wian Yai), Ban Khaek Intersection, Phrannok (near Sirirat Hospital).

On November 8, 1947, Trams at Saladaeng were parked longer than usual and it found out that there was a coup'd etat, so the traffic near the Ministry of Interior and Defense was stopped until the Army kicked Rear Admiral Thawan and his cabinet out. At that time the area beyond

Lumphini and Wireless Road was a paddy field. Rama IV Road used to have a canal (Thanon Rong Canal) connecting Phadung Krungkasem (the third City moat dug during King Mongkut's reign around 1857) to Phra Khanong, but the during the 60's the traffic got so bad that the canal, Paknam railways, and tram had to be closed for good to make way for cars.

Ajin Panjaphan

Ajin Panjaphan a famous writer who founded *Fah Muang Thai* weekly magazine (now defunct). In the early 1940s he was a freshman engineering student at Chula. However, WWII turned his life upside down—wanted to be with his friends at Memorial Bridge, play music, write novels as the way to escape the stress of the War that had no end in sight. Eventually, he decided to drop out of Chulalongkorn University and study at Thammasart Open University. He then went South to work as a miner for 4-5 years after graduation from Thammasart.

December 8, 1941

Atsadang Line is considered the shortest Tram line in the world, running from Atsadang Pier (near Rachinee Royal Seminary – the first girl's school in Thailand) along the Khoo Muang Doem Canal (the 1st City Moat) to the Triangle Shop connecting Samsen line at the foot of Charoenrat Bridge in Ban Moh area.

Cost of living late 1941-early 1942

tickets at Chaloem Buri Cinema	10 satang (then 5 US cents) for 1st class 6 satang for 2nd class
tickets at Chaloemkrung Cinema	24 satang (US 12 cents)
2 duck eggs	3 satang (1 Phai for the old men alive long enough to see Phai copper coins)
daily allowance for a boy in the 10 grade	5 satang
daily allowance for a boy in the 11th or 12th grade	15 satang
month salary of a clerk at the Royal Irrigation Dept. who graduated from secondary school	20 baht
monthly rent for a townhouse in front of Rachinee Royal Seminary	11 baht
ice coffee with fresh cow milk at Ui Lee Coffee shop (the most famous coffee shop in Bangkok – now defunct – but the recipe is still alive in form of Old-style coffee)	6 satang
black ice coffee	5 satang
glass of black ice coffee from a coffee stall	2 satang
ice coffee with milk	4 satang
ice cocoa (ovaltine)	6 satang
monthly salary for Privates (Royal Thai Army or Police)	11.75-12 baht

monthly salary for a janitor at a district office	14 baht
monthly rental of a wooden house	15 baht
2nd Lt. (Royal Thai Army or Police)	80 baht
private servant	30 baht
rental for a single block townhouse in Nakhon Pathom	4 baht a month
monthly salary for head of a Muang District	150 baht
monthly salary for a man with a Bachelor's Degree	80 baht
monthly salary for a doctor	120 baht
meal for a family (a husband, a wife, and 2 children)	50 satang
Phatthai with an egg	6 satang
10-year-old girl plus her younger sibling sold by her mother to become beggars	35 baht
short time with a prostitute	75 satang
1 rai of land around Phra Khanong	8 baht
a pair of Asahi rubber shoes	75 satang
a pair of Sakura rubber shoes	1.25 baht
a pair of combat boots	1.75 baht
a bowl for noodles	5 satang
rice with green curry and half a boiled egg	6 satang
a full egg	6 satang
carton of Red Lion cigarettes (20 pieces)	8 satang
carton of Red Bull cigarettes (10 pieces)	10 satang
carton of Tricastle and Abdullah cigarettes	12 satang
canned cigarettes (50 pieces)	50 satang
book of matches (50 matches)	1 satang
factory-made Youth Army uniform (pants and shirt)	7 baht
tailor-made Youth Army uniform	15 baht
glass of ice water	1 satang
public toilet fee at Memorial Bridge	1 satang

During the 1942 flood

a pair of shoes made of rubber tires	35 satang
a durian	100 baht
a prostitute at Soi Sub	10-20 baht
a prostitute at Chaloemkrung	25 baht
monthly salary for worker at Bangkok Dock	50 baht

The Japanese Arrive

Everyday at 5:00 am, tram workers (usually young men from Isan) came to clear the tram tracks with shovels and eaters (a construction instrument with a sharp head on one side and flat head on the other side for breaking stone and cleaning the narrow tracks). At that time the tram sign was a red triangular pedant with a single white star with five arms at the center.

Mr. Ajin came from Nakhon Pathom. He lived with his aunt and siblings in a rental block near Rachinee Girls' School. Mr. Ajin and his friends witnessed the Imperial Japanese Marines marching down Ratchadamnoen Avenue. After the invasion, black markets became a reality. Ration coupons and death sentences could not effectively stop the black marketeers.

Early in 1942, the ticket for Youth Army was a bronze one-satang coin ("Yuwachon Taharn"—a predecessor of Territorial Defence units. Territorial Defence unit is a Thai version of ROTC. If you see high school students wearing olive berets and green olive uniforms with combat boots, they are Territorial Defence units. Many high school students study in the Territorial Defence course to dodge the military draft). For that amount one could ride from Ban Moh to Sam Yan via Pahurat, Ratchawongse, Songwat, Talad Kao (old market), Sam Yak Ton Pradoo, Wat Sam Jin (now Wat Trai Mitr-Golden Buddha Image Temple), Hua Lamphong, and Saphan Luang. At that time, the Imperial Japanese seized Triam Udomsuksa High School (my old alma mater). At that time, the study building of this school still had roofs made of padan leaves, bamboo mat walls, and Phayathai Road still had Chamchuri trees along the road up to Victory Monument. The flood increased the price of rice from 12 baht for a 100 kg to 16 baht for 100 kg. After that, the price of rice shot up to 32-40 baht for 100 kg.

Bombs Fall

On June 5, 1944 (Visakhapooja Day) at 11:00 am near the Memorial Bridge. Mr. Ajin and his friend saw Allied bombers flying in circles. They saw white smoke coming off the bomber wings. At first, they thought that the bomber was hit by anti-aircraft guns. The bomber circled and flew away and a few seconds later. Its purpose was to mark the target area with smoke for the rest of the fleet. Then a fleet of B29 bombers poured iron eggs (bombs) aiming to destroy the Memorial Bridge and Wat Liab Power Plant. However, they hit buildings around Tha Tian and Ban Moh area instead! The power line for the tram (a pair of copper wires about the size of a thumb) were cut by the shrapnel. The buildings around Ban Moh intersection turned to debris, obstructing the tram services from Bang Lamphoo to Hua Lamphong via Ban Moh. However, the tram lines from Pahurat, Ratchawongse pier, Song Wat area, Sam Yaek (Ton pradoo – Angsana tree), and Hua Lamphong still functioned. The bombs destroyed a Japanese hospital in Ban Moh and corpses were scattered around the area. Mr. Ajin survived the bombardment even though a bomb dropped ten meters away from him. After that day, schools and universities in Bangkok were closed and moved out of Bangkok for safety and the workers from Wat Liab Power Plant came to reconnect the torn copper wires and repair the tracks a few days later.

B29's arrived again on April 14, 1945 and plunged Bangkok into darkness since Wat Liab and Samsen Power Plant were destroyed, tap water cut off, no light from light bulbs, roads turned dark after sunset, and trams not running. It took 4-5 years to get everything back to the normal.

Odds and ends

The 2nd class tram tickets from Ban Moh Intersection (electronic and jewelry section of Bangkok not far from Wang Boorapha and Memorial Bridge) to Sam Yan was 1 copper stang (about 0.5 US cent). During the 30's there were an extension of the tramway from Yot Se to Patunam and via Sam Yan and Sala Daeng (Yot Se area is near Kasatsuek Bridge (Rama I Road) and Patunam terminal is near the Patunam pier of Nai Lert White Boat Service which ran from Patunam to Minburi and Nonchok). At that time, there was only a boat trip a day along Saen Saeb canal since it took a day or two to reach Minburi and Nonchok (then a separate province until the Great Depression forced Minburi Province to merge with Bangkok).

Sornsans Phaengsapha

Sornsans Phaengsapha was a Chulalongkorn University architect student. He designed patrol boats for the Mekhong Operation Unit of Royal Thai Navy which worked much better than the PT boats from the US Armed Forces. He is also a writer as well, and below recalls the Bangkok Tramway lines of the 1920's to 1930's.

Bangkok tram services ran from 05:30 to 23:30. Tram drivers on the last rounds (around 23:00) would drive very fast. However, the last round of feeder lines such as the Ratchawongse line would be at 18:30 since the last round of boat services would be around that time. The Ratchawongse area was a place to have fun for those who had money to burn at first-class Chinese restaurants like Hoy Tian Lao (AKA Yard Fah Restaurant).

The tram officers were generally people of good hearts volunteering to help people who lived along the tracks asking adults to give seats for students, sending drunkards from bars back home, helping the setup of funeral rites without asking When inspectors came, the tram workers had to listen the criticism ... and act according to regulations to ensure that they would receive wages without being fined.

There were 11 tramway lines (Paknam and Mae Klong Railway not included) during the 1920's and the 1930's:

1) Bangsue – Bang Krabue (AKA Bangsue line)

A line with a single tram starting from a rest hut at Bang Krabue Intersection (Rachinee Bon Girls School), passing Boonrawd Brewery, the 4th Calvary Battalion – Royal Guard (the toughest Calvary Unit in Thailand – no hoodlum dare mess with the tough calvarymen from that battalion) and Kiakkai Intersection. The line turned right at Kiakkai Intersection to go along Taharn Road and pass military units (e.g. the 3rd Cavalry Battalion – Royal Guard, RTAF Engineer Dept., Anti-Aircraft Division (then the 2nd Artillery Battalion), RTA Ordinance Dept., RTA Signal Dept. before turning left after crossing Premparchakorn canal (a canal dug during the early reign of King Chulalongkorn from Phadung Krungkasem outer city moat in front of Wat Mongkutkasat to Bang Sai district of Ayutthaya) at Saphan Daeng. After that, the line turned left and went along Techawanit Road (a road parallel with Premprachakorn Canal) and passed RTA Ordinance Dept., RTAF Engineering Workshop, Wat Saphan Soong, Tao Poon area, Siam Cement PCL (a heavy industry giant founded by King Vajiravut on December 8, 1913) before ending up at Bang Sue Railway Junction.

During Boworndej Revolt in the mid-October 1933, Bangsue-Bang Krabue tram was temporarily halted for security reasons since the government moved the troops from the units around Dusit area to fight against Boworndej units from Isan, Saraburi, and Ayutthaya in the rainy and muddy paddy fields in Bang Khen area. The line ceased services around 1962-65 and BMTA bus No. 3 (Km11. SRT Community – Klongsarn) and No.5 (Tao Poon – Chakkrawat Temple) took its place.

2) Samsen-Sathon (AKA Samsen line)

A 3-car tram running from Kiaw Khai Kah pier (AKA Red Boat Pier of Mae Nam Motorboat Co.Ltd.), turning right at Bang Krabue intersection to go along the western section of Samsen Road to Sophon Bridge, Vajira Hospital, Sang Hee Intersection, Vasukree Royal Pier, Seesao Thewet Intersection (then Seesao Baiporn Intersection), Thewet area, Bangkhunphrom Palace, Aksornniti Press (a publishing house printing law textbooks, novels, tram and bus tickets), Wisutkasat area, Bang Lamphoo area Badman Store (later the Dept. of PR and later on the lottery stalls), Saphan Siaw (a tram bridge next to Saphan Phanphiphob Leela), Rachinee Road at the back of the War Office (Ministry of Defense), Saphan Changrongsee (a bridge for elephants heading to the Ministry of Interior and Giant Swing constructed in 1910 at the place used to be the Royal Ricemill), Wat Ratpradittharam before going across the Khoo Muang Doem canal to Ban Moh area at Saphan Hok. Ban Moh is the area famous for trading in diamonds and electronic items. After passing Ban Moh, the line headed to Pahurat area (Little India – famous for textile and garment trading), Saphan Han (one of the most famous flea markets in the City Center), Mahachai Road, northern section of Yaowarat Road (Chinatown), Samyaek Ton Pradoo (Bangkok Tramway HQ)–interchange station with Bangkholaem line, southern section of Rama IV Road, Hua Lamphong Station, Saphan Lueang (Jarumuang Intersection), Sam Yarn (Chula U. Campus), King Chulalongkorn Hospital, Queen Saowapha Institute (Red Cross HQ), Saladaeng (Lumbhinee Park), and ending up at Sathon Intersection which Wireless Road intersects with Sathon Road.

There were two depots at Bang Krabue near Kiaw Khai Kah Pier (the Pier for Maenam Motorboat Co.Ltd -> the Red Boat to Nonthaburi) and Saphan Lueang (the bridge between Hua Lamphong and Sam Yan which was later on moved to the place near the office of Anglo-American Tobacco Co.Ltd. before the nationalization to create Tobacco Monopoly). Tram tickets for this line can be used for riding the Red Boat to Nonthaburi and the tickets of Maenam Motorboat can be used for riding the tram to Pakklong Talad. The ticket from Bang Krabue to Sathon was 6 Stang (2nd Class) and 10 Stang (for 1st Class).

3) Atsadang Feeder line

A single tram for those merchants at Pakklong Talad flea market and those girls studying at Sunanthalai Royal Seminary (now Rachinee Girls School). The line was probably the shortest tram line in the world. It cost the riders 1 copper stang but the passengers usually used tickets from the Bangkrabue line to go along this line. The line was abandoned around 1934-37 since the Bangkok Map of 1937 (now in a very dilapidated condition at the National Archives) does not show this line at all.

4) Ratchawongse Feeder line

A single tram for those who want to ride the ocean ships at Ratchawongse Pier (one of the most important piers in the days before Klong Toei port) and those who want to have good meals at the Chinese restaurants around Ratchawongse Road. The last tram of this feeder line would run at 18:30 so as to make an extra space for those who want to hang around that area

for dinner and parties at the restaurants. There was no luggage movement to/from the ocean ships after sunset. This line was abandoned in 1934, and Siam Electricity Co.Ltd. decided to run a blue bus from the Golden Mountain to Ratchawonse Pier as a substitute. However, WWII eliminated this feeder bus of Siam Electricity Co.Ltd due to the lack of spare parts since at that time the rubber tire for a bus alone cost the company 10,000 baht .

Only Nai Lert Bus (white buses) and Bangkok Municipal Buses (green buses with an elephant seal) could afford such luxuries. Medicines such as Quinine and Ateppine (for Malaria) and NB-639 (for Syphilis) were priced out of range for virtually everybody. Only those with good connections with black marketers could obtain such necessities. Now, BMTA bus No. 204 (Huay Kwang – Ratchawongse Pier) runs this route.

5) Sukhothai Feeder Line

A single tram for those who live along Samsen canal who want to go to Vajira hospital. The line ran from Wat Kwid (Wat Prasart Bunyawart) pier to the end of Sukhothai Rad. After that, it turned left to go along Sukhothai Road at the Vajira Hospital side of the road. The line met Samsen line at Vajira Intersection. It was constructed around 1913 (the first years of Vajira Hospital) which one can see on the map from the National Archives, ceased service around 1933-34.

6) City Pillar – Thanon Tok Pier

A three-car tram which was the oldest and the longest line of all. Originally a horse-drawn line with 4 pairs of horses. The left and right pair for normal use and the other central two pairs for going uphill at bridges. The service started on May 22, 1887 from City Pillar to Bangkok Dock Co.Ltd. (the oldest modern dockyard founded in 1865–still in service for Marine Police and Royal Thai Navy but as a state enterprise which was nationalized in 1939 for military use). The line expanded to Thanon Tok pier in 1888. It become the talk-of-the-town after being used by Royal Siamese Army for moving military personnel to quell triads fighting for territory at the ricemill in Yannawa. The details of the traid suppression in 1889 has been recorded by Prince Damrongrajanuphab (Prince Damrong for short) in his memoir "Nithan Borankhadee" (written in 1942 and first published as memorial book for the cremation of Prince Damrong in May 1944 after he passed away from heart failure on December 1, 1943). The horse-drawn tram did not work very well even though the company had received Royal approval to construct seven tram lines in Bangkok.

The line ran from City Pillar to behind the Ministry of Defense and then along Koo Muang Doem to go across Chang Rongsee Bridge to the Ministry of Interior to go along Bumrung Muang road to Giant Swing, and then turned right at Seekak Sao Chingcha to go along Fuang Nakhon Road to New Road at Seekak Phrayasri Intersection. After that, the line went along New Road to Chaloeckkrung Royal Theater (founded in 1933–the air-conditioned cinema/theater), Werng Nakhonkhasem (Thieves Market), Wang Boorapha Palace (the palace of Prince Bhanurangsi and the Bhanubongse family founded in 1876, became Bahnuthat Girls School from 1928 to 1941, sold to a land developer and then demolished to solve heritage disputes in 1952 -> and become a trade center ever since). The line also passed Saphan Hun, Suapah, Wat Leng Nei Yee (Wat Mungkorn Kamalawat), Phraya Sombutphaisal Building (9-storey building), Sam Yaek Ton Pradoo (Bangkok Tramway HQ), Nailert Ice Manufacturing at Saphan Lek Larng, Si Phraya, Bangkok GPO, Oriental Hotel, Bangkok Dock Co.Ltd, Wat Don Cemetery before ending up at Thanontok pier (Red Boat Pier for Maenam Motorboat Co.Ltd. to Phra

Padaeng). At Thanon Tok, there is a U-turn. It took several minutes to move the locomotive back to the front, moving the trolley backward, and make the seats face toward the City Pillar. BMTA bus No. 1 now takes this route.

7) Hua Lamphong

The redline (line 1-6 for yellow lines) with 3-car tram starting from Banglamphoo near Banglamphoo Intersection (then Banglamphoo Pratoomai), turning right at Wat Bowornniwetwiharn to Tanao Road (now an entertainment road in City Center beside Phra Athit Road), Khok Wua intersection (Old cattle barn-> Tanao Rd. intersecting with Ratchadamnoen Avenue) to Bumrung Muang Rd. near Chaopho Sua Shrine. After that, turning left to go along the Southern section of Bumrung Muang Rd. to Yotseh via Suan Mali, Saphan Dam Intersection (AKA Maen Sri Intersection – another office of Bangkok Tramway-> with a depot and a maintenance center). After reaching Yot Seh, the line went along Krung Kasem Road (a road parallel to Krung Kasem canal – an outer city moat from Thewet to Si Phraya) before ending up at Hua Lamphong. BMTA bus No. 53 (Ring line Thewet – Hua Lamphong – Bang Lamphoo) has filled the slot.

8) City Circle

A single-car tram line which was also the last red line to survive until October 1, 1968, the end of the tram service. The line ran from Banglamphoo to go along Phrasumen Road, Prachathippatai Intersection, Wat Trithossathep, Phan Fah Intersection, Wat Ratchanadda, Mahachai Road, Samyod Gate, Wang Boorapha, Saphan Han Gate, Wat Bophitphimuk, Memorial Bridge (old GPO–demolished to make a way for Phrapokklao Bridge in 1984), Chakphet Road, Pakklong Talad flee Market, Chakkraphongse House (house of Prince Chakkarabongse—a favorite son of King Chulalongkorn until he married a Russian lady), Wat Po, Tha Tian pier (a pier to Wat Arun, and the main pier of Siam Motorboat Co.Ltd. -> Red boat -> to Phra Padaeng and Pathumthane), Tha Ratchaworadit Royal Pier, turning right to go along Na Phralan Road at Tha Chang Pier (HQ of Chaophraya Express Boat). After that, it turned left at Nah Phralan intersection to go along Phrachan Road to Tha Phrachan (ferry pier to Bangkok Noy Railway Station – AKA Terminal of the Southern Railway until Rama VI Bridge become a reality on Jan 1, 1926), turning left at Phrachan Intersection to pass Thammasart University, and National Museum before turning left at the National Theater. After that, it turned right at the mouth of Ko Muang Doem canal (inner city moat) via Wat Phrakao Wangnah (now the School of Arts). After that, to went along Phra Athit Road (a new entertainment center for Thammasart people and other college kids) to Pass Ban Phra Athit (belonged to Chaophraya Woraphongsephiphat who was the owner of Bang Buathong Railway) before ending up at bang Lamphoo via Phrasumen fort , and Wat Sangwet. The riders of this line needed to pay twice—once at Banglamphoo and the other at Pakklong Talad Intersectin-Atsadang Road.

9) Yotse line

A single-car tram line which was constructed during the late 1920's and early 1930's and went from Yotse to go across Kasatsuek Bridge to Ratprasong Intersection via Rama I Road, Bunthathong Intersection, National Stadium (then Hor Wang (Winsor Palace) of Crown Prince Vajirunnahit and office of Prince Mahidol), Sapathum Palace (palace of Queen Sawangwatthana, Prince Mahidol and Princess Mother before becoming Princess Mother Foundation office), Wat Pathumwanaram (meditation center in downtown BKK), World Trade Center (then Phatchabun Palace) before turning left along Ratchadamri Road to Nai Lert pier at Pratoonam near Chaloem Lok Bridge. After that, you could ride Nai Lert White boat to go along Saensaeb canal to Nongchok

via Klong Tan, Hua Mark, Bang Kapi, Saphan Soong, and Minburi. Nai Lert boat also went along Praweturirom canal to Paed Riw (Chachoengsao) via Ladkrabang after branching out of Saensaeb canal at Phrakhanong. Nai Lert White boat tickets could be used to ride the tram to Bang Rak or Yotse and the tram ticket could be used to ride Nai Lert White boat to Phrakhanong or Bang Kapi.

10) Silom line

A single-car tram that went from Nai Lert Pier to go along Ratchadamri Road and Silom Road to meet Bangkoklaem line at Bangrak Intersection. The line also went parallel to Silom canal which had a long line of Angsana and Asok trees. Silom canal was gone for good with the expansion of Silom Road (AKA Windmill Road – for the western windmill not far from the road during the reign of King Mongkut). During the blooming time of Angsana trees, the yellow petals of Angsana flowers made the tram track look very beautiful.

11) Dusit line

A three-car tram that went from Wat Thewaratkunchorn to Seesao Thewet Intersection before turning left to Uthong intersection. Then turning right to go along Ratchaseema Road at Suan Kulab Palace. After that, the line turned left to go along Sri Ayuthaya Road at Karn Ruan Intersection. After that, it passed the 1st Infantry Division (Royal Guard), Wang Parutsakawan (Palace for Prince Chakkraphongse—later the Government House after the 1932 revolution until Phisanulok House replaced it in 1939), Suan Misakawan Intersection (Supreme Commander HQ), and Wat Benjamabophit (AKA Marble Temple) before turning right along Rama V Rd. to Prince Abhakorn Palace (now Rajamongkhon Institute, Chumporn Khetudomsak Campus) via Royal Turf Club. After that, it went along Phitsanulok Rd. to Nang Leng Intersection and turned right along Nakhonsawan Road to Worachak Intersection. After that, the line went along Worachak Road to Suan Mali and S.A.B. Intersection (Societe Anonym de Belge watch shop – now Xin Xia Yit Pao Press), Saphan Dam Intersection, Wat Sam Pluem (Chakkawatrachawat temple), before ending up at Wat Liab power plant (now the HQ of MEA).

First Allied Bombing

On Jan 9, 1942 from 2:00 am to 3:00 am – the first Allied bombs hit Bangkok at B.L. Hua. Drugstore, Wat Tuek intersection, Yaowarat, and Yotse – not hitting Hua Lamphong at all. After the sunrise, many Bangkokians rode trams to see the effects of the bombs.



1942 Flood (photo from the collection of Ric Francis)

Great Flood of 1942

There was a boat service (White Boat) along Saen Saeb canal run by Nai Lert (Lert Setthaputra) from Patunam to Nongchok via Minburi and Paed Riw (Chachoengsao) via Prawet Burirom canal. At that time the Sukhumvit area was full of rice and paddy fields with buffaloes. Trams passed the Patunam Pier ... During the 1942 flood, the floods soaked the motors and tram drivers and workers had to push them back to the depot near the City Pillar. The floodwaters near Bang Krabue depot reached to chest level. Cars and boats had head-on collisions

during the flood since cars drove on the left while boats when on the right. After the flood, algae caused the tram wheels to slip off the tracks.

Bombing the Power Plants

On April 14, 1945 at 1430, a fleet of Allied bombers (30-40 bombers) turned Wat Liab Power plant and Samsen Power plant into rubble. It was beyond repair—no running water, no electricity, the trams could not run and Bangkok was in the dark. The government decided to get power from 540-HP engines of HTMS Matchanu and Wirunchabung submarines to feed Lakmuang-Thanon Tok. However, the DC power burnt the motors when the trams reached Bangkok Dock Co.Ltd. (the place where 2 submarines were generating electricity to feed trams) while the trams ran out of power if trams were near the terminals since DC power could not reach far enough. It took a lot of labor to put the rolling stocks back to the depot.

Yutthisathian

AKA Yot Wachirasathian – recorded in 1971 and revised in 1977

When I was 60 plus 2 months (October 1, 1968), the trams were NO MORE! No one who was born after that day would have any idea about the trams except when they saw them in the photographs or sitting on an old tram. My dad told me that trams were initially horse-drawn from City Pillar to Thanon Tok via Sam yak Tone Pradoo (in front of Chaloemburi Cinema). It was in 1894 that the trams were electrified. Trams were the cheapest mass transit available (compared to rickshaws and rental chariots). Trams were safe but slow every time they parked at the red pedant signs with a white star to pick more passengers or waited to let the tram from other directions go first. Trams were so popular that all walks of life rode them. The back of the tram was for the 2nd class while the front of the tram was for the 1st class. The first class tram (with covered pillows stuffed with coconut fiber) tickets were 10 satang (a nickel) and the 2nd class (wooden seats) were 6 satang (3 cent or 2 Phai for those who still remembered Phai-Sorot copper coins).

Initial Lines

The lines which owned by the Danes were City Pillar – Thanon Tok and Bang Krabue – Saladaeng (later on extended to Klong Toei). Trams were smooth since they did not drive on dirt roads with potholes. If your tickets still had money left, you could interchange the lines if you wanted. If you rode a tram from Sam Yak to Nang Lerng (near Royal Tuft Club and Thewakam Bridge that goes across Premprachakron canal), you would drop down to S.A.B. Intersection or Saphan Lek Intersection and then ride the City Circle line to Nang Lerng without paying more.

Bangkok Tramways Company

Bangkok Tramways Co.Ltd. merged with Electricity Co.Ltd. (Samsen Power Plant) in 1900 which owned Samsen Line In 1901, Siam Electricity Co.Ltd. took over Bangkok Tramways Co.Ltd. and built Wat Liab Power Plant. Thanon Tok line went from City Pillar to Thanon Tok line via Bumrung Muang, the whole Fuang Nakhon Rd., and went along the New Road to Thanon Tok depot. Samsen line went from Kiao Khai Kah pier (a pier for a boat to Nonthaburi) in Bang Krabue to Saladaeng (initially ended at Hua Lamphong Railway Station but later extended to Saladaeng and Klong Toei) via Samsen Rd., Chakkrabongse Rd., Khoo Muang Doem (the 1st City Moat dug in 1771),

Rachinee Rd., Ubonrat bridge, Ban Moh, Phra Phithak, Phahurat (Bangkok Little India), Saphan Han, Rob Krung canal (the 2nd city moat), Saphan Phanubongse Bridge (Wang Boorapha), Yaowarat Road (Bangkok Chinatown), Sam Yak Tone Pradoo, Charonesawat bridge, Hua Lamphong and ended up at Saladaeng. Rolling stock of both lines were painted in yellow and the head office was a 2-floor building at Sam Yak Tone Pradoo.

Siamese Tramway Company

Siamese Tramway Co. Ltd. owned by Prince Narathip was founded on October 1, 1905 and King Chulalongkorn went to the the inauguration ceremony. Trams from Siamese Tramways Co.Ltd. were painted in red—thus called red lines. There were two major lines: City circle near Wat Liab Power plant and Hua Lamhong line that went across an iron bridge to Wat Bophitphimuk to Chakkrawat Rd., Yaowarat intersection, Charoen Krung Intersection, Worachak Intersection, Maen Sri Intersection (Saphan Dum), Golden Mountain, Nakhonsawan Rd., Nanglerng, Phadung Krungkasem canal (the 3rd City Moat dug in 1857) and then ended up at Thewet. The fares were collected by distance which was fair to the passengers and the company. Sometimes when the trams went off of the tracks, the workers and the passengers had to use their own strength to put the rolling stock back on the tracks.

Merger

The tram companies were officially merged into a single company in 1926 and the electric company was changed to Siamese Electricity Co.Ltd. to Siamese Electricity Corporation Co.Ltd. on May 5, 1927 after Thai businessmen become major shareholders. The trams were used by fire Department but not so good as they expected since it cannot cover every section of the city.

Labor Trouble

There was a labor strike in January 1924 by Bangkok Tramways workers. Initially, Mr. Thiang (a Thai worker) was sacked by Mr. Hui (a Chinese foreman from Hainan) without reason and the Dane managers believed what Foreman Hui said. Therefore, nine friends of Nai Thiang tried to appeal to Mr. J. Knutson (Bangkok Tramways CEO -a Dane CEO who could speak Thai as fluently as a Thai) but to no avail. Even worse, Mr. Knutsen believed what Mr. Hui said. Furthermore, Mr. Hui said "Sir, you should NOT take care of Thai workers since they were just like a bunch of dogs—running back to our company after hearing the knocking of coconut shells with dog food. Therefore, you can get Thai workers as much as you want to replace those who got a pink slip."

Such an insult caused almost Thai workers to strike. Those who worked as strike brakers (either as volunteers or by bribery) were beaten bloody with metal-headed clubs by striking workers. Mr. Knutson and managers were worried since the concession said the government would nationalize the trams if the company could not run the service for more than 24 hours. The Chinese and the Dane managers had to run the tram services until the government of King Vajiravut could mediate the labor dispute. The results was that Mr. Hui was sacked while Mr. Thiang went back to work and Mr. J. Knutson had to take care of Thai workers' welfare much better than in the past and even get a Thai doctor who graduated from Germany to take care of sick workers (Luang Suriyaphongse-Wisutthiphaet). There was also a free loan for workers – they didn't have to pay the 5-10% market rate.

Libel Against All Thais

The leader of this strike was Thawat Ritthidet. He became the talk-of-the-town

when he and Bangkok Tram workers sued Mr. Hui for libel since Mr. Hui insulted the Thai people in general—with Luang Srisurangwaramat as a lawyer. However, the court dropped the case since the petition Thawat presented required 12 million Siamese people to sign it. Thawat Ritthidet became notorious when he attempted to sue King Prajadhipok in 1933-34. However, the case was eventually dropped since the 1932 constitution (and every Thai constitution) states that the "King is a venerable head of state, and nobody can violate HM and nobody can bring HM and the Royal Family to court."

Thawat Ritthidet became a member of the People Party since he was a labor activist. He also tried to help rickshaw workers (usually illiterate Chinese) to get more power to bargain. Even though the rickshaw drivers won three times, their lives still were in misery until the demise of rickshaws in 1954 by the proclamation on January 1, 1953 which states that the government would no longer extend licenses to rickshaw drivers.

Trams at Phra Padaeng

After electrifying the Bangkok tram, Herrn (Mr.) Prune (a German businessman) asked for the concession for the public boat from Thanon Tok to Phrapradaeng and Thai Tianm to Nonthaburi and Pathumthanee. King Chulalongkorn granted the concession to Herrn Prune who founded Siam Motorboat (red boats). The red boats could not go along Lad Luang canal – a shortcut canal dug during the reign of King Rama II (circa 1815) – since the boats were too big and Phrapradaeng had no electricity at all. So, the steam-engine tram with a track similar to the railway track along Lad Luang canal from the canal end near Wat Prot Kate to downtown Phrapradaeng and Phrapradaeng pier was the answer. It seems to me that the Phra Padaeng tram died after Siam Motorboat Co.Ltd. was out of business.

Thepchoo Thubthong

Lopburi Tram

After many parts of Bangkok Tram were removed, the removed trams were reinstalled in Lopburi. Actually, Lopburi was to have a tram system since the day the leader (Field Marshall Plaek Phiboonsonggram) wanted to rebuild Lopburi as a new model city in 1938, but the leader need to wait until they removed the Lak Muang-Thanontok line to install in Lopburi in 1955.

The Lopburi tram ran from Tha Hin Flea Market to the gate of King Ananda Mahidol Army Hospital via Phra Karn Shrine. The fare rates were as follows:

2nd class

Tha Hin Flea Market – Phra Karn Shrine : 25 satang
Phra Karn Shrine – Sra Kao: 25 satang
Sra Kao – King Ananda Mahidol Army Hospital: 25 satang
Tha Hin – King Ananda Mahidol Army Hospital: 75 satang
(then 1 US\$ = 20 baht)

1st class

Tha Hin Flea Market – Phra Karn Shrine : 50 satang
Phra Karn Shrine – Sra Kao: 50 satang
Sra Kao – King Ananda Mahidol Army Hospital: 50 satang
Tha Hin – King Ananda Mahidol Army Hospital: 1.50 baht

Initially, the Lopburi tram was cheered by the local people. However, the enthusiasm died down very quickly since the local buses were much faster and passengers did not need to wait long. Lopburi tram died after nearly five years after the inception due to heavy loss.

Trams assist in triad battle in Chinatown

Prince Damrong (a younger half-brother of King Chulalongkorn and the right-hand man of the king) recorded that in 1889 the Royal Siamese Army used Lakmuang Thanon Tok tram to move an Army battalion to suppress a riot between two rival Chinese triads at the New Road near Wat Yannawa. The two Chinese triads were Tang Kong Xi (Techiew) and Siew Li Kue (Fujian). The two triads removed the galvanized roofs from local folks to build barricades to fight on June 19, 1889. On June 20, 1889, there was shooting—20 triad members were killed and more than 100 wounded. Police could not suppress the triads since there were thousands of members. Therefore, the police needed to call the army in to bail them out on June 21, 1889. The army seized all the trams and drove them to Thanon Tok to move the infantry battalion to deal with triads. The Danish managers of Bangkok Tramway Co.Ltd. were willing to let the Army seize the tram since the company was fed up with the triads itself. A company of Marines and Sailors rode river boats from Navy HQ to Thanon Tok so as to encircle the triads.

After the fighting ended, 10 triad members were killed and 20 were wounded. 800 members and 8 bosses surrendered. Army and Navy officers tied the pigtails of those triads into groups of triads—100 triads for each group—to create public humiliation. Many people living along the New Road—Siamese, Westerners, Chinese, Indian, and Islamic people—blessed such a quick and bold action of the Royal Siamese Armed Forces to suppress the triads. Trams moved up and down between the War Office and Yanna all day and night of June 21, 1889.

**More: [The days when I was young](#)
by [Uncle Yai Naphayon](#)**

A tale of two newspapers: TRT win?

March 22, 2004

Categories: A Tale of Two Newspapers

A tale of two newspapers: TRT win?

– March 22, 2004

[TRT](#)

[bounces back with landslide win](#) – *Bangkok Post*

[Democrat](#)

[surge sours TRT win](#) – *The Nation*

There is probably no better example of the tone and type of news the two English-language papers carry than the above articles. The *Post* has just the minimum of facts.

The Nation has plenty of interesting analysis which is likely to be slanted against the government. If the *Post* does come up with some background or analysis, it is usually in an additional article a day after the first one.

A tale of two newspapers: US ‘apology’

March 24, 2004

Categories: A Tale of Two Newspapers

A tale of two newspapers: US ‘apology’ – March 24, 2004

Basically the same information, but entirely different spin depending on the paper you choose:

US

‘regrets wrongly assessed’ findings

– *Bangkok Post*

...Mr Jakrapob said Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai yesterday told cabinet a message from US President George W Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed regret for the US report, which

had riled Thai authorities particularly with its criticism

of extra-judicial killings during the government’s three-month war on drugs.

...Asked to comment on this matter, US embassy spokesman

Mark Larsen said he could not confirm that such a message had been sent by his government to the Thai government.

US

Embassy dismisses apology claim

– *The Nation*

The US Embassy in Bangkok yesterday dismissed a statement from the Thai government that claimed Washington

had apologised for alleging extrajudicial killings in its annual report on human rights.

"I definitely can not confirm that any letter

was sent that can be characterised as an apology," the spokesman at the US Embassy in Bangkok said.

In Buddhist Bangkok, even stray dogs have their day

March 24, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[In Buddhist Bangkok, even stray dogs have their day](#) –

Wall Street Journal, March 24, 2004

About controlling dogs in Bangkok...

A tale of two newspapers: US ‘error’

March 25, 2004

Categories: A Tale of Two Newspapers

A tale of two newspapers: US ‘error’ – March 25, 2004

The saga of the two local English-language papers continues:

Today the *Post* has a different take on the US human rights report (not mentioning its incorrect story from yesterday), but still spins it by highlighting the ‘error’ in its headline.

The Nation again hammers home that the government claims of an apology are false.

[US](#)

[stands by report, but removes error](#)

– *Bangkok Post*

The United States stands by its assessment of Thailand’s

human rights problems but concedes it made an error

in a report, since removed after Bangkok objected, US embassy spokesman Mark Larsen said.

[US](#)

[Embassy confirms no apology issued](#)

– *The Nation*

“There have been no messages from either President Bush or US Secretary of State Colin Powell

to the Thai government regarding the human rights report,” said Mark Larson, an embassy spokesman.

“The US is standing by its human rights report,” he said.

‘US apologises for human rights allegations’

March 25, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[‘US apologises for human rights allegations’](#) –

MCOT/TNA

We notice that the MCOT/Thai News Agency site still is reporting the discredited U.S. apology about the human rights report: *BANGKOK, Mar 23 (TNA) – Washington has issued a formal apology for its report which accused Thailand of gross human rights abuses, government spokesman revealed today.*

Speaking after this morning’s cabinet meeting, Mr. Jakrapob Penkair said that the US letter, issued in the name of President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell, expressed apologies for having issued the report, which the US has already admitted was based on ‘inaccurate information’.

Earlier: [A tale of](#)

[two newspapers II – The US human rights report](#)

– March 25, 2004

Former media mouthpiece turns on TRT?

March 25, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Former media mouthpiece turns on TRT?

– March 25, 2004

Wisarat reports: Even *Manager*

Daily, which used to be a mouthpiece of propaganda for Thai Rak Thai, have warned Premier Thaksin and the cabinet that:

(translated and summarized by Wisarat Bholsithi from an editorial in *Manager Daily*, March 25, 2004) *His Majesty has pointed out the new forms of corruption through the message "CEO-Style corruption" and "The richer of the billionaire, the more corrupt they are!" Premier Thaksin and his cronies will be expected to suffer punishment from heaven unless they can clarify the following issues:*

1) *the privatization of EGAT*

2) *Bird flu*

3) *the controversial [Laem](#)*

[Phak Bia Project](#)

4) *The Detroit of the East Plan while they are claiming to [expand](#)*

[mass transit projects](#)

4) *[The integration](#)*

[of Mass Transit System through nationalization](#) while bullying private companies that won the concessions to sell back to the government at very cheap prices before offering an IPO.

The most blatant example of this kind of bullying is that "If BTSC and BMCL refuse to sell the shares to the government at favorable prices,

[no extensions allowed!"](#)

Thai Rak Thai have played with the sufferings of Bangkokians from the traffic jam so that those government could come up with alternatives in favor of their cronies (e.g. bus rapid transit, expressways striking through communities while the cronies prosper from the local people's sufferings).

This kind of action reveals that those cronies of premier Thaksin want to silently kill BTSC and BMCL in the same way they killed the [Lavalin](#)

[project](#) even though the government is supposed to help companies to stay alive and well so that they can make money to pay for the concessions.

This land is Thailand

March 26, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[This land is Thailand](#) – Nashville City

Paper, March 26, 2004

...It turns out that the photo of a DHL van chugging through a flooded country road against a hilly backdrop wasn't shot anywhere near Nashville.

It was shot in a rice paddy in Thailand, Baker said...

A tale of two newspapers: Ghost buildings

March 26, 2004

Categories: A Tale of Two Newspapers

A

tale of two newspapers: Ghost buildings

– March 26, 2004

Same day, same subject: ghost

buildings. The *Post* quotes "property expert

and lecturer Manop Bongsadadt," and *The Nation*

quotes "independent architect Yodyiam Teptaranon"

resulting in very different articles.

[B135bn](#)

[needed to revive ghost buildings – Amnesty seen as](#)

[best way out of problem](#) – *Bangkok Post*,

March 26, 2004

Construction on half of the buildings, mostly in prime areas, is expected to restart this year...

"About 25% of the 508 ghost buildings are continuing

with reconstruction, such as the Central World Plaza.

The idea of demolishing them is not fair to their

owners. Rather, we should consider whether it is safe to reconstruct or renovate them," he said....

[‘Ghost](#)

[buildings not worth reviving’](#) –

The Nation, March 26, 2004

...half of those structures should be torn down immediately for safety reasons alone, independent architect Yodyiam Teptaranon said.

And the answer to the question, ‘Why doesn’t someone

finish those buildings?’:

... Other experts shared the view that many projects could not be restarted because creditors and debtors could not agree on financial matters. Bankers are reluctant to offer "haircuts", the experts said.

Din of discontent grows in Phuket

March 26, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Din of discontent grows in Phuket](#) –

The Nation, March 26, 2004

Concerning Phuket: *"Yes, it's a great lifestyle
if your style includes a love of noise..."*

Mackenna Theater being torn down

March 26, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Mackenna Theater being torn down](#)

– March 26, 2004

End of arbitration – April 2, 2004

As many construction folk read this site, we thought you might be interested in this press release from AustCham: *Early this year the Thai Government passed a Cabinet Resolution which states that any contract between a state agency and a private entity (Thai or foreign) should not include an arbitration clause. This means that arbitration will no longer be a mechanism for settling any contract disputes with the state agency. Should a party wish to enter into a contract with a state agency and they wish to include a clause for arbitration, this will be considered by the Cabinet on a case by case basis. Furthermore all contracts with state agencies must be in Thai language with English (or other languages) only as unofficial translations. This decision by the Government is of great concern and as such, the National Academy of Criminal Justice will hold a seminar to explain the consequences of the Cabinet Resolution and seek feedback from both the local and foreign business community. They also intend to report the feedback they gather back to the Government. Members who will be affected by this Cabinet Resolution are invited to attend this seminar. It will be free of charge and there will be simultaneous English translation. Details of the seminar are supposed to be [here](#), but the link seems to be broken.*

GOP survey question on terror draws ire

March 26, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[GOP survey question on terror draws ire](#) –

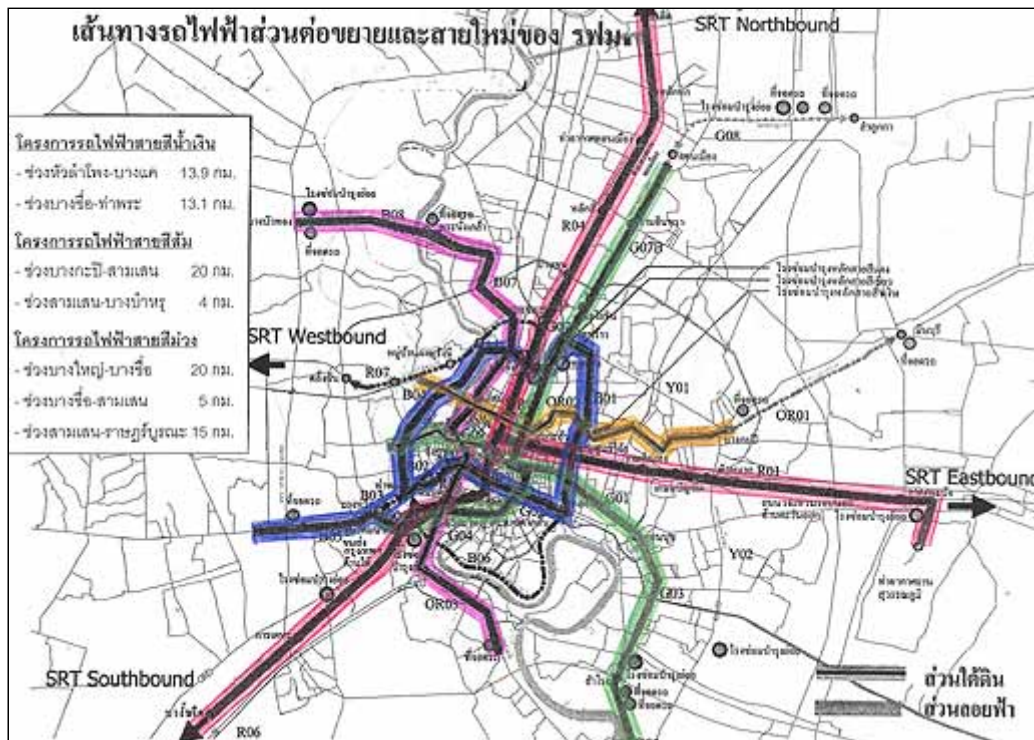
AP, March 26, 2004

A question on the National Republican Congressional Committee's "Ask America 2004 Nationwide Policy Survey" asks, "Should America broaden the war on terrorism into other countries that harbor and aid terrorists such as Thailand, Syria, Somalia, the Philippines, etc.?"

Bangkok Subway News January-March 2004

March 27, 2004

Categories: Subway



(Photo: MRTA route map with their own notations in color.)

MRTA sends a route update – March 27, 2004

Phansopa Chatchawal noted that the MRTA info contrasts with the info on the [OTP site](#), so he contacted MRTA: *I sent an email to MRTA (Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand) ... making an inquiry with regards to the changes in the subway routes. There have been a little confusion with regards to the extended route from Bang Sue to Bang Yai and from Bang Wa to Bang Khae. Some new sources have been reporting that the Blue Line will run to Bang Yai while some says the Purple Line would. Moreover, in many reports, it sounds as if both the Blue and the Purple Line will go to Bang Yai and these contradicting news cause some confusion on my part lately. Thankfully, the MRTA Public Relations Officer gave me a reply ... And he/she has enclosed a map which might be useful to you too. At this point, I think the routes are more or less finalised and I am glad so.*

Poll on the new version of subway lines – translated and summarized from *Transportation Journal*, March 15-21, 2004

MRTA has hired Rajabhat Suan Dusit to conduct a poll on the new version of MRTA Subway project from 3816 Bangkokians in BMA area and vicinity. The results show that:

1) The mean of transportation

63.73% Use the bus as well as other mass transit services available

25.36% Drive their private cars

2) 84.75% Said "MRTA must continue the construction of the new lines and extensions!"

3) Those who want MRTA extensions and new lines said the following lines must be done and finished after the 20-km Blue line has become a reality:

39.20% Orange Line (Bang Kapi – Thai Cultural Center – Victory Monument – Sam Sen – Bang Bumru)

38.73% Purple Line (Bang Yai – Phra Nanklao – Bang Pho – Bang Lamphu – Wongwian Yai – Ratboorana)

21.45% Blue Ring (Hua Lamphong – Tha Phra Bangsue)

Even after the new lines and extensions have become a reality according to 6-year plan, many Bangkokians are still unsatisfied—they want even more lines and extensions. The following are the list of extensions

Bangkokians want:

1) Orange Line Extensions:

1.1) Bang Kapi – Minburi via Sukhaphiban 3 Road

1.2) Bang Bumru – Bang Khae

2) those who suffer from private and BMTA buses, want the following extensions to allow them to not ride the busses anymore—even Euro 2 air-conditioned buses cannot satisfy these people]

2) Purple Line Extensions:

2.1) Ratboorana – Phra Padaeng

2.2) Branch line from Dao Khanong to Machachai via Rama 2 Highway.

3) Blue line Extensions:

3.1) Tha Phra – Bang Khae

3.2) Bangsue – Bang Buathong

3.3) Bangsue – Rangsit via Northern Railway

4) 38.38% want Skytrain extension in mixed form (elevated-underground)—more than other people who want either all elevated sections or all subway sections.

5) 74.40% said MRTA must pay the former land owners at market prices for land compensation.

The results will be delivered to MRTA and sent to the cabinet so that they will learn about the people's opinions.

Commentary: These opinions imply that the government must complete the former Blue line with Extension to Bang Yai suburbs (Bang – Yai – Phra Nanklao – Bangsue – Huay Kwang – Hua Lamphong – Wang Boorapha – Tha Phra – Bangkhae) first before adding the Ring line (Bangsue – Bang Pho – Bang Plad – Tha Phra) even though the Ring line is necessary.

These poll results also show the extent of trauma due to maltreatment from BMTA buses as well as private buses on the Thonburi side of Bangkok.

Subway extension news – translated and summarized from *Prachachart Thurakij*, March 15-17, 2004

Those who live in Bang Yai-Bangbuathong-Ratthathibet have hit the jackpot since the government has approved the **Northern extension from Bangsue to Bang Yai** with the total 13 stations (7 stations from Bangsue – Phra Nanklao are already known) since this line is much easier to handle than other lines due to the fact that all is elevated. Bangsue-Tha Phra Bangkha will follow this line and then the Orange line will follow the Blue line.

MRTA will hire PB to handle the design so as to call a new bid in late 2004 to start the project in early 2005 and open the line in late 2008. The southern extension of the blue line will follow in late 2005 and the orange line will be started in early 2006.

MRTA is just waiting for the cabinet resolution to make an official start on the project. MRTA needs 376 million for the detailed survey on the expropriated areas for all three lines before issuing the Royal Decree to expropriate the land in May.

For the **Purple line**, the budget is 94.585 billion baht – 4.491 billion for expropriation, 61.703 billion for construction, 26.608 billion for rolling stocks and services, and 1.783 billion for design.

After readjustment, the construction cost will be 20-30 billion baht (for the 1st section with 100% public investment) and private sector investment to run the services.

For this section, the expropriated land will only be the stairs for the areas with narrow spaces and curves. The 6 additional stations from Phra Nanklao to Bang Yai via Rattanathibet Road are

1) Sai Mah, 2) Tha It, 3) Ratchapruek Road (Bang Buathong?), 4) Bang Phai, 5) Tahankarn Village, 6) Bang Yai

Bang Yai needs more land for both park and ride as well as a sub maintenance center.

The mass transit funds and the capitalization in the stock markets will be the source of income for this project. However, MRTA is negotiating with BMCL about the nationalization process.

Real estate companies such as Buathong Property Co.Ltd., Wangthong Group PCL, NC Housing said they are waiting for the line to become a reality to come up with the new projects at Bangyai and Bang Buathong.

Subway extension news!

Subway extension from Hua Lamphong-Bang Khae starting in 2005 – translated and summarized from *Dailynews*, February 27, 2004

MRTA Governor said MRTA will start construction of the following two extensions in 2005:

1) January – June 2005: Southern Extension (Hua Lamphong – Tha Phra – Bang Khae – 14.1 km) 44 billion baht construction budget

2) July – December 2005: Northern Extension (Bangsue – Phra Nanklao – Bang Yai- 19.1 km) 37.201 billion baht construction budget

It will take 3 years and 6 months to finish the extensions.

In the part of the subway line there have been several drills for bombs, arson, chemical leakage, and Subway hijack—with cooperation from MEA, MWA, BMA, and Metropolitan Police Office—with very satisfying results. Passengers can be removed from the stations in six minutes.

As for routine crime, BMCL and MRTA has set up security guards to have the authority to arrest suspects and have also installed CCTV cameras in blind spot areas. However, further security measures are needed. Such as a plan to install poison gas detectors. There will be toxic gas drill before the opening date of April 13. The ticket fee will be collected on May Day 2004 at 12-32 baht.

Subway to Bang Yai will be called for a bid in early 2005 – translated and summarized from *Thairath*, February 27, 2004

Governor Praphat said MRTA received three projects to handle:

Blue line extension – Bang Sue – Bang Yai and Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae of 65 billion baht

Orange line – Bang Kapi – Bang Bumru 73 billion baht

Purple line – Bang Yai – Rat Boorana 94 billion baht

Cabinet approval will grant the authority for MRTA to do land expropriation to create the gates—either force the local people to move to other places or return the land to land owners in the same way as the shops around Chatuchak Weekend Market (Kamphanegphet Road). There will be a single consultant to monitor each line in all process such as construction, systems and the service management instead of the separate consultants for each contract.

Governor Praphat said he allows more contractors, not just Ch. Karnchang, Italian Thai Development, and Japanese contractors to handle such massive projects. The new contractor bidding will have to meet the criteria of techniques, price, and construction time. The consultants of MRTA said they would like to see local Thai contractors to handle this job. The new contract will be written in Thai—only technical terms will need to use English terms along with the transliterated version. The Southern Extension from Hua Lamphong to Bangkok and Northern Extension from Bangsue to Bang Yai will be called first in 2005 (first half for Southern Extension and second half for Northern Extension). The Orange Line and the Purple Line will be started in 2006.

What happened to the subway depot development plans? – February 13, 2004

Somehow we missed posting these articles below that explained the end to MRTA plans (they are from last August). Previously 2Bangkok.com had the only English-language mention of the attempts to develop expropriated MRTA land for commercial use. It was extensively covered in the Thai-language press. This issue first came up in 2001 when MRTA (the subway company), attempted to develop some of the land they expropriated to be a shopping center and [residents complained that this would be prohibited by the Constitution](#). The constitutional ban is based on the earlier scandal involving the Central Lat Prao site (See [Was Central Lat Prao really built on a garbage dump?](#)).

From the article below it seems the focus turned to lobbying the government to change the zoning first, but then MRTA would still have to confront former owners to settle the issue (perhaps by giving them more compensation).

MRTA Development Plan Folded – BMA refuses readjust zoning – translated and summarized from *Prachachart Thurakij*, August 21-24, 2003

BMA and City Planning Dept. refused to readjust the color of the 691-rai MRTA Depot and Maintenance Area from Blue (Bureaucrat Office) to Red (Commercial Area) even though MRTA has tried to lobby hard to make such a change. BMA warned MRTA that if BMA changes the color from blue to red, MRTA must confront the former landowners who had surrendered their land plots for the depot.

Many people said the reason why BMA refused to fulfill the request from MRTA is due to MRTA's strong connection with Ch. Karnchang. Therefore, Premier Thaksin might have ordered BMA not to change the color of the area to allow commercial development to starve Ch. Karnchang and force a merger with the Skytrain.

Even if those who surrendered their land to MRTA agree to allow commercial development on MRTA land, the development might not be worthy as they expected since SRT is going to develop the land around Makkasan Station with government support. By the time the MRTA plan would be approved, there might be no demand at the MRTA depot location. Therefore, MRTA could only be allowed to construct a park and stadium since they are considered a public good. Another usage might be a new SRT depot.

"Uea Arthorn Subway" by Lom PlianThit – translated and summarized from *Thairath*, February 3, 2004
Minister Suriya is planning to buy back the subway, Skytrain and expressways to create a nationwide transportation network and the government will invest 400 billion baht more instead of granting a concession as the previous government did. I agree with him in principle to reduce the public burden and stimulate the economic through the construction without profit seeking.

The first part of the nationalization process is to purchase the BMCL subway for 18 billion baht. The subway belongs to Ch. Karnchang PCL. The purchase of BTSC is the second step but the government will have to wait until BTSC has restructured the 32.4 billion baht debt before making any further negotiation. So far, the creditors have written off 6 billion baht interest and 2.4 billion baht principle, transforming debts into equity by 16 billion baht. The other 14 billion baht debts will be paid back in 18 years.

The government will have to allocate 40-50 billion baht to purchase both projects. After that, they will be able to integrate the system in physical form or ticket form as the way to relieve traffic jams.

However, I will ask Minister Suriya to come up with an "Uea Athorn Subway" to cut ticket prices to boost passengers from all walks of life.

Would you believe that all eight Seoul subway lines as well as the upcoming the ninth line has the single price for the section within the jurisdiction of Seoul Municipality? Just 700 won (22 baht) while the area outside the Seoul Municipality will be a flat rate of 1000 won (about 31.5 baht). Such a ticket price is very cheap compared with the expensive cost of living.

Therefore, the ticket prices for an integrated mass transit system must be cheap enough to allow all walks of life access into the system—not seeking too much profit as private sectors did. We will allow the maximum price for this integrated mass transit system to be a little bit higher than the air-conditioned buses since the government has invested about half a trillion baht to implement such a project... and to keep air-conditioned buses alive and well. However the ticket prices must be lower than the current rate to encourage more passengers. This will cut down automobile usage and the budget to build more roads and highways.

One thing I would like to complain about to Minister Suriya and Director Praphat is that MRTA has not constructed the tunnel to connect all parts of the intersections such as Silom Station in Saladaeng intersection. The passengers from Chulalongkorn Hospital have to go across the the street to the station gates which are definitely inconvenient. The same thing can be said about Rama 9 Station and Hua Lamphong Station and so on. The connecting tunnels to major department stores such as Central Plaza, Fortune Town, Robinson Silom and so on are missing. It will not be a good deal for passengers to go to the stores by going outside to face smoke and rain.

Commentary: Khun Lom Plian Thit did not tell the whole story. Both companies who are dealing with the Seoul Subway system suffer heavy operating losses (now reaching more than 100 billion baht) even though Korea produces their own subway rolling stock to support the systems as well as for export to Hong Kong, the Philippines, India and so on. This heavy loss has dragged the ninth line project down. Furthermore many people are going to live in the new suburb towns outside Seoul thus the government has to come up with LRTs and new commuter lines (including the new Airport Link to Incheon Airport) to feed the Seoul Subway system.

MRTA contract allows purchase of 25% of BMCL shares – translated and summarized from *Manager Daily*, January 27, 2004

Minister Suriya is trying to push his plan forward by asking MRTA to immediately purchase 25% of BMCL shares by paying at par since the contract with BMCL allows MRTA to do so. The other 75% will need negotiation with Ch. Karnchang and N-Park to facilitate the system integration.

Commentary: Too much meddling for political revenue will spoil ruin the 6-year plan though.

Land expropriation plan for four new subway stations

The English-language papers gave a general overview of the plan—here are the real numbers and figures translated and summarized from *Manager Daily*, January 26, 2004.

Since the Southern Extension has to pass through the Rattnakosin Island (in Bangkok and Thonburi side), MOTC will ask landowners to use the areas to construct the four new stations and then MRTA will compensate the landowners by constructing new buildings on top to return to the landowners afterwards. Some compensation payment will be made during the construction period as well—in the same way as MRTA handled Kamphaeng Phet station.

There will be four station areas to be expropriated:

- 1) Wat Mungkorn (AKA Wat Leng Nei Yee)
- 2) Wang Boorapha
- 3) Pakklong Talad (near Phra Ratchawong Police Station)

4) Bangkok Yai (near Wat Chaeng, RTN HQ and before Tha Phra)

The law to be applied is the Land Expropriation Act of BE 2542 while land prices will be readjusted to the 2004 Price.

Wat Mungkorn: land price – 348 million baht and buildings – 58 million baht

Wang Boorapha: land price – 300 million baht and buildings – 105 million baht

Pakklong Talad: land price – 101 million baht and buildings – 28 million baht

Bangkok Yai: land price – 160 million baht and buildings – 101 million baht

It will take eight months to finish land expropriation. MRTA will apply the latest technology available so that the surface opening is not necessary at all as the way to comply with regulations on Rattanakosin Island area. It will take five years to finish this section (Southern Extension of Blue line through Rattanakosin Island).

Earlier: [Plan to cut land costs for subway extension](#) – *Bangkok Post*, January 26, 2004

...The Mass Rapid Transit Authority would instead build stations for the extended line under old buildings, which would be demolished, said Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit.

Upon completion of construction, new buildings would be erected at the sites and handed over to the original property owners, Mr Suriya said...

At least four stations would be built _ at Mangkorn temple in Yaowarat district, Wang Burapha, Phra Rajawang Police Station (Pak Klong Talat) and Bangkok Noi, near Tha Phra intersection on the north side of the Chao Phraya...

Earlier: [Subway extension plans](#) – translated and summarized from *Thairath*, January 17, 2004

Notes on the subway system – ‘Free’ rides by invitation only? – translated and summarized from *Siamturakij*, January 18-24, 2004

Temperature in the subway station is controlled to 29 Celsius to prevent the people from hanging around for too long thus reducing the chance for crimes as well as juvenile delinquents. The speed of escalators is 45 m/min—faster than the common escalator speed of 30 m/min.

The subway may not be as fast as European counterparts (maximum speed of 110 km/hr for European subway systems and 80 km/hr for Siemens), but it will be fast enough to cruise from Kamphaengphet to Sukhumvit in 5-10 minutes -> up to 70-80 km/hr. The total time for round trip is less than 15 minutes.

Before the concession expires, MRTA will check if the subway rolling stocks need to be restored and modernized to carry more passengers.

The ticket price has been capped at 36 baht according to the contract even though MRTA has allowed price readjustment according to the inflation rate every two years. The first year rate will be 12-32 Baht/trip. If you want to have a free ride from April 13 to May 1, you should send a postcard to the PR Department of MRTA.

The fight to take over the subway – translated and summarized from *Thairath* and *Dailynews*, January 21, 2004

MOTC Minister Suriya said he had a preliminary discussion with Mr Plew Triwitsawawet (CEO of Ch. Karnchang PCL) about the plan to buy back the subway concession to facilitate the system integration between Skytrain and subway and buses as well as ticket price controls. After that, MOTC will call a new bid to handle the service. By the end of January, MRTA will come up with a plan to buy back the concession and the planning will be done before August 12, 2004.

If BMCL refuses to sell back to MRTA, the government will readjust transport routes to support its own systems and not support the subway system.

Furthermore, MOTC has asked the Director of the Expressway Authority to change the ticket price scheme to collect according to the distance or open system.

Wisarat reports: It seems to me that the government is trying to meddle on other people's affairs too much. After telling the press about the plan to buy back BMCL, MOTC got a very negative responses which can be seen [here](#).

Therefore the insiders at MOTC have told the *Manager* correspondent (January, 2004) that the most feasible plan would be:

- 1) Government has to carry the 11 billion baht burden to refinance the project or cut the interest.
- 2) The investment paid by the private sector (Ch. Karnchang) must be paid back in cash. Both sections total 20 billion baht.
- 3) Revenue from the 25-year concession should be transformed into stock for the new company to handle mass transit integration. The company has to be a state enterprise with the government holding at least 51% of stock.

Or this is the best deal—integrate the mass transit system without imposing nationalization of the system. NBMCI still owns the project even after this transformation while BMCL could transfer some of their debts into equity. MRTA would come up with the data for this integration plan. The price to purchase BMCL would be about 10 billion baht. However, the government will wait until BMCI has come up with their own prices. However, MOTC will not include BTSC (the Skytrain) into this integration scheme yet until the company has concluded the 40-50 billion baht debt restructure deal. Also the Don Muang Tollway will not be fully merged with the expressway yet since the company has quoted too high a price. **Also:** For once the *Bangkok Post* reports this story ([State to buy back subway concession](#), Bangkok Post, January 21, 2004) and does not seem to omit anything.

Subway extension plans – translated and summarized from *Thairath*, January 17, 2004

Chaloemsak Rabinwongse (Director of Traffic and Transport System Development Office – Traffic Policy Office) said after the discussion between MRTA and Traffic Policy Office that the planned subway extensions are as follows:

The first phase will follow the lines which MRTA has already finished studying—Blue Line northern extension (Bangsue – Phra Nanklao), Blue Line southern extension (Hua Lamphong – Tha Phra) and Orange Line (Bang Kapi – Rat Boorana) which will be approved in principle in mid-February 2004. However, to comply with the 6-year development plan (2004-2009), the following extensions have to be constructed:

1) Bang Yai extension -> Phra Nang Klao – Bang Yai

2) Northern Ring – Bang Wah – Tha Phra Charansanitwongse – Bang Pho (Rama 7 Bridge) – Bangsue
However, the details will have to be discussed since MRTA has a duty to finish the first phase. After getting the second phase approved by the Traffic Committee, the plan will need cabinet approval with the assessment from the ad hoc subcommittee headed by MOTC to handle the assessment of the following matters: procurement, contracting, and financial resources. For the police jurisdiction along subway lines, it is necessary to clarify such things as who handles the Ratchadaphisek Station (Suthisarn Police Station or Huay Kwang Police Station). Otherwise, it will create a lot of trouble.

Australian radio reports on the Bangkok subway – January 17, 2004

Several readers are reporting that Australian radio is claiming that the Bangkok subway is a year behind schedule and will not open until mid-2005. We think someone is confusing earlier news about a delay in Skytrain extension construction to May, 2005 (now the extensions are halted).

The truth is that the subway will begin operating on a limited basis (meaning limited hours and not on the entire route) starting this April 13, 2003. Even if it had been behind schedule, there was a scenario in which the subway would run between at least two stations so it could be declared it began operation as promised. The official opening will be August 12, 2004 (on HM The Queen's Birthday).

Design and build for MRTA extensions – translated and summarized from *Bangkok Biznews*, January 8, 2004

After reading the plan for 90 km of MRTA Subway extensions from the 6-year masterplan (2004-2009), the MRTA director said MRTA will use the design and build process – increasing the risk cost to the contractors – in addition to the construction and design. This is the process which Hong Kong and Japan have used to construct their MRT systems.

The detailed design for elevated sections (Tha Phra – Bang Khae and Tao Poon – Phra Nanklao – Bang Ya) must be done before asking contractors to handle the project.

The risk analysis will be done by the Engineering Association of Thailand, Architecture Association of Thailand, Construction Industry Association of Thailand, and professors of related fields in universities. These trustworthy auditors will ensure that the prices are right and will not become another controversy. So far Minister Suriya agrees with the MRTA plan.

The extensions which MRTA will execute are as follows:

1) Northern Extension – Bangsue – Phra Nanklao – Bang Yai – 19.7 km with a price tag of 30 billion baht. If the government supports the plan, this section will be done in three years. This section has to be done first since the elevated section is easy to handle.

2) Hua Lamphong – Tha Phra – Bang Wahr – Bang Khae – 13.8 km with a price tag of 28 billion baht. This section will be an underground from Hua Lamphong to Tha Phra (6.5 km) and the rest (Tha Phra – Bangkhae) is an elevated section.

However, the underground section will be only one floor instead of 3 floors as in the first section to cut the price. Construction with only one underground section will be 10% cheaper than the 3-floor type.

The vending machines will be on the ground floor – same as the elevated station.

The buildings expropriated by MRTA will be used as commercial buildings for the upper floors with gates and vending machines on the first floor in the same way the Hong Kong MRT and Tokyo Subway.

Note: The buildings around Rattankosin Island are very delicate issues. There will be a need to preserve the old structure.

IPO from MRTA for extensions – translated and summarized from *Dailynews*, January 7, 2004

MRTA is talking about extensions. The discussion at the ministry level will be held in mid-January 2004. At least the first three sections have to be implemented since they have already been studied and designed.

1) 11 km – Northern Extension (Bangsue – Wong Sawang – Phra Nangklao)

2) 10 km – Southern Extension (Hua Lamphong – Tha Phra – Bang Khae)

3) 35 km – Orange Line (Bang Kapi – Thai Cultural Center – Wang Boorapha – Rat Boorana)

All three sections require a total investment of 200 billion baht. The underground section will be design-and-build with the board to define the prices as unit costs. The board will consist of the architects from Siam Architecture Association and engineers from the Thai Engineering Association. The board will calculate the construction costs and risk costs – with suitable profit from the construction. The board will submit the plan to the Traffic Committee and then deliver it to the cabinet to get approval so it will be done in 6 years. MRTA will get the funds from the Stock Market through an IPO.

The Smart card system for system integration will be installed in all three sections as the way to boost the number from the passengers from 200,000 to 1,000,000 a day with a 20 baht/trip for joint ticket with the Skytrain. The current price for BTS Skytrain + BMTA bus will be 40-50 baht/trip – too much since it would be translated into 80-100 baht/trip if directly added to the subway.

More on the Royal subway ride – January 11, 2004

Wisarat reports: *I also went to see Princess Sirindhorn Opening Phu Fah on 5:50pm of Sunday Jan 11.*

However, Security Guards in black uniforms would not allow me to take a picture of Princess Sirindhorn for security reasons and privacy.

The news from Khom Chad Luek (Jan 11, 2004) said that Princess Sirindhorn drove the subway car from Chatuchak Station to Kamphaengphet Station by herself to open Phu Fah Shop. In the return trip, Princess Sirindhorn drove the subway car from Kamphaengphet to Sukhumvit by herself before riding Skytrain back to Sra Pathum Palace.

The products at Phu Fah Shop are red t-shirts with a batch of Monkey and Chinese characters drawn by Princess Sirindhorn (350 baht each, 50,000 shirts) and coffee mugs with Chinese characters (Siw – Longevity) for Chinese new year. There are also the products from the Royal Project for Thai teens as well as food and beverages from Chitladda Palace sold in Phu Fah Shop to meet the demands of teens (Thai or foreigners).

Phu Fah shop is in Kamphaengphet Station area. Electric and water bills will be paid by revenue from renting around Kamphaengphet Station. It will be open from 10am to 6pm. Revenue will go to the Children in Remote Area Funds.

When Princess Sirindhorn rode the Skytrain from Siam to Mochit, she rode along with people even though she had to be squeezed inside the Skytrain. The merchants and customers at Chauchak Weekend market said with delight that they have never thought that they will have a chance to see Princess Sirindhorn.

Children's Day in the subway – January 10, 2004

Wisarat reports: *I have been to Phra Ram 9 Station and went inside the subway train – the first set of Subway trains transported by air. This one will be used for HRH Princess Sirindhorn's visit on Sunday, January 11. So far, the TVM machines and turnstiles are not installed yet. It will take two more months. Now, the subway has three pricings:*

1) Ordinary – full rate

2) Children (under 12) and Senior Citizens (65+) – half price

3) Students (13-23) – probably 2/3 the price

When I went down at the first level, it was pretty humid and warmer than the outside. On the second floor, the air-conditioning was working. Lots of children, their parents and even grandparents came to see and sit inside the subway cars. However, MRTA and BMCL officers said that those who wear high heel shoes and those children with small feet better beware the step before going inside the subway car since there is a small gap (about 1.5-2 inches) between the door and the subway gate.

The stairs for Hua Lamphong station are apparently smaller than the stairs of Phra Ram 9 Station due to the space constraints. However, MRTA managed to build a direct connection between Hua Lamphong Railway

Station and Hua Lamphong Subway station. If you do not look carefully, you will not be able to detect the connection since the connection looks like the extra wing of Subway station. So far, I can only see the [station name signs](#), but map and other signs are not installed yet.

Royal subway rides/subway testing/free rides & promotions – translated and summarized from Matichon, January 8, 2004

Princess Sirindhorn is to ride the subway to Chatuchak Weekend Market on Sunday Afternoon (January 11) at 4:30pm Phu Fah Shop – Chatuchak Branch is in the MRTA area of Kamphaengphet Station.

The royal route will be:

- 1) Riding Skytrain from Siam Station to Mochit Station
- 2) Opening Phu Fah Shop
- 3) Riding Subway from Kamphaengphet Station to Sukhumvit Station
- 4) Riding Skytrain from Asok Station to Siam Station to go back to Sra Pathum Palace.

Minister Suriya said MRTA and MOTC feel very appreciative that Princess Siridhorn has a very strong interest in the MRTA Subway system – a very auspicious sign indeed! MRTA has already finished testing the route from Bangsue to Ratchadaphisek station and all sections will be tested by the middle of January, but the section to Asok must have been finished testing before the Royal Visit.

Furthermore, Queen of the Netherlands will come to visit MRTA on January 21 and will ride the Subway from Sukhumvit Station to Queen Sirikit National Convention Center.

Therefore, the system must be fully functional and security must be tightened to the highest level due to these Royal Visits. They may need Royal Guard Units to handle the security even though MRTA and BMCL have asked security guards to tighten the security system to the maximum level.

Free rides will be from 7am to 9pm from Songkran Day to May Day 2004 (April 13-May 1, 2004). After that, the passengers have to pay 12-32 baht and the normal schedule (5am to midnight) will be started. The limited service hours will cut energy bills even though it means less passengers. The price will be readjusted according to the inflation rate—so far the maximum price will still be within 36 baht.

On January 20, MRTA will call a meeting with department stores along the subway line to come up with a promotion plan such as buying 1000 Baht and then get a free ticket.

Subway test run – translated and summarized from *Matichon*, Jan 9, 2004

Transport Minister Suriya feels very satisfied after making a test run of subway rolling stock from Kamphaengphet to Sukhumvit -> very smooth and quiet despite a slight jerking at the start and stop. Minister Suriya was at the controls for a while before letting Mr Wichet (Deputy Minister Wichet Kasemthongsri) take over before reaching Sukhumvit. Minister Suriya also asks BMCL and MRTA to keep security at the maximum level and ensured the correspondents that MRTA will be open on Songkran day 2004.

For the free rides, MRTA will take 10,000 guests for free rides from April 13 – May 1. After that, the first year rate will be applied.

BMCL is going to offer an IPO by starting the process in February 2004 and IPO will be offered around mid-July or early August 2004. The IPO will be before cutting down debts, buying the second set of rolling stocks or extensions. So far, the registered capital is 7 billion baht and the debts are 12 billion baht. Creditors have cut interest rate to MLR -1% to MLR -0.75 % from the current 7.5-7.8% which helps BMCL since 1% of interest rate is 120 million baht. Creditors have also granted a 1 billion baht loan to keep BMCL afloat. Now the subway will have a test period which will last 90 days according to standard procedure starting from March 2004. After an independent engineer finishes testing, the service will be fully started on Mother's Day 2004 (August 12, 2004).

MRTA calling a bid for development of 18 subway stations—expecting 200 million baht a year revenue – translated and summarized from *Matichon Daily*, December 31, 2003

MRTA is going to draft a TOR to invite the private sector to develop 18 stations. Development is divided into three types: new park and ride facilities, advertising, and commercial leases. Bidding must be done before Mother Day's 2004 (official opening date). Each station will have different price tags. Silom and Chatuchak will have higher price tags than Bangsue.

MRTA expects to reap 100-200 million baht revenue a year from station development with the majority to come from the commercial leases.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Above: The subway exit at Silom and Rama IV Roads. An additional 80-meter walkway to the Saladaeng Skytrain Station is scheduled to be constructed soon.

Subway/Skytrain link at Saladaeng – Delivering the rest of the subway cars – translated and summarized from *Dailynews*, December 16, 2003

Bidding for the connection

MRTA Director said BKCT (contractor for Hua Lamphong – Huay Kwang section) has called a bid for the construction of the connection to from the subway to the Saladaeng Skytrain station. So far the lowest bidding is 60 million baht. The settlement will come up by the end of 2003. After that, MRTA will send the result to BMA and BTSC to get construction approval. At first, MRTA will pay for the construction and then BMA and BTSC have to pay half.

80 meter walkway

The connecting via duct will start from the gate in front of Dusit Thani Hotel. It will be 80 meters long. There will be a need to clear up the infrastructure in the way before placing the pillars. However, the construction can be start in early January, 2004 to be done before August 12, 2004.

Rest of the rolling stock

The 2nd and 3rd set of rolling stock are going to reach (reached) Laem Chabang Port on December 19, 2003 and all 19 sets will reach Thailand by the end of April 2004.

Prasumen Fort and Santichaiprakarn Park

March 29, 2004

Categories: Buildings, Communities

Prasumen Fort –

March 29, 2004

Prasumen Fort is one of two remaining city wall forts in Rattanakosin

Island and in recent years undergone a facelift with nearby buildings cleared to create Santichaiprakarn Park. Here are some photos from past and present.



(Photo: National Archives)

Prasumen Fort during the Rama V era with the old city wall intact.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Prasumen Fort in 1992 – Note the buildings on the left that were removed for the construction of Santichaiprakarn Park.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Prasumen Fort in 2004 – In a rare instance of aesthetic foresight, the electric lines have been removed from in front of the fort.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Prasumen Fort by night in 2004 – A new tourist attraction.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The other city wall fort, Mahakan Fort, during [Loy Krathong](#) in 2003 (the Golden Mount is in the background). Behind this fort is the [Mahakan Fort community](#).



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Prasumen Fort today as the centerpiece of Santichaiprakarn Park



(Photo: National Archives)
Prasumen Fort during the Rama V era with the old city wall intact.

Santichaiprakarn Park – September 17, 2001

This waterside park is based around the Prasumen Fort that marks the northeast corner of Rattanakosin Island—an area that demarcates the old city area of Bangkok. It is a well thought out park with a Thai-style pavilion, sculptures, a beautiful mangrove tree, restrooms (in the northeast corner), and plenty of benches (which often seem to be taken by backpacking frangs reading paperback books). There are usually several security guards prominently patrolling. An elevated grade across the park is intended to assist in flood control.

There are a few diagonal parking spaces in front of the park. Unfortunately, as with most public parking in Bangkok, they seem to have become permanent parking for some broken-down taxis and some big Mercedes Benzs. A row of historic shophouses across the street from the park are filled with trendy cafes and pubs.

See also [Rattanakosin Island Waterfront Reclamation](#)

See also [Rama VIII Bridge](#)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
Looking southwest across the Chao Phraya River



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Looking south towards Pinklao Bridge



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Looking northeast across the Chao Phraya River to the [Rama VIII Bridge construction](#)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

It is unusual to see the riverside so completely open in downtown Bangkok.

A shoreline promenade extends from the park to the Pinklao Bridge. This is a long overdue improvement. There do seem to be many seedy looking characters lounging around the walk though.

October, 2001 – Wesley has alerted us to possible new riverside promenades (above right): *Taking the Chaopraya Express boat north, I've noticed the recent construction of what appear to be walkways with concrete railing posts very similar (possibly identical) to the ones on the promenade*



of Santichaiprakarn Park. Locations of this new work all seem to be on the Thonburi side of the river; including the area in front of the defunct Sofitel hotel and occurring as far north as past the Pinklao bridge.... It almost looks as if they intend to build some sort of intermittent, disjoint riverwalk.... The Si Praya ferry lands right on top of one (by the Sofitel).

20 million Bangkok residents?

March 29, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

20 million Bangkok residents?

– March 29, 2004

Some [odd](#)

[figures from the the Bangkok Post](#): Manop Bongsadadt, Chulalongkorn University's town planning lecturer, said Bangkok has to accommodate some 20 million people daily. Six million are residents, two million are non-Bangkok residents who commute to work in the city, another two million are migrant workers, while 10 million are tourists. More tourists than residents in Bangkok??

Historic Bangkok gears up for 222nd birthday

March 30, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Historic](#)

[Bangkok gears up for 222nd birthday](#) –

TNA, March 30, 2004

...The celebration, announced by Bangkok Governor Samak Sundaravej yesterday, will take place on 6-13 April.

Whereas previous Ratanakosin celebrations have taken place almost exclusively on the historic Sanam Luang ceremonial ground in front of the Grand Palace, this year the celebrations will take place in seven separate locations around the Ratanakosin Island.

Events will include performances of traditional music and dancing, a mock-up of the ancient Giant Swing ceremony, a re-creation of a traditional floating market, handicraft displays, and exhibition on the history of education in Thailand, a 'food street' and observances of traditional Buddhist ceremonies.

Mr. Samak expressed hope that the festival would not only celebrate the capital's most historic district, but would also help boost tourism and give Thai young people an opportunity to learn about and conserve their national heritage.

The traffic

March 31, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

The traffic

– March 31, 2004

Thai papers are talking about the unusually heavy traffic this week and attributing it too regular end-of-month rush and people hurrying to complete their activities before going on long vacations next month.

Provincial tours may mean snap poll

March 31, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Provincial tours may mean snap poll](#) –

The Nation, March 31, 2004

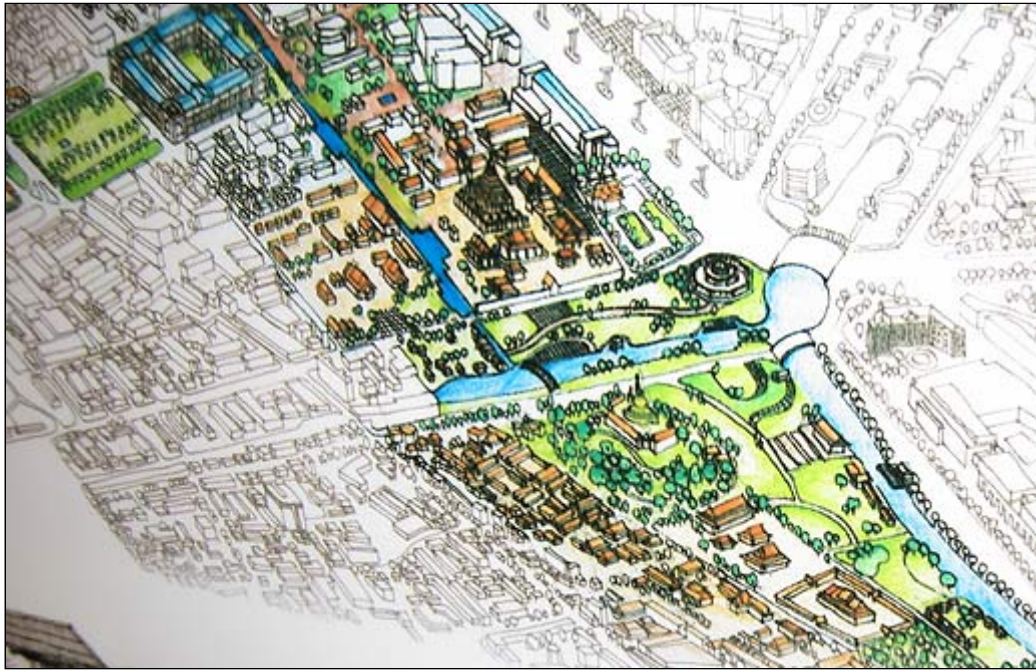
Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra will today begin a series of provincial tours to assess the progress of his grass-roots programmes, prompting speculation that he is in fact launching a campaign swing ahead of a snap election.

Visions of Thailand from Architect 2004 – Part I

April 1, 2004

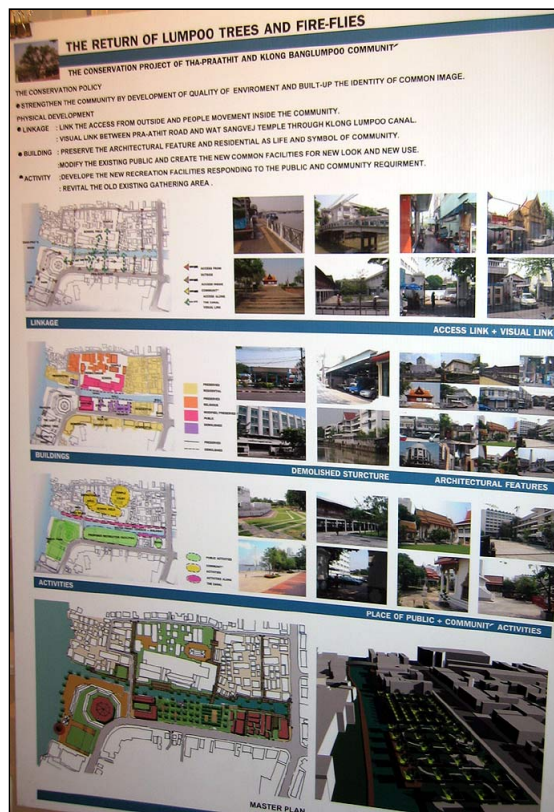
Categories: Buildings, Infrastructure

[Architect](#)
[2004 Part 1](#) – [Architect 2004 Part 2](#) – [Architect 2005](#)

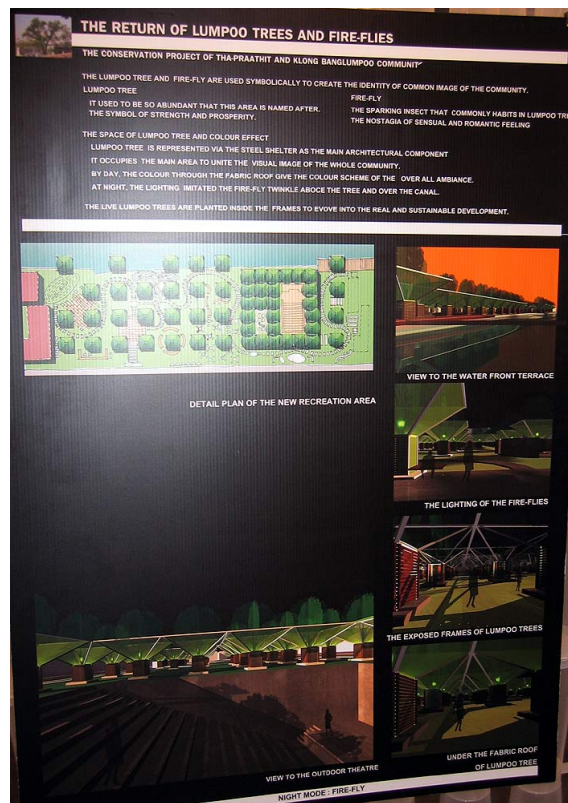


(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Student plan for green areas around [Fort Mahakan](#) and the Golden Mount.

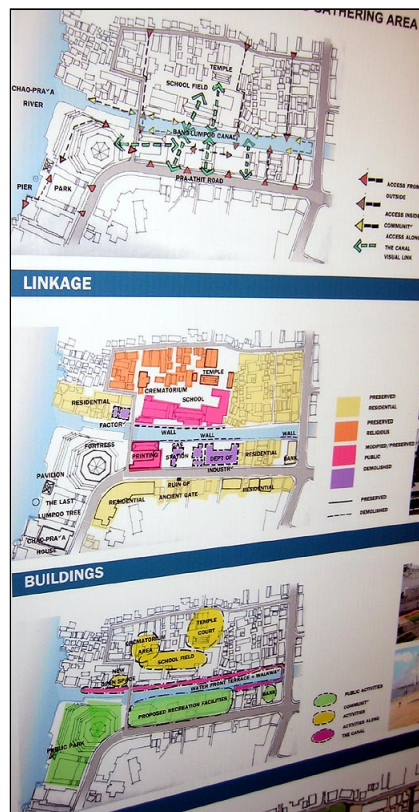


(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

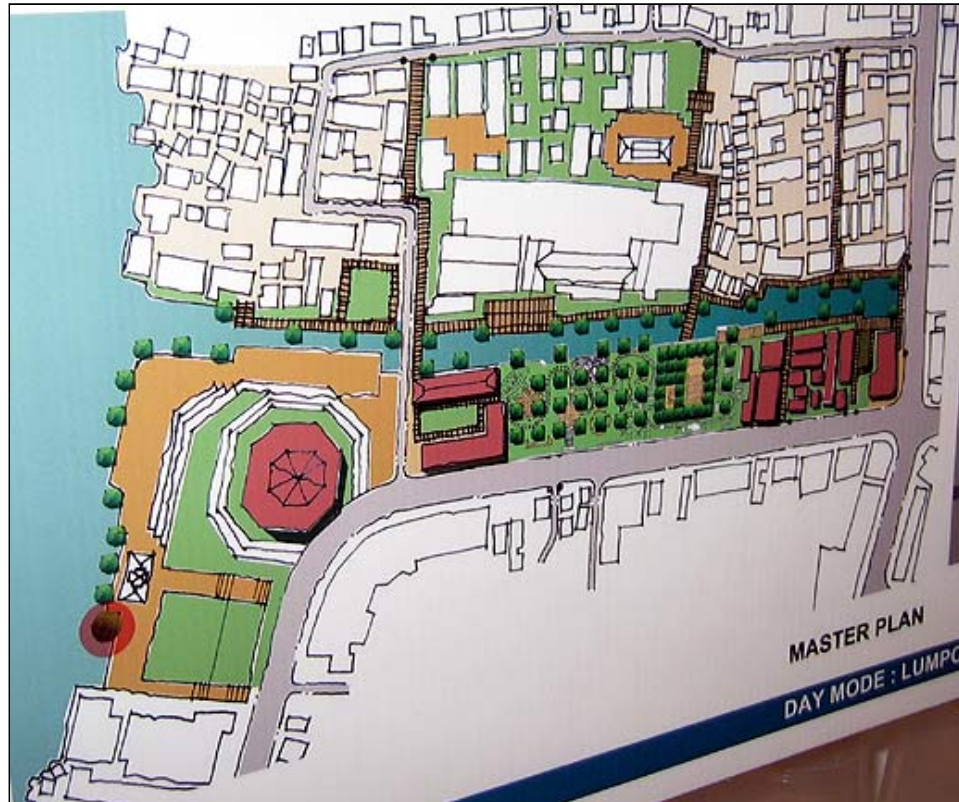
‘Return of the lumpoo trees and fireflies’
Rendering of the completed project...



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

‘Return of the lumpoo trees and fireflies’

Above land usage ideas around the Prasumen Fort downtown.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

‘Return of the lumpoo trees and fireflies’

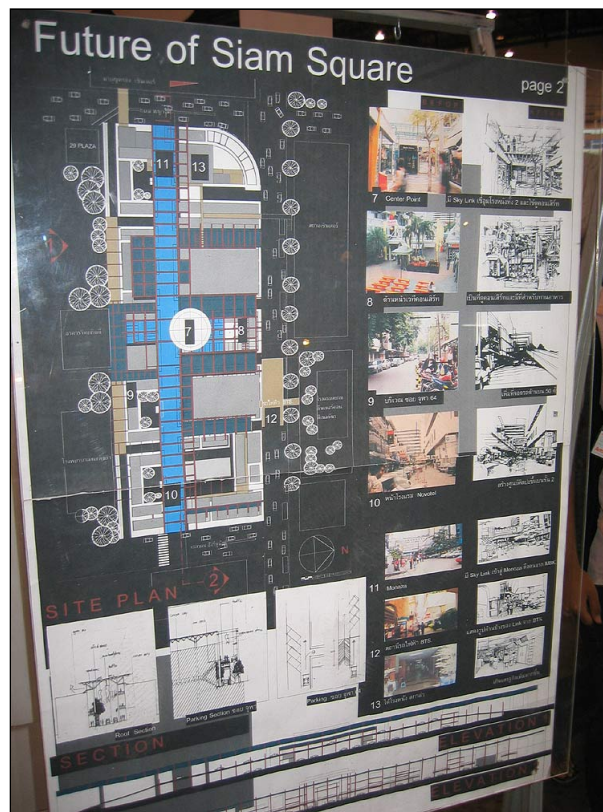
Above is a detail of a plan for redevelopment around the [Prasumen Fort](#) area downtown. It envisions bringing back the lumpoo trees

(which the Banglumpoo area was named for) and the fireflies that are said to nest in its branches. This idea entails extending the green areas from the fort park down along the klong and integrating Wat Sangwet (at the top) into the design. This plan is similar to the official plan, but the official plan also insists on demolishing the historic [Kurusapa Printing House/Wat Sangwech Typing School](#) (the red rectangles to the right of the fort).



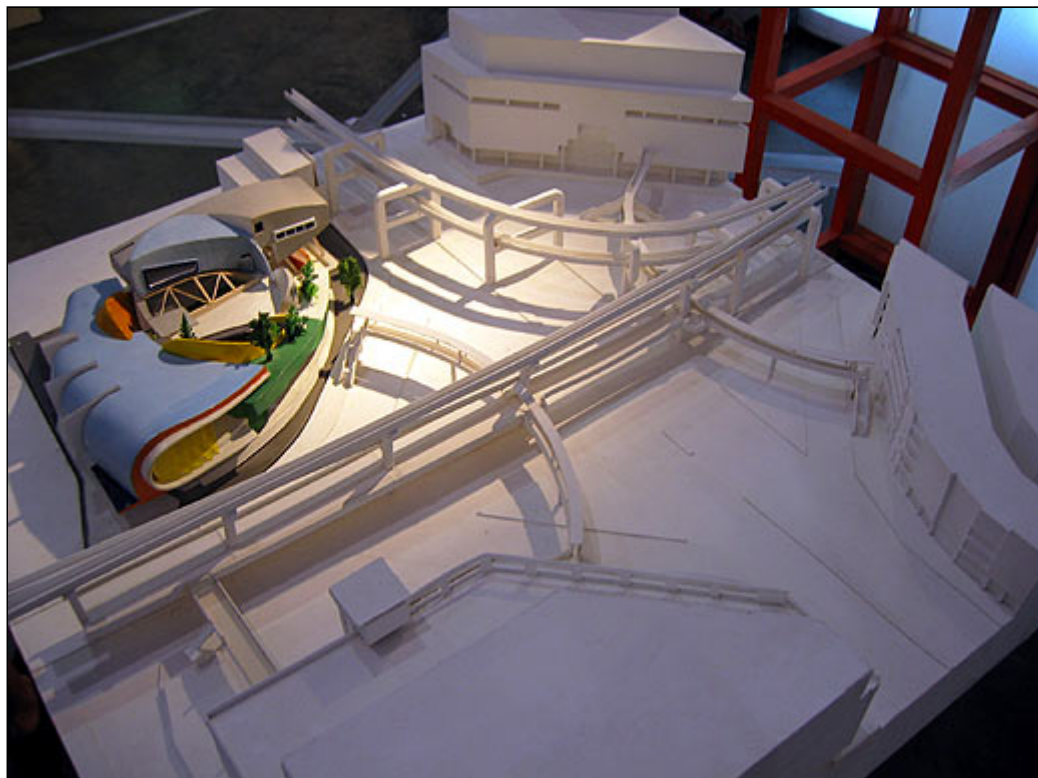
(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Above is a presentation showing ideas for color schemes for redevelopment around the [Prasumen Fort](#) area downtown. Note in the bottom left is a photo called "opposite building" which is the dilapidated Chinese Mansion [Ban Bang Yeekhan](#) on the river front.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Siam Square has long needed a makeover that unifies its various shophouses and fixes its broken pavement. This plan above eliminates the ground-level parking in Siam Square in favor of broad walkways for shoppers and overhead parking.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Model of a design for the Bangkok Art Museum. Past articles on [Bangkok's](#)

Art Museum

Architect

2004 Part 1 – Architect 2004 Part
2 – Architect 2005

April Fool's roundup

April 2, 2004

Categories: Humor

April Fool's roundup

– April 2, 2004

The Bangkok Post ran its own variation

of the [BBC's](#)

[‘spaghetti tree’ hoax](#) and well as reprinting the [Myron Kropp piano recital](#), first published in 1967.

The Irrawaddy had this: [Black](#)

[Elephants Up in Arms – Say White Elephants Getting Royal Treatment](#):

More than ten thousand African-Burmese elephants marched through the streets of Burma's city centers at 9 a.m. to demonstrate against the centuries-old custom of treating white elephants as auspicious symbols of divine blessing and the black variety as an inferior beast of burden.

*"Black elephants are elephants too," read the banner of one protesting elephant in the coastal town of Sittwe. "I'm black and I'm proud," read another in the Kachin State capital of Myitkina. (Last year *The Irrawaddy* had this: [Myanmar to send troops to end Iraqi dictatorship](#))*

And circulating among those who follow Khmer politics is this oddity (attributed to *Nhan Dan*, a Vietnamese newspaper): *‘Hun Sen Youngest Daughter to Wed King Norodom Sihanouk’ – ...Upon questioning of the Cambodian Ambassador's entourage, our reporter was able to find out that the beautiful Miss Hoach, all in her 16 years of age, was sent by her father to attend the needs of His Majesty the King. Also, with her parents approval, Miss Hoach is to wed King Sihanouk on April 12, 2004 at his royal palace in Pyongyang. According to anonymous source from the Cambodian Embassy in Beijing, Nhan Don has learned that the wedding ceremony will be officiated by His Excellency Kim Jong Il in person as no religious authority are allowed in North Korea...*

Also: [Sorry,](#)

[but we couldn't help it](#) – April 3, 2004

The Nation has its own wrap up of April foolishness...

Bangkok in 2008

April 3, 2004

Categories: Buildings

Bangkok in 2008

– April 3, 2004

Pas of [Bangkok](#)

[Highrises](#) writes: ...*this is what I think the Bangkok skyline (Chidlom, Pratunam, and Silom) will look like 5 years from now, taking into account the proposed buildings and assuming that all the buildings that are currently on hold would resume construction this year or the next.*

Two images: [Bangkok](#)

[in 2003](#) (134kb) and [Bangkok](#)

[in 2008](#) (136kb).

Encircled Building

April 5, 2004

Categories: Buildings



(Photo: Don)

Encircled

– April 5, 2004

Don sent in this interesting photo of
CDG House (right) and LPN Tower (left) encircled
by the expressway.

First looks at the subway stations

April 6, 2004

Categories: Subway

First looks at the Phetchburi, Queen Sirikit Convention Center, and Hua Lamphong subway stations – April 6, 2004

Earlier station photos

[Morchit Subway Station Construction](#)

– March 14, 2001

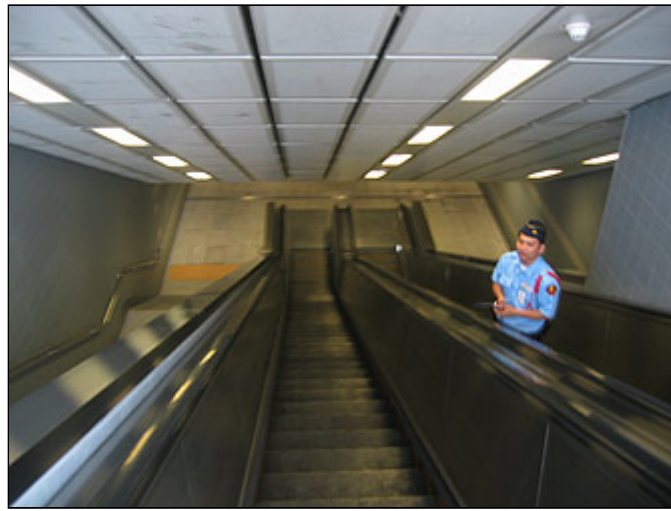
[Inside the Rama 9 Station](#) – July 3, 2003

Phetchburi Station



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

At the Phetchburi and Queen Sirikit Convention Center Stations we were told taking photos in the subway is "against the law."



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Going down the escalators from street level



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Underpass at Ratchapisek Road

Stylish ticket gate on the ticketing level. No stations have ticketing machines installed yet. An attendant said they will be installed "probably next month."



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

An empty subway train passes the station.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Above and below: Examples of signs on the platform level—notice the Skytrain links clearly marked.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Elegant subway sign with a Thai motif



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Plaque installed in every station—quite a prominent display of the Japanese flag

Queen Sirikit Convention Center Station



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The Queen Sirikit Station symbol. Other station symbols are [here](#).



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

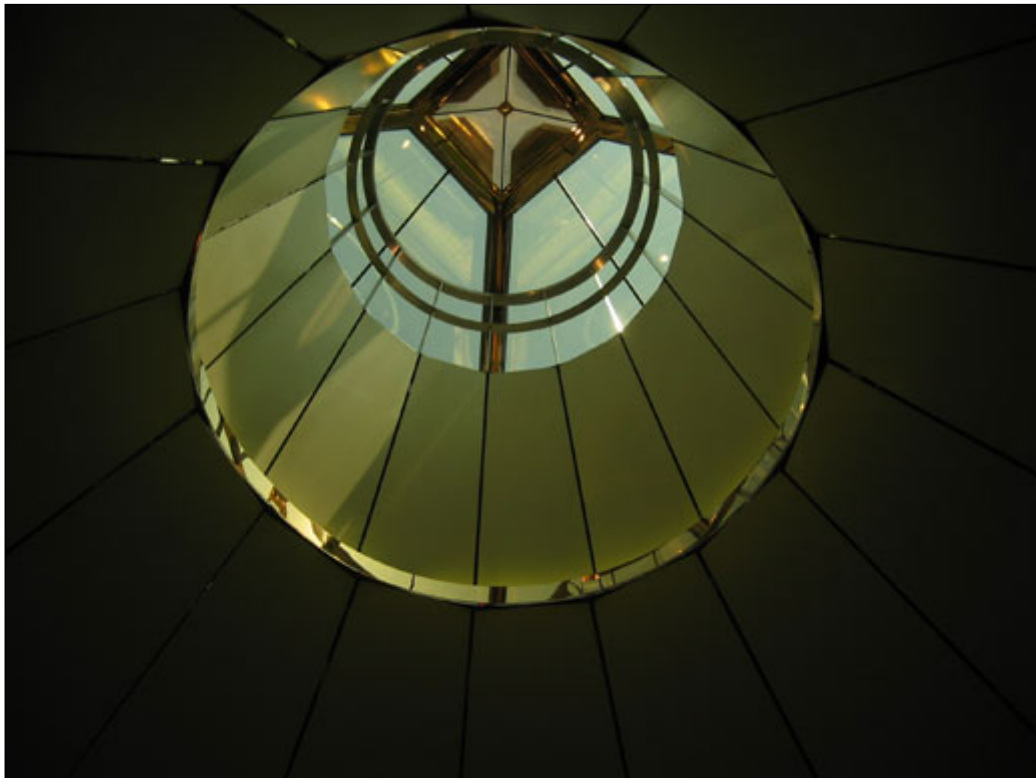
We had been under the impression that the Queen Sirikit Convention Center and Hua Lamphong subway stations would have special design elements.

According to the Thai press: *Queen Sirikit Convention Center Station will be a completely designed with traditional Thai-style decor. Hualampong station will have a museum detailing railroad mega projects in Thailand starting with the first railroad cars imported by Rama V.*

However both stations appear basically identical to the others.

Many people will notice how grey, bland and dim the stations are. However, this kind of design is created with a purpose. It is used around the world as a psychological tool to discourage people from remaining in station areas.

Hua Lamphong Station



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Above and below: Display case
area under the glass pyramid at the Hua Lamphong Station.
This displays the foundation stone laid by HRH The Crown Prince.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The glass pyramid at street level



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The Hua Lamphong Station is the only station with any variety in its design.
Above and below are interior views of the domed entrance on the north side of Rama IV Road.

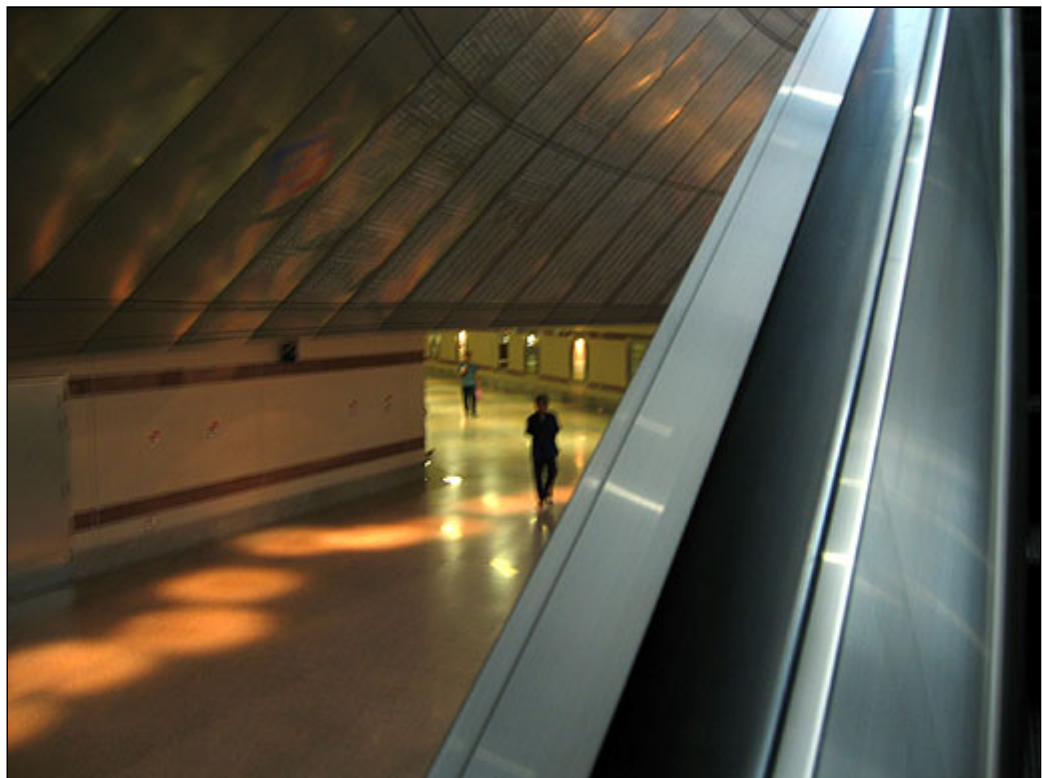


(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Names of those who worked on the subway project on an overhead under the domed entrance. We wonder if the workers who earned 175 baht a day are listed ([Workin' on the subway for 175 baht \(US\\$4\) a day](#), *Manager Sunday*, March 10, 2002). The long passage leads to the Hua Lamphong Railroad Station.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Walk of names from the escalator going up.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The passage to Hua Lamphong. On the walls are xeroxed photos of the subway construction.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Over at Hua Lamphong Railroad Station, workers prepare a new floor outside the main hall. Inside, work on sealing the hall for air-conditioning is still in progress.

[Discuss
the subway on the 2Bangkok.com Forum](#)

Earlier station photos

[Morchit Subway Station Construction](#)

– March 14, 2001

[Inside the Rama 9 Station](#) – July

3, 2003

Chiang Mai Mass Transit News 2000-2004

April 7, 2004

Categories: Mass Transit

Current Chiang Mai Mass Transit news is [here](#)

Update on Chiang Mai LRT
– June 4, 2004

Wisarat reports: *The Chiang Mai LRT got very positive responses. Only those who run the red minibus in Chiangmai oppose the project since it hurts their interests. If they can deal with the power line issue for LRT, more positive responses will come. Premier Thaksin better ask Minister Suriya and Sawat Horrungtueng as well as Japanese or German investors to set up local assembly for both LRT and MRT rolling stock to cut down costs. Look at Thai netter's response on Chiangmai LRT [here](#) and [here](#).*

Premier Thaksin asks Chiang Mai Mayor
to revive Chiang Mai LRT projects – translated
and summarized by Wisarat Bholsithi from *Matichon Daily*, May 26, 2004

Chiang Mai Mayor (Boonloed Booranapakorn) received a direct order from Premier Thaksin that Chiang Mai must come up with an LRT with five routes to support Chiang Mai Aviation-Transportation Hub in 2006:

1) City Circle around Chiang Mai City Moat -> 27 km -> 3 billion baht

2) Chiang Mai Airport -Chiang Mai University – Chiang Mai Zoo

3) New Chiang Mai government center

4) Chiang Mai Railway Station-Chiang Mai Bus terminal

5) Chiang Mai Night Zoo and the route along irrigation canals

The total distance of this – Chiang Mai LRT systems will be 40 km. The City Circle is very cheap (3 billion baht) and the whole system is about 5 billion—a bargain price.

This new route alignment is a combination of the studies by Louis Berger Co. Ltd 10 years ago (the companies hired by ETA) and Chiang Mai University is going to come up with new studies. The results will be submitted to the Ministry of Energy and MOTC before getting cabinet approval.

Commentary by Wisarat: Since this is a project proposed by Premier Thaksin, no one will dare go against the plans. Electric commuter trains along with the double tracks from Chiang Mai to Denchai would be great. However, the initial phase would have to end at Lamphun since the route from Lamphun to Denchai needs new composite tressels and parallel tunnels.

Chiang Mai mass transit projects
– May 17, 2004

From [Chiang Mai rushes](#)

[to produce transportation blueprint](#) – MCOT, May 14, 2004: *...The OTTPP has recently hired Chiang Mai University's Information Technology Service Institute to draw up 5-year, 10-year and 15-year plans for the city's transportation programme.*

...The plans will also focus on the transportation needs of the city when it hosts a global crop festival in 2006, which is expected to attract 3 million visitors over a space of six months.

The plans are expected to include the construction of a light rail system linking government offices and tambon Mae Hia, the location of the Night Safari to the city centre...

More on the Chiangmai

subway – September 26, 2003

Wisarat Bholsithi reports: Chiangmai Municipal is taking responsibility to deal with the 40 sq-km urban area of Chiangmai District. The urban area of Chiangmai covers 14 communes (Tambon) such as:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1) Chang Moy | 8) Pa Daed |
| 2) Hai Yah | 9) Fah Ham |
| 3) Sri Phoom | 10) Nong Pa Krang |
| 4) Wat Ket | 11) Tha Sala |
| 5) Chang Klan | 12) Pa Tan |
| 6) Phra Singh | 13) Nong Hoy |
| 7) Suthep | 14) Chang Phueak |

Here are the new proposed LRT routes from *Bangkok*

Biznews, September 25, 2003

It consists of two lines with terminals for both lines at Chiang Mai Bureaucrat Center.

1) Chiang Mai Bureaucrat Center – Hang Dong ->

Shortened

version of Line 2 – with a track shared with Chiang Mai Bureaucrat Center

– On Luay Line from Chiang Mai Bureaucrat Center to Wat Upakhut

2) Chiang Mai Bureaucrat Center – On Luay (Tambon Onluay – Mae On Subdistrict

– Tambon On Luay is separated from San Kamphaeng District) -> the same route as the old line 1

Too bad *Bangkok Biznews* did not publish a map of the new proposed LRT routes for a comparison, so we have to make a guess that it is not so good at all because it does not include a route to Chiangmai University. The route to Chiangmai Railway Station and to Chiangmai International Airport are preserved.

I found a map of Chiangmai City at the [Chiangmai](#)

[City website](#) for a comparison–too bad it's pretty big–too big for

A4 Paper. Even [Chiangmai](#)

[map](#) from Yuppharat School is quite big and has less details. Here's

earlier info on the [Chiang Mai](#)

[Subway](#) including a map of the original route proposal.

Mass transit system for Chiangmai

needed – translated and summarized by Wisarat

Bholsithi from *Naewna Daily*, September 24, 2003

Traffic jams in Chiangmai (the home province

of Premier Thaksin) are almost at par with Bangkok traffic jams. So the Minister of Energy, Dr. Phrommin Loedsuridej, has called a meeting to deal with this matter.

Chiangmai International Airport handles air traffic from China, Bangladesh and even Singapore adding more traffic to the city. City planning in urban areas of Chiangmai municipal must be implemented and the Chaingmai LRT must be revived to become a reality since the municipal area of Chaingmai no longer has space for new roads to meet demand. The CEO governor will handle this job with cooperation from all related parties and get an optimal investment plan that everybody can agree on.

Premier Thaksin may ask for foreign investors without borrowing... so

far, more than 50% of Chiangmai traffic comes from bicycles and motorcycles and only about 10% is the small red buses. Even though ETA proposed the Chaingmai LRT, it has not materialized. Chaingmai has received a 15 million baht budget from the government and another 50 million baht from the German government to deal with the LRT.

Chaingmai Mayor said that traffic discipline has to be enforced to cut accidents and traffic jams. Furthermore, most of those who work in Chiangmai come from the neighboring districts such as San Sai, San Kamphaeng, Saraphee, Mae Rim, and Hang Dong.

Furthermore, Chiangmai has very poor mass transit system—buses in Chiangmai look more like a red minibuses, there are pickup trucks modified to pick more passengers, and Daihatsu minibuses. New systems and social structures must be constructed.

Commentary by Wisarut: Since ETA has transferred most of the mass transit system affairs to MRTA, MRTA should handle this project in Chiangmai by using either the [old plan](#)

or coming up with the new routes to reflect the new reality.

The new LRT to the main terminal of Chaingmai International Airport, Chiangmai Railway Station and New Chiangmai Bus Terminal will be very nice, but the line to Chaingmai University and Rajabhat Institute of Chiangmai would be fine. Rajabhat Institute of Chiangmai is within the city wall and thus may not be a good target route. After all, Chaingmai is more than 700 years old with lots of old temples within the city walls. Digging tunnels across the city wall area requires delicate handling and expertise to deal with the foundations.

Transit system not likely soon

– Lack of funds mean traffic woes to go on

– by Supoj Wancharoen, excerpted from the *Bangkok Post*, November 5, 2000

Chiang Mai desperately needs a mass transit system if it is to overcome its worsening traffic problems, but an engineering discussion group yesterday concluded it could be many years coming. A shortage of funds means any such project is unlikely to get off the ground in the next 10 years, said participants at a seminar organised by the faculty of engineering of Chiang Mai University.

....

Samart Ratpolsit, a engineering consultant who drew up a mass transit master plan for Chiang Mai, said it was essential to avoid some of the mistakes made in Bangkok.

“I think we will have to wait at least 10 years, judging from the economic situation,” he said.

“It is also important to attract as many people as possible to use the system, especially with suitable fares.” Fares on the MRTA subway have been set at 14-36 baht, which was considered too high because the state invested in most of the project.

It is not right for the government to let a private firm operate the system in the hope of getting some return, Mr Samart said, because the project itself was of great economic value.

....

Chukit Phothayanuwat, the subway manager of the MRTA, said Chiang Mai must learn from Bangkok’s experience, especially in areas of investment, sources of loans and repayment periods.

....

The ETA has planned a public hearing on the project early next year before submitting the results to the Interior Ministry, the National Environment Board and the cabinet for approval.

....

**Chiang Mai under threat,
say civic groups – Claim city's heritage at risk from scheme**
– *Bangkok Post*, September 17, 2000

Transport and Communications Minister Suthep Thaugsuban has promised to look into complaints by several Chiang Mai civic groups calling for the suspension of an elevated road project near the city's airport. The groups say similar construction projects should be put off and replaced with underpasses.

Mr Suthep said he would talk to the Highways Department about whether the projects should be put on hold. In a letter to the minister, the groups, led by Sirichai Narumitrekhakarn, of the Club for Chiang Mai, said the intended schemes would have serious impacts on the city's environment, culture and arts. They said Chiang Mai's 700 year-old heritage was threatened by the elevated road that would not solve traffic problem as intended.

The elevated road, which is under construction near the province's international airport, would take traffic flowing from the outskirts of the city, thus worsening congestion, said the group, adding that elevated road projects would worsen air quality in a city where pollution was already rife. They quoted a 1994 study showing that 40,000 people in a population of 330,000 suffered from respiratory diseases.

The group attacked the projects for lacking transparency, saying they were drawn up and implemented in haste. Local people were not involved. Originally, the projects were drawn up by the Highways Department as underpasses. Because of budgetary constraints, they were redrawn to become elevated.

If shortage of funding was the main reason for having the design changed, Mr Sirichai said, the projects should be put off until adequate funding was available. Senator Khunying Chodchoi Sophonpanich, an environmentalist, said most tourists preferred to see Chiang Mai being preserved as an historical city with as little physical change as possible.

Meanwhile, Highways director-general Srisook Chantragsu insisted that he could not revoke the project because construction by Chiang Mai Construction Co was 30% complete. He said the bidding contest was done with transparency and won consent of the Budget Bureau and the House.

**It's Alive! – ETA Dusting
off the Chiang Mai Light Rail Project – April 7, 2000**

The Expressway Authority of Thailand has revived the "Chiang Mai Light Rail Project" project for the first line (12.3 km). Preecha Srithongsuk, ETA Director, said Chiang Mai get lots of traffic jam due to rapid development, so the Ministry of Interior (which oversees the ETA) asked ETA to deal with this problem. ETA has studied the Chiang Mai light rail plan since 1996 and proposed four suitable routes with total distance of 27.4 km.

Line 1: Chiang
Mai Government Center-Upakhut-Buak Krok (12.3 km)

Line 2: Hangdong
Cross Intersection-Sansai Tee intersection (8.6 km)

Line 3: Chiang

Mai University-Jaeng Sriphoom (4.5 km)

Line 4: Saeng

Tawan Cross Intersection-Chiangmai Land (2 km)

(See [below](#)

of possible route lists.)

ETA will construct Line 1 first which will take 1-2 years to finish since this line has been approved by ETA Board and it is ready to start land expropriation, construction, and civil engineering. The first line will be above ground for about 2 km and the other 10 km underground. However, this line will need government subsidies about 9,075 million baht. For rolling stock, service and maintenance, ETA will invite the private sector to deal with and shoulder a burden of 5,317 million baht. Therefore, the total cost will be 14,392 million baht.

This project is now waiting for the results from National Environment Committee, after revising the plan to reduce environmental impact – with the consultants from engineering consultant firms such as Southeast Asia Technology Co. Ltd., Sepsilon Co. Ltd., and Louis Berger International Inc. ETA has submitted the plan to Environmental Policies and Plans Bureau and asked Southeast Asia Technology Co. Ltd. to submit the Environmental Impact study which has been revised according to the advice from Social and Cultural Impacts Committee and expert committee. ETA will submit this report to Environmental Policies and Plans Bureau for the consideration from National Environmental Committee.

ETA is ready to get more field data before calling a public hearing after The National Environmental Committee approves the plan. ETA Director and ETA Board will go to Chinag Mai around April 27-28 for field studies. After calling a public hearing, ETA will submit the plan to the cabinet for the final approval. ETA expects that the construction will begin next year if the National Environmental Committee approves this project. (*Thansettakij Business News*, April 6-8, 2000)

A Tale of Two Newspapers

April 9, 2004

Categories: A Tale of Two Newspapers

Tale
of two newspapers –
April 9, 2004

[Farang](#)

[affairs](#) in *The Nation* mentions 2Bangkok.com's

["tale of two](#)

[newspapers" from last week](#). Be sure

to take a look at the item in [Farang](#)

[affairs](#) about an Aussie journalist on a

press junket for Thai Airways who ended up writing
an unflattering article about nightlife.

Earlier [‘Tales of Two](#)

[Newspapers’](#)

Segways in Thailand

April 9, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

>Segways in Thailand

– April 9, 2004

Don Entz points out the article about the Segway Tours in the "Horizons" section of yesterday's *Bangkok Post*. Here is the Segway Tours [website](#).

Warning to cell-phone users: ‘Stay away from power...

April 9, 2004

Warning

to cell-phone users: ‘Stay away from power poles’

– *The Nation*, April 9, 2004

Is this an urban legend? It seems similar to urban legend about the dangers of cell

phones at gas station: *A senior academic yesterday warned people against using their cell phones close to high-voltage power poles – a move that exposes them to the risk of electric shock and their phone exploding... Turning off the cell phone did not mean the user could safely get closer to the pole, he said.*

Discharges of electromagnetic waves from cell phones could cause a spark and attract a flow of electricity from the poles to the phone, thus subjecting its user to the risk of fatality...

Wisarut notes: Mobile phones exploding when used under the high power lines is a real danger since such an incident electrocuted a mobile phone engineer... even though he survived, he needed to have both legs amputated. This incident also has been reported in local Thai press.

Dye your shirt while you wait?

April 9, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Dye your shirt while you wait? – April 9, 2004

A man on a Lat Phrao soi provides a mobile cloth-dyeing service, complete with fire-heated bucket of dye on his bicycle. Many services are provided down long sois, with the seller making a sound of some kind on a horn, loudspeaker, or a small drum (in the man's hand) to alert neighborhood people.

A walk through Pak Klong Talad

April 10, 2004

Categories: Communities

A walk through Pak Klong Talad

July 10, 2004

Vendors in the Pak Klong Talad area are to be relocated to make way for a tourist park and new floating market. Most people know of this area as the flower market at the base of Phra Buddha Yodfa Bridge along Chakrawat Road. A future subway station is planned to also be in the area near Phra Rajawang Police Station (on the other side of the klong). Below are some photos from the area.

[Pak Khlong](#)

[Talat Renovation – Bid to appease angry vendors](#)

– Bangkok Post, July 22, 2004

...The current contract allows the organisation to terminate a lease without compensation if it informs vendors 60 days in advance...

Initially, Mr Sopon agreed to overturn an eviction order issued on June 28, saying the organisation had no plans to evict any traders from the city's largest and oldest wholesale market.

"However, the market needs renovation, which requires cooperation from all the vendors to make the place more attractive to tourists," he said.

He said the renovation blueprint, set to be approved by the board on July 27, would be completed in a few days. The plan would cover the organisation's three-storey building at the market, which would be turned into a One Tambon One Product shopping centre, while all three piers in the area would also be renovated to serve trade and tourism.

"The renovation will come in three phases and nobody will have to lose their business. They will have the right to return to their place of business once each phase has been completed," he said.

The traders, while satisfied that the eviction order had been withdrawn, expressed skepticism over the acting director's explanation, saying they want to have a say in the blueprint to ensure the renovation would not have any negative impact. "We're wondering whether this is just a way of trying to buy more time," one trader said.

[Historical](#)

[market vendors told to move out of place in 60 days](#)

– Bangkok Post, July 7, 2004

Around 100 wholesalers at Bangkok's historical Pak Klong Talad market face eviction as the Marketing Organisation of the Interior Ministry, which owns the land, wants to renovate the market into a tourist attraction...

[Redevelopment](#)

[for Chinatown](#) – Xinhuanet, December 11, 2003

The third project will see an overhaul of the famous Khao San

Road tourist area, from Tha Prachan to Pak Klong Talat – a pet project of Bangkok Governor Samak Sundaravej...

Pak Klong Market – *The Nation*, April 4, 2002

The governor said he would also seek another Bt200 million to Bt300 million from the government to relocate the famous Pak Klong Market from Phra Nakhon district to Klong San district.... The area would be turned into an open area so that historical places, such as Kalayanamit Temple, Memorial Bridge and Chetupon Wimolmangaram, could be seen by tourists. (from [Govt funds sought for freeway in Lat Phrao](#))



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
Ice ready to be delivered to restaurants and markets



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
The ubiquitous sleeping cat



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
Looking through the market area to houses on the
other side of the Chao Phraya River



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
Preparing chili peppers



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
A warehouse with an anti-drug banner



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)
The flower market



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Surakiart's secret connections

April 10, 2004

Categories: The Thaksin Years

[Surakiart's
secret connections](#) –

The Nation, April 10, 2004

*...Bangkokian couldn't help but wonder
what Beijing would say if and when they find
out about Surakiart's secretive Taipei connection.
Surely the minister must realise that as a
permanent member of the UN Secretary Council,
Beijing could easily shoot down his rosy dreams?*

Bangkok Subway News – March-April 2004

April 12, 2004

Categories: Subway

Subway test runs

– translated and summarized from *Thairath*,

April 12, 2004, *Dailynews*, April 12, 2004, and *Bangkok*

Biznew, April 12, 2004

MRTA Governor said Minister Suriya will come to open the subway system for a test run at 9am on Songkran Day in Thai Cultural Center Station along with representatives from MRTA and BMCL.

The test run period from 10am to 2pm from April 13 to 18 will be arranged as follows:

Odd days (April 13, 15, 17): 9 stations open: Hua Lamphong, Kong Toei, Queen Sirikit, Phetburi, Thai Cultural Center, Sutthisarn, Lad Phrao, Chatuchak Park, and Bangsue.

Even days (April 14, 16, 18): 10 stations open: Hua Lamphong, Kong Toei, Sukhumvit, Phra Ram 9, Huay Kwang, Ratchadaphisek, Lad Phrao, Phaholyothin, Kamphaengphet and Bangsue.

Those who receive the free tickets must come to the station at the time dictated by the tickets even. They can take a free ride and then come out of the station only once.

The free rider can hang around the subway stations until 2pm. The ticket will be invalid after coming out of the stations. Furthermore, free riders must strictly follow the instruction of the BMCL-MRTA officers—no food and drink allowed. No pets allowed except guide dogs for the blind. No flammable items or suitcases allowed. Further details on the May free rides will be reported later on.

Since subway system is very new, MRTA has to limit the number of free rides to 300,000 and they have to ensure a fair ride to all Bangkokians. MRTA and BMCL officers work hard to handle the security. The ticket system will use the smart card system which allow passengers to enter into the system without pushing the ticket into the ticket readers at all. Female passengers can even keep their tickets inside their bag and just allow zip through the gate and that's all .

Furthermore, MRTA will have regular and adequate elevators for the handicapped and escalators in all gates.

MRTA is the 7th subway system in Asia – 15-30 m deep from the ground level (4-10 floor building). The stations are 18-25 m wide and 150-200 m long with 2 floor, 3 floor and 4th floor structures according to the condition of the land. The station design is simple, clear, with soft tones, and has no blindspots, no garbage bins or benches so that terrorists will not be able to hide nerve gas to choke the passengers.

Even though this subway line has not reached suburbs yet since the route is still within the central business district, it better than having no mass transit system at all. At least, this will cut some traffic for a better quality of life.

Tickets can be bought either from vending machines which sell smart tokens or stored-value Smart cards. Ticket price will be 14-36 baht ($14 + 2 * \text{No. of Station}$) even though the first year rate will be 12-34 baht. Children below 12 and those over 65 will be discounted by a half. There are two Park and Ride facilities—Lad Phrao (2200 cars) and Thai Cultural Center (200 cars).

Passengers will place tokens or smart cards into the readers and

then the gate will open and the passengers will go down to platforms with screen doors. The inbound and outbound rails are at the same level except Sam Yan, Silom and Lumpinee which have to be 4 floors due to the space constraints.

Screen doors will cut energy bills and make a safe ride since it will open only after the subway parks at the correct position. We can see only lights along the tunnels and lights inside the subway cars. It takes 30 minutes to ride from Hua Lamphong to Bangsue and the rush hour interval will be 2-4 minutes. The full service hours will be from 5am to midnight.

The security forces inside Subway have been authorized to arrest, check the passengers, and carry weapons at every station. There are also local police forces who take a look around the subway stations as well. Every station has cameras to monitor every spot inside the station.

The gates and open sections above ground are 1.5 meters high from the ground to prevent flooding. There will be a collecting pool to trap the water before it enters the station and the pumps to push the water out. Stations and subway cars will use nonflammable materials. Even the flammable parts will not emit poisonous fumes. There will be an automatic fire extinguisher to quell the fire in 45 minutes and the evacuation will be done in 6 minutes according to international standard.

Wisarut's free ride –

April 13, 2004

Wisarut received his free subway tickets. Here's how he will use them: *I just received two tickets from BMCL. Both tickets said you can go to Subway stations on April 18, 2004 (Sunday) and I must come to Phaholyothin Station on time (10am-11am). Otherwise, you will be disqualified.*

I guess that those journalists as well as politicians will make the first test run at 10am on April 13, 2004 at Thai Cultural Center Station while those lucky few will have the first ride at Chatuchak, Hua Lamphong, Kong Toei, Queen Sirikit, Phetburi, Sutthisarn, Lad Phrao, Chatuchak Park, and Bangsue.

However, the common men like me will have to wait until Sunday April 18 to have a free ride (at Hua Lamphong, Kong Toei, Sukhumvit, Phra Ram 9, Huay Kwang, Ratchadaphisek, Lad Phrao, Phaholyothin, Kamphaengphet and Bangsue).

According to my plan, I will go to either Kamphaengphet or Phaholyothin even though I found that I need to go to the right gate in addition to the right station. However, I will get out at Bangsue Station at around 2pm. I hope that I will be able to take a photo even though photo restrictions will be applied inside the subway stations to prevent terrorists to get information about the stations so they can plant a bomb.

MRTA Subway – Improving

our mass transit – by Dr. Samart Ratpolasit, April 12, 2004

The grand engineering task which they said was impossible due to soft clay and the underground water table has become a reality after the test run on April 13, 2004—the MRTA Subway.

Even though MRTA subway is not at very first subway system in the world or even Asean, the technology is definitely second to none.

The first subway system in the world opened on Jan 10, 1863 in London. There were hundreds of thousands waiting in line along subway stations but only 40,000 passengers had a first ride. It took 33 years for

Britain to build the first subway line—after a proposal in 1830.

The first Asian subway system opened in Tokyo on December 30, 1927.

The first line was 2.2 km long connecting Ueno and Asakusa. The designers of Mitsukoshi Department Store had the advertisement that it was "The only subway line in the Oriental World." Mitsukoshi department store has contributed to TRTA in such an extent that TRTA has used the name of this department store as the name of Tokyo subway station that was close to the store.

This ad had effectively drew ten thousands to those who live in Tokyo to line up at the subway station to have the first ride even before the opening at 6am on December 30, 1927.

This Tokyo subway line carried 70,000 passengers on new year's eve, 1928. Now the Tokyo subway system has grown into a 300-km giant. Only London and New York City subway systems are more complex network than Tokyo system. The first subway line in Asean was Singapore's opened in 1987.

It took 6 years to make the Bangkok system a reality. Each drill that dug subway tunnel had the drilling rate of 10 m/day/set. There were very few traffic interruptions during the construction which is very good. Those who came to see subway construction said Thai engineers could drill to make subway tunnels and construct stations to become an underground city.

No need to worry about floods since the gates have been constructed 2.5m higher from Thai standard sea level at Kho Lak. Thus, flooding would be a serious problem after the flood has reached 3.5 m level. The subway cars will use nonflammable materials. Even the flammable parts will not emit poisonous fumes. There will be automatic fire extinguishers to quell the fire in 45 minutes and the evacuation will be done in 6 minutes according to international standard.

Every subway station is equipped with elevators and ramps for the disabled which many other systems in other countries still have not installed yet. It is up to the government to make a new BMTA air-conditioned bus to have the access for the handicapped in every buses so they can ride the bus to the subway stations.

It is a fair deal to pay the ticket at 14-36 baht after August 12 in exchange for this comfort. Even though there is a park and ride facility at Lad Phrao and Thai Cultural Center, there are not many people to use such facility since the line does not extend close to the suburbs. Only massive expansion will solve this problem.

I hope that the government can do it.

The nationalization plan of

BMCL and BTSC is good for the country

– translated and summarized from *Siamturakij*,

April 4-11, 2004

The price tag for BMCL ([the subway company](#)) is 25 billion baht (for stock as well as other hardware) while the price tag for BTSC ([the Skytrain company](#)) is 30 billion baht. The Government is negotiating with KfW and Siemens about the nationalization plan which allows 75% ownership by the government (MOTC + MRTA) and 25% for creditors and people after offering an IPO. The ratio can be changed to 51:49 so as to allow the strategic partners to handle projects.

However, the IPO must take public interest into account to ensure that the funds from IPOs will go directly to investment on extensions, improving facilities including new sets of subway rolling stock, as well as a local assembly line to allow local made rolling stock.

The funds for this purchase will come from 30-year Wayuphak funds

with 4% annual interest rate and the government will take a responsibility when the interest is higher than the principle.

So far, BTSC creditors (IFC and KfW) agreed to cut 14 billion baht debts (35%) but the government wants even more cuts so as to put BTSC under the budget of 30 billion baht.

Earlier: [Suriya boasting that negotiations with Skytrain creditors successful](#)

– translated and summarized from *Thairath*, April 7, 2004 and *Manager Daily*, April 7, 2004

And *Bangkok Post* has the response to this: [Skytrain chief lashes out at takeover talk Demands state deal with BTSC directly](#) – *Bangkok Post*, April 8, 2004

Earlier: [BMCL would sell the subway at 35 billion baht to reap 200% profit](#) – *Prachachart* *Thurakij*, April 1, 2004

Earlier: [More on buying the subway – Government counters 300 baht per share offer by offering to pay 1 baht per share](#)

Comments

on the subway stations – April 8, 2004

[Discuss these stories on the 2Bangkok.com Forum](#)

Wisarut reports: *I have been to the following subway stations and here are some comments.*

1) *Suan Chatuchak – very spacious – even though Thai Cultural Center Station is the spaciest of all. I met a middle age men who said he has worked for ITD as workers to construct both Skytrain and Subway. I suggested him to tell the stories to his children and ask his children to write down the tales as the way to keep the stories about the construction of both systems alive.*

2) *Sukhumvit – pretty small station... needs a 4th gate at the building opposite Soi Cowboy after the construction of the derelict building there becomes a reality.*

3) *Queen Sirikit – pretty big, but no traditional Thai decoration yet. The air-condition at the ticket purchasing level looks salty and the air condition at the platform level has chemical odor. The officers said they will make a weekly cleaning of the air-condition and may have to perfume the air-condition as monthly basis.*

4) *Klong Toei – pretty small, but tolerable*

5) *Lumphinee – an uncle who lives in Bon Kai complained that this station has too few gates. He has either to pay 14 baht to ride subway to Silom for the morning or evening exercise at Lumphinee Park or has to walk through the smoking Rama 4 Road to enter into Gate 2 at Witthayu Intersection to go across the street.*

6) *Silom Station – needs two new gates near Surawongse Intersection and Chulalongkonr Hospital. The escalators are very steep. The escalators at Lumphinee station are very steep as well! if you go in the wrong direction at Silom and Lumphinee (either head to Bangsue even though you want to go to Hua Lamphong or vice versa), you will be exhausted from either climbing up or down the stairs.*

7) *Hua Lamphong – this one has a via duct to Hua Lamphong Main Railway Station. The display under the glass pyramid is the foundation stone laid by HRH The Crown Prince.*

Photos of some of the stations are here: [First looks at the Phetchburi, Queen Sirikit Convention Center, and Hua Lamphong subway stations](#)

BMCL would sell
the subway at 35 billion baht to reap 200% profit
– translated and summarized from *Prachachart*
Thurakij, April 1, 2004

BMCL said they are willing to sell 100% of BMCL stocks at the premium to be worthy for investment—and compensating BMCL for not offering an IPO. The right to buy at par has already expired. If the government going to buy BMCL so as to integrate with BTSC and use the same smart card tickets, that would be very nice since ii would cut travel expense. The joint ticket system is not conceived yet.

BMCL has delayed the IPO to the 3rd quarter to see the result of the subway opening> Furthermore, the bear market condition has deterred them from offering IPOs. BMCL has already broke the 100 baht/share into 1 baht/Share (with a hundred fold increasing in the number of shares) and changed the company name by adding "PCL."

The registered capital has been boosted from 7.050 billion baht to 10 billion to cut down the 12 billion baht debt and need to buy 2-3 sets of rolling stocks to add into the existing 19 sets for future expansion.

The expected number for the first year is 250,000 passengers a day (3/4 of the daily passengers of the Skytrain) to increase 5-7% next year.

BMCL said they might sell 25% of stocks at par (1 baht/share) but the other 75% must be sold at 3 baht/share—as a way to clear up 12 billion baht debt.

After selling according to the scheme, the government has to find 35 billion baht in cash to pay BMCL—covering the investment of 18 billion baht and 17 billion baht profit.

However, the final results will come up in May 2004 and MRTA will run the paid service from June 2004. The free service will be limited to 300,000 passengers.

MRTA is waiting for the extensions which are supposed to be started in 2005 since the cabinet has not come up with the official resolution yet.

All three extension have to be bid on freely without the reservation on the winners of the first phase.

MTOC has responded that this 3 baht/share is totally unacceptable since BMCL has given very little reason and used future expectations as a way to calculate stock prices. Thus the Traffic Policy Office and MRTA has to study the real price for this project.

Even though Premier Thaksin delayed the trip to negotiate with KfW and Siemens in Germany due to problems in the South, they still send officers to negotiate at the officer level before coming up with preliminary results by the end of April 2004.

More on buying
the subway – Government counters 300 baht per share offer by offering to pay 1 baht per share
Translated and summarized from ‘Ch. Karnchang shocked – government asking BMCL to lower the stock price to 1 baht /share – be fair!’ – *Matichon*,
March 30, 2004

Sombut Kijjalux (BMCL General Manager) said BMCL has lowered the par price from 100 baht/share to 1 baht/share to encourage more buyers when it offers an IPO in 3rd quarter of 2004. If the government wants to buy all the shares back, BMCL may not offer an IPO. If

BMCL sells only 25% of the shares, BMCL would still be able to offer an IPO as planned since BMCL wants to capitalize the stock after boosting the registered capital from 6.8 billion baht to 10 billion baht since BMCL needs to buy at least 3-5 additional sets of rolling stock to meet surging demands.

The government has to ask Ch. Karnchang first before buying the stock back. However, the government has to buy at fair prices.

MRTA governor said Ch. Karnchang PCLK has submitted the plan to sell the stock to the government via MOTC. The extensions would be handled by the government.

Earlier: Buying the Subway

– March 30, 2004

Ed.: The move to nationalize the Subway and Skytrain is a high-stakes web of financial maneuvering and conflicting priorities with the long-delayed Skytrain extensions being [held hostage](#) to the political infighting—but you would never know this by reading the news in English-language papers.

The Bangkok Post blandly [reports](#):

The Transport Ministry, which oversees MRTA, is negotiating buying back the subway system from BMCL, to more effectively manage the total mass transit service of Bangkok. BMCL managing director Sombat Kitjalaksana said yesterday that BMCL wanted a reasonable price and secure future for its trained staff.

However, in the Thai-language papers, the jostling and positioning of the major players is well-documented:

BMCL stock prices—300 baht/share—price at super premium

– translated and summarized from *Thairath*,

March 29, 2004

Ch. Karnchang PCL told Minister Suriya that BMCL (the company that owns and runs the subway project) will sell stock to the government at the price of 300 baht/share—tripling the prices from par since the provision for selling 25% of the stocks at par has already expired. This price is fair to Ch. Karnchang since it has already included the investment, the difficulties for the contact with the public sector and so on. However, the government must buy the stocks before BMCL offers an IPOs in the second quarter and third quarter of 2004.

The MRTA Governor told the press that MRTA still has the full right to purchase back 25% of the stocks at par since MRTA has already issued the reservation letter to BMCL before the provision expired. If BMCL still insists that MRTA no longer has the right to purchase back at par, negotiations through mediators or legal fighting at the Administration Court will become the last measure MRTA is going to apply. If BMCL agrees to sell 25% of stock at par, MRTA may allow BMCL to sell the rest of stocks at higher prices.

Earlier: Ch. Karnchang purchasing more BMCL shares

– translated and summarized

from *Manager Daily*, March 22, 2004

Ch. Karnchang (CK) is purchasing more shares from BMCL Co.Ltd, approved by the Board of Directors on March 8, to increase the registered capital from 6.8 billion baht to 7.05 billion baht through 2.5 million capital increase in shares.

This purchase will enable Ch. Karnchang PCL to retain the ratio of stock allocation in 23.09% range by purchasing 5,747,291 shares at par (100 baht/share)—total 57.7291 million baht.

Commentary: There was a similar purchase of BMCL shares by BECL PCL. *Matichon Daily* reported on February

28, 2004 that BECL has paid 37.5 million baht to purchase 375,00 shares of BMCL as the way to retain 15% level of ownership. BECL has no problem to pay for the BMCL shares at all since the company is a money-making enterprise.

Earlier: Government

feeling confident about purchasing the Skytrain concession from the private sector – translated and summarized from *Manager Daily*, March 18, 2004

BMCL setting up Metro Mall as a subsidiary

– translated and summarized from *Prachachat*

Thurakij, March 22-24, 2004

BMCL has set up Metro Mall Co. Ltd as a subsidiary to handle the retail trading inside MRTA Subway station areas and hire professionals to run an underground department store with BMCL and Ch. Karnchang PCL as major shareholders of more than 50%.

BMCL decided to set up a new subsidiary to handle the department store since hiring other companies to handle retailing inside the station area will cause lots of problems about revenue sharing.

The underground department stores will consist of brand name products.

After BMCL made an unofficial leasing announcement, there are several retailers such as 7-11 (Thailand), Starbucks (Thailand), O Bon Pain (Thailand), EZ Buy, and Se-Ed book that have signed contracts to rent space inside subway station areas. The main target is those who are not passengers, a different approach compared to BTSC.

The monthly rent rate is in the range of 1500-3000 baht/sq-m while the monthly transferring rate from previous owners will be 10,000 baht/sq-m, at par with BTSC Skytrain renting rates and the space for rent will be 4-70 sq-m.

BMCL is decorating the subway stations and the underground Metro Mall department store -> ready to be opened on August 12, 2004 (official opening date with a royal ceremony) at the following 5 Stations:

1) Sukhumvit, 2) Chatuchak, 3) Kamphengphet, 4) Phaholyothin, 5) Queen Sirikit National Convention Center

The politics of police abduction

April 12, 2004

Categories: Thai Police, The Thaksin Years

Latest from Chang Noi –

April 12, 2004

It is Monday and thus time for another tough editorial from *The Nation*. The harshest editorials (like this one) are written under the pseudonym "Chang Noi" (Little Elephant).

From '[The](#)

[politics of police abduction](#)', *The Nation*,

April 12, 2004: *"There is nothing under the sun that the Thai police cannot do." Open the [website](#)*

of the Thai police and you will find this saying of Phao Sriyanon proudly displayed. He is considered one of the founding fathers of the modern police department, and is celebrated in its internal history.

He is also widely believed to have ordered the abduction and murder of several prominent figures during the late 1940s and 1950s, including MPs, Muslim political leaders, journalists and businessmen. His famous saying has a terrible ring. Thaksin quoted it in his speech launching the "war on drugs" on 14 January last year...

Chang Noi has written about Phao Sriyanon in the past

([Anything](#)

[under a dictator's sun](#), January 20, 2003).

Considering the horrible reputation Phao had both in his own day and through the prism of history, it is amazing (and telling) to find his threatening quote on the police website.

Chang Noi's [website](#).

Bangkok Subway News – April 2004

April 14, 2004

Categories: Subway

Cell phone blindspots in
the subway – April 14, 2004

Wisarut reports: *For telecom blindspots, Thai netters [have responded](#) that even subways in other countries are mobile phone blind spots. The Tokyo Subway also prohibits passengers from making a call on the train since it annoys other passengers.*

Earlier: Cell phone service in subway not complete – translated and summarized from *Siam Turakij*,

April 9-16, 2004

Even the test run is closer and closer, BMCL and telecom companies cannot make a settlement on the telecom cells for mobile phones. This will create mobile phone blindspots. It could be very dangerous if crime, arson, or terrorism breaks out. However, BMCL said TOT and TRUE (the new name of Telecom Asia) have installed the telecom cells for public phones and PCTs.

Subway – Ride

it now or wait four months for full service –

translated and summarized by Wisarut Bholsithi from *Matichon Daily*, April 14, 2004

On Songkran day of this year, Grandpa Lek and Granma Phutsa felt very excited that the Subway has become a reality and they want to make a free ride. They woke their children up at 5am so that they can go to Hua Lamphong station early since Granpa Lek lives in Salaya (Bangkok western suburb in Nakhon Pathom – where the main campus of Mahidol U. is situated) and Granma Phutsa lives in Samreh (a community on the Thonburi side of Bangkok – used to be a place for beheading the condemned).

However, they got stopped by MRTA and BMCL officers at Hua Lamphong station and were told that "Sorry Granpa and Granma, you don't have the permission cards, so you cannot enter into the train!"

Even though both old folks tried to appeal to the officers, the officer explained that they cannot let both old persons enter the train since it could create chaos at all 18 subway stations if they allow unlimited free rides during a limited time. Therefore, permission tickets are necessary and BMCL has asked people to send letters to BMCL to obtain 60,000 permission cards (actually, BMCL officers have to give 84,000 tickets due to strong demands from 42,000 letters).

Therefore, they have to accept the missed opportunities due to security restrictions. Nevertheless, Granma Putsa told MRTA-BMCL officers with a grumbling voice that "you should work on PR much harder! We just received the news that BMCL is going to open the Subway for a test run but we have not received another message that we need to send letters for permission tickets. If we knew this beforehand, we would have asked our children to write and send the letter to get the tickets." They also said they will be back when the full service becomes a reality.

However, lucky ones like Ms. Rewadee Mutalai and her daughter (Sitala Mutalai) waited for a while until it reached 10am (the opening time) to enter into the system.

Ms. Rewadee said she got the ticket from the Highway Dept which had requested BMCL to issue free tickets for officers. The ticket said "BMCL has guaranteed that Khun is a Thai person who has a chance to ride the first Subway line before other people! April 13, 2004."

Ms. Rewadee said she felt very glad to have subway line to tackle traffic jams along with the Skytrain.

When the first set of passengers entered the subway system, many of them felt very happy and excited since many have had no chance to ride a subway before.

The air-conditioning in the subway set is so high that it creates moisture on the mirrors and windows. There were two officers in each bogey.

"Sathanee Tor Pai Chatuchak, Than Phoodoysarn Samart Plian Setthang Lae Tor BTS at this Station" (Next Station Chatuchak, the passengers can change the train to Skytrain at this station).

The announcements the stations is in Thai first and then in English. Many praised that the announcers speak very well in both English and Thai—so well that they feel they live abroad.

Even though the government wishes to speed up the official opening date, the most auspicious date of all would be August 12, 2004.

Commentary by Wisarut: The MRTA subway uses a recorded announcement—a better approach than humans speaking by the drivers in the Skytrain do. Escalators in both directions and elevators for the handicapped are also a big plus for the subway.

This automatic announcement machine as well as the availability of escalators and elevators will force BTSC to modernize their fleet of rolling stock as well as the stations since many passengers—local people and foreigners—have complained a lot about the poor Thai-English announcement.

MRTA

governor explains subway 'free rides' to the public

– translated and summarized from [*Manager Daily*](#), April 14, 2004

After hearing the appeal for free rides from many people who missed a chance to make a free ride due to the lack of permission tickets, MRTA governor explained that this measure will minimize a chance for chaos to break out as well as to cut down congestion.

Tickets for free rides in May have been increased from 140,000 tickets to 160,000 tickets to cope with surging demand even though Mr Suriya asks MRTA to allow anybody to take a free ride in May 2004.

Subway System Inspection

– translated and summarized from *Manager Daily*, April 13, 2004

The air-conditioning inside subway stations will have the thermostat fixed at 27 Celcius—higher than the 25 Celsius level for department stores since MRTA do not want passengers to hang around the stations—just comfortable enough, but not too comfortable.

The escalators will have to run faster to move many people as possible and for evacuation.

The Skytrain had run empty trains for eight months to check that the system had no problems despite grumbling passengers who wanted

to ride the system. However, the Subway system is a much more complicated system—rolling stocks, power supply, air-conditioning, ventilators, fire alarm and extinguishers, elevators, gates. All must work at in a synchronized matter and thus the testing will be much more complex.

The government has invested billions of baht to come up with this system along with a 9 floor Park and Ride at Ladphrao, 3 floor Park and Ride at the Thai Cultural Center, and a small parking lot at Ratchadaphisek, Huay Kwang, Phetburi, Sukhumvit and Sam Yan – with free parking during the April test run. Security forces have been set up at all 18 stations since April 6.

There are 3 interchanges with the Skytrain and BMTA has readjusted both bus stops to stop near the subway gates and 24 air-conditioned bus routes to feed the system. If Airport Link and North-South commuters have become a reality to replace Hopewell, there will be new interchanges at Phetburi, Hua Lamphong and Bangsue.

Test runs without passengers from 4am to 7pm have been underway since March 1, 2004, and extended to 9pm since April 1, and further extended to midnight since April 5.

There are 4 sets of BMCL officers

- (1) Drivers and Station Controllers
- (2) Maintenance Officers
- (3) Supporters to control the tickets and revenue from tickers
- (4) Security offices and quality controllers

The drivers must pass through vigorous testing since they have to go through dark tunnels with lots of mental pressure. Those who run the station controllers will need to be service oriented. They must have at least a 2-year college degree. Most applicants (52,300 candidates) have 4-year college degree or higher.

Only 7000 candidates passed the writing exam.

Only 4000 pass the interview exam.

Only 3000 candidates passed the Color Blind Testing.

Only 900 candidates passed criminal record examination to face psychological testing.

The drivers cannot turn on lights while driving since it will blind their vision. Thus they have to sit down in a dark control room.

They need to detect every signal they pass along the way. They have to work hours a day.

Some of them have to wake up at 2am or 2:30am to be ready for the first train will at 4:30am so that they can get it to the track at 5am. After finished the first round, the driver must come to relax immediately before coming to other shifts (3-hour working intervals) to fill up 8 hour working hours.

There are 90 drivers (controllers) with 10 driving trainers. All the drivers must pass through 4 1/2 month testing. There are 600 station controllers which need to pass through 3 1/2 months and then they will be allocated following slots:

There are 50 officers at the Control Center.

Each station will have 5-10 officers.

The rush hour interval of trains will be 3 minutes, 45 seconds.

Even when the system is ready, they need to pass independent engineering inspections to ensure safety.

Diplomats, executives

and press ride the subway—Lots of development planned around the stations – translated and summarized from *Manager Daily*, April 13, 2004 and *Thairath*, April 13, 2004

Minister Suriya and his family, the Ambassador of Japan and family,

the Ambassador of Germany and family, the Ambassador of Austria and family, members of MRTA Board and their families, members of the BMCL Board of Directors, TV, radio, and newspaper journalists – both local and abroad, as well as invited guests who receive free tickers have made the first ride of the subway from Thai Cultural Center Station to Hua Lamphong.

MRTA Governor Praphat told the press that he feels very satisfied with the first test run even though he found that some of the rolling stock have defective air-conditioning systems and the doors cannot be closed which prevents the subway from departing the station. However, he asks those technicians from Siemens and MRTA to repair the defective parts to be ready for free ride tomorrow. Furthermore, the MRTA and BMCL security guards have been trained for the security, evacuation, rescue, basic first aid, basic fire extinguishing, hand to hand combat, combat with weapons, and the way to search for weapons.

Metro Mall is going to open the first 5 branches at Sukhumvit, Chatuchak, Kamphaengphet, Phaholyothin, and Thai Cultural Center stations and 6 more branches will follow. The area over the station at Chatuchak and Kamphaengphet are going to have commercial development with additional development at Queen Sirikit (near Phai Singto neighborhood), Lad Phrao and Ratchadaphisek.

The existing malls along the subway route will have major facelifts. Brew Pavilion is jumping into the retailing business by developing the Pavilion Bangkok shopping mall for new generation and entertainment complex with existing German beerhouse. Union Mall at Phaholyothin near Ladphrao Intersection will have a supermarket, banks, major shops, food center, and entertainment center (Cinema, Bowling, Karaoke) with a park and ride for 3000 cars. Central Patthana is going to come up with Rama 9 Square opposite Fortune Town. Even Dusit Thani Hotel is going to turn some part of their hotel into an office building, shopping center and plaza and now the real estate firms have come up with condominiums within 500 m radius of stations.

How to be a subway driver

– translated and summarized from [*Manager Daily*](#), April 12, 2004

Even though subway cars can run with automatic controls, the drivers are still necessary. However, it is very tough to be qualified for the Subway Driver since all of the eligible candidates must be good at math, English, general knowledge, and good service. The committee for testing the candidates come from the physicians as well as specialists.

Those who pass the knowledge testing must have strong physical and mental health. This has already disqualified many candidates—only a few survive to have an interview with the committee to examine internal thought. Only those who have good characteristics, are reasonable, and have good concentration can pass.

Even those who pass the examination will have to go through the orientation to know the culture of organization, policy, and goals—along with physical testing held by BMCL and Siemens (Thailand) at Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy to build discipline.

After the orientation, they have to learn subway procedures and training in a simulation. They have to be able to do more than push buttons to open the screen door and start the train—they have to deal the first aid and other emergencies such as floods, arson, blackouts, bag snatchers, and even espionage.

Qualified people must be calm in dangerous situations so that they can solve the problems without causing another problem. If they flunk the test, they have to make another test to pass the exam.

Even those who held a master degree in Business Administration and worked as an instructor at the university must work hard to become a subway driver. He has to drive the subway to get it cleaned at the depot and calculate speed to be able to decelerate at the right time.

It would be a very good thing to have a nationwide mental examination of drivers of buses, trucks, trains, and even motorcycles at the same level as subway drivers. We feel very sure that many of them need to see psychiatrists or even some of them need to have some mental relaxation at asylums or in meditation schools.

If the subway system has been expanded it would solve the traffic problems—a very worthy investment even though massive investment is required. Look at BTSC Skytrain as a good example.

After a 5 month examination, 90 male and female qualified subway drivers will go through the driving the actual trains without passengers.

They work 8 hours a day – with 2 intervals, 4 hours for each interval. They will have to line up for inspection from the head of the subway driver division every day. Those who suffer insomnia or get sick will get the day off to get some rest. They will take pride as those who run the subway system in Thailand.

Disappointment and praise for the subway – translated and summarized from *Manager Daily* ([1](#)),

April 13, 2004

Many who wanted to have a free ride but do not have tickets feel very disappointed since they thought that Premier Thaksin told them that they can have a free ride without mentioning they need to have a ticket.

Therefore, Minister Suriya is asking BMCL that they should allow another free ride for anyone—not just those who live along the tracks—in May 2004 so as to educate the new passengers of the subway system. The full service must also be ready in June or July 2004.

Mr. Pliew said BMCL have given 60,000 free tickets to passengers and kept the other 240,000 tickets for May free rides by giving them out at department stores along subway lines. However they may revise the plan after the assessment of the April free ride.

However, after checking the letters to BMCL, they found that there are 42,000 letters -> thus there will be 84,000 free riders

in April alone. They may even print more tickets for the May free ride to accommodate millions of Bangkokians who want a free ride.

Bangkokians have made the following praises of Subway system:

Satanan Junegrungriengkij (7 years old) – a child of Minister Suriya said he is very excited and very fast so no need to bother with traffic jam. He wants to take another ride if he has a chance.

Kittphongse Tatiyarattna (39 years old) – officer at private firm said he is very satisfied with the system and it is very comfortable, but he needs to study the route since he lives in Donmuang and works in Sukhumvit. So he will use the park and ride and then ride the subway to go to his office around Asok. The subway is safe thus he can go to work downtown without problem.

Mr Thanaphong (24 year years old) – a college student said it

is fast and safe – even safer than Skytrain which looks like airplane. Subway is safer in his viewpoint.

Boontham Pornpradit (73 years old) said she likes subway. It is very fast and very safe. She will use it since she travels around Bangkok to see her children and grandchildren along the route. She will definitely ride it instead of private cars and a senior discount applies to her.

Monrueedee Ketuuphan (47 years old)- deputy Director of PR Dept, AOT PCL said she feels very satisfied with the test run. She also asked that the security is tightened up when it is fully functional so that she can ride the system during the holiday.

Songkran on Khao Sarn Road 2004 Part 1

April 15, 2004

Categories: Songkran

Songkran on Khao Sarn Road 2004

– April 15, 2004

(This page was served over 200,000 times in the first 48 hours after its posting on April 15, 2004.)

The center of the water-throwing frenzy in Bangkok is around Khao Sarn Road. Here is a taste of what it's like to be there...



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

More photos on [page 2](#)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Water tank for a water gun shaped like a giant cell phone



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Revelers smear each other with talcum powder



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Khao Sarn Road is normally a haven for foreign backpackers,
but on Songkran Thais outnumber the tourists 100 to 1.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Buckets of water fly across the crowd



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Entrance to Khao Sarn Road with a black paddy wagon as a warning to rowdy people



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Entrance to Khao Sarn Road—no talcum powder or bottles of water from outside could be brought in.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Outside of Khao Sarn Road, the crowds cover themselves with wet talcum powder



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

More photos on [page 2](#)

Songkran on Khao Sarn Road 2004 Part 2

April 15, 2004

Categories: Songkran



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Techie on top of the Channel 11 van throws water on the people passing below.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Several water troughs along Khao Sarn Road
so revelers could refill.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Stores display Buddha images during Songkran.
People sprinkle the images with water (from the silver bowl).



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Outside of McDonalds at Democracy Monument



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

People play in the fountains at Democracy Monument



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Police show up and shoo them away.

First ride on the subway

April 18, 2004

Categories: Subway

Wisarut rides the subway on April 18, 2004...

Right: Looking out the subway door



Below: Empty train awaiting passengers

Below right: A long line of passengers waiting to go down to the platform level



Above: Wisarut on the train which is virtual identical to the Skytrain, except for a difference of overhead hand rails.

Left: Waiting outside the platform doors

Another free subway ride ticket

– May 11, 2004

At right is another example of a subway free ride

ticket
(thanks to Wisarut for sending it in).

Free subway ride tickets

– April 20, 2004

The tickets for free rides (below) on the subway during the demonstration period. The "tunnel as eye" on the cover of the ticket looks like an advertisement for a horror movie.



BangkokSubway.com

main page

If you like 2Bangkok.com, tell your friends and family to make hotel reservations through our [hotel reservation service](#).

Songkran Scenes 2004

April 18, 2004

Categories: Songkran

Songkran *still* continuing
– 12:15pm, April 18, 2004

While visiting the site of the mega-bridge construction (photos tomorrow) we were surprised to see Suk Sawat Road still choked with die-hard Songkran revelers (right).



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Songkran heat – April
16, 2004

Conor noted the incredible temperature (left) on the final afternoon day of Songkran: *That's not a typo where it says "feels like 136 F."*



[Cell](#)

[phone repair business enjoys Thailand's annual water fight](#)

– AP, April 16, 2004

...Thaweechai said he's been fixing wet cell phones for the past several years during Songkran, charging between 250-450 baht (US\$6-11)

per phone. The technique is simple. He unscrews the cover, pours out the water, blow dries it with an electric hair dryer and reinstalls the software before recharging the battery.

Songkran on Khao Sarn Road –

April 15, 2004

In the first 36 hours after posting the [Songkran photos from Khao Sarn Road](#), the page itself was served 122,873 times!

A Songkran scene –

5:24pm, April 14, 2004

For those of you in town for Songkran, this will be nothing new,
but if you cannot be here, it will give you an idea of what goes on.

Right: Green bus 60, jammed with Songkran revelers, heads down Suthisarn Road to a point where roadside

revelers are throwing
water.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Those in the bus jump out to douse and be doused by
the group at roadside.

Right: As the bus starts to roar off,
two drunken boys dash in front of it, narrowly
escaping being hit.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Green bus 60 finally continues on its way. This scene is repeated countless times during Songkran.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Patpong, 1:03am, April 14, 2004

Another Thaksin Goal: Eliminating Open Piracy

April 19, 2004

Categories: The Thaksin Years

One year ago

– April 19, 2004

A year ago the government was riding high coming of its anti-drug drive. It could pick and choose the issues or new ground it wanted to break, so April 1, 2003 was confidently chosen as the end of piracy in Thailand.

We came across this selection of translations from Thai papers from a year ago made by an EC organization in anticipation of elimination of pirated goods:

(The EC-ASEAN Intellectual Property Rights Cooperation Programme (ECAPII) – Report of Thai Press Monitor – coverage of IP-related stories – Period Monitored: 1-14 March 2003)

** Trigger Co.,Ltd, is implementing the CIPITC court ruling that it owns the Thai font PSL, said it has reached a proper understanding with a number of printing houses which agreed to pay subscription fee for the use of the PSL font.*

** In a market survey of pirated CD trade ahead of the 1 April crackdown, Prachachart Turakit (3-5/3) reported brisk trade going on as usual in the Chatuchak weekend market, Panthip Plaza, KlongThom flea market downtown Bangkok and beyond. Cheap pirate CDs,DVDs remain popular among both Thais and foreigners. Imports of pirated CDs, DVDs continued in the border provinces in the north and northeast. A number of shops surveyed offer a mixture of both copyrighted and pirate products. Traders reported that pirate product manufacturers may move facilities into Burma and Laos to avoid crackdown in Thailand.*

** In a letter from readers published by mass circulation Thai Rath, a lady wrote to protest "how police and those who claim to represent rights holder of cartoon characters that appear in kids and adult clothes harassed vendors who sell infringed products." The lady claimed to be subject to a "well organized raid, taken to an office in Sathorn Road," where those rounded up were presented with a letter, eventually resulting in 20,000-30,000 baht fine in order to avoid law suit. The columnist responded that even though the government's right in enforcing copyright, it should not allow "lucrative loopholes" to arise in the process of enforcement.*

** DCM Wattana said he has been informed by the US Ambassador to Thailand that the US government is practising a policy of blacklisting landlords and owners of premises that allow trade in pirated products, in which US businesses would boycott such people as well as those who do not cooperate with the US authorities in suppressing IP infringements. High on the sanction list include the well-known spots of pirate CD trade centres namely Pantip*

Plaza, Tawanna, MBK, Future Park Rangsit, and CP (owned by DCM Wattana's in-laws) which owns Fortune Tower, Seri Centre and Seacon. DCM Wattana vowed to take stern action against mall owners that ignore trade of infringed products in their premises.

** A senior executive of one of Thailand's major rice exporters discovered trademark infringement — Chinese rice wearing the jasmine rice label of his company— while travelling to Chongqing province of China in the Commerce Minister's delegation recently.*

** DCM Wattana said he plans to present the government's intensive campaign to eliminate piracy between 1 April to end of June and the outcome to the APEC meeting which Thailand will host with a view to impress the US, so that the US will remove Thailand from its IP Watch list. He said that if his effort fails, he will ask the Prime Minister to bring up the issue at the summit level meeting.*

A walk in old Bangkok

April 20, 2004

Categories: Communities

A walk in old Bangkok

– April 20, 2004

Heinrich writes: *I'm a frequent visitor to your 2Bangkok pages. I especially like the Then & Now pages (like about [Saphan Kwai](#) and the [Santichaiprakarn Park](#)). As I'm also interested in Bangkok's history I put together some pages on my own homepage, like a [Virtual Walk over Rattanakosin Island](#) and [Old Bridges of Bangkok](#) (in German).*

Advice to motorcyclists

April 20, 2004

Categories: Signs and Billboards



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Advice
to motorcyclists –
April 20, 2004

A folksy public-service announcement from the police at Rama IV Road and the expressway. The top part reads: "A example of what not to do."

The bottom part reads: "You must turn on the light and put on a helmet."

The person under the sign is a mannequin to show the proper way.

City hall in fresh bid to install electronic traffic light system

April 22, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[City hall in fresh bid to install electronic traffic light system](#) – Bangkok

Post, April 22, 2004

City hall wants to re-introduce the area traffic control system—electronic gadgets controlling traffic lights at intersections—to alleviate congestion...

He said the ATC system would be installed at over 200 intersections within a 150-sqkm radius from the Ratchada ring road. The installation is expected to be completed by 2007.

In its 1993 plan, the BMA wanted to install the ATC system at 369 intersections plan. However, lack of cooperation from traffic police stalled implementation, and sensory detector sets placed under roads were destroyed by excavation projects.

Under the current system, traffic lights are programmed to change every three minutes or more, and the police switch to a manual system when the traffic becomes congested.

However, the time period of traffic congestion at an intersection is longer and more unpredictable.

The average traffic congestion timespan at the intersection between Vibhavadi and Paholyothin roads in front of Central Lat Phrao was 800 seconds, or over 13 minutes.

Mr Chitchanok said motorists would have to wait only 180 seconds or three minutes under the ATC system...

State Tower unveils its golden dome

April 22, 2004

Categories: Buildings



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

State

Tower unveils its golden dome

– April 22, 2004

After a long refurbishment during which it was white, State Tower's dome was uncovered in the last few days revealing a new coat of gold.

Earlier: World's highest outdoor restaurant:

[Sirocco](#)

[Restaurant on top of State Tower](#)

Bangkok Subway News April 2004

April 23, 2004

Categories: Subway

BMCL insists 3 baht a share

for subway buyout—challenges government to pay or make good their threat to create another system along the same route

– translated and summarized from *Manager*

Daily, June 7, 2004 and *Bangkok Biznews*, June 7, 2004

BMCL said the price for the stocks to be sold to MRTA will be 3 baht/share since the government has deprived BMCL of the chance to make money so the high price tag is for compensation.

BMCL challenged that the government to come up with a system parallel to BMCL tracks—with connections to other system while isolating BMCL tracks. This type of measure would forever sever the relationship between the public and private sector for making joint ventures.

Commentary: Even though the stock price of BMCL is too high, the heavy-hand methods against BMCL and Ch. Kanrchang PCL to deprive the Democrats of having the financial resources to challenge TRT's supremacy is too blatant to be acceptable because TRT is using the Bangkokian's sufferings for political gain. However, the delays on the Taksin and Samrong extensions will cause a backlash against TRT. It would be much better if the government just comes up with a simple majority by holding 51% of stock, but TRT has the strong intention to grab all the shares to give to their cronies in the same way as the privatization of PTT, TOT, and AirportThai.

No wonder then that the EGAT privatization is bound to be a total failure because too many people are opposed to the plan. Same can be said to the plan to nationalize and then privatize BMCL.

Even though the BTSC and BMCL (or even the commuter networks of SRT) will be forced to merge in the same way as Hong Kong MTR and Kwangtung Rail (East Rail + West Rail) by market demands, the government should never meddle in the process for their own gain. Otherwise they will suffer from political defeat as the consequence.

BMA-MRTA setting up motorcycle taxis around

Subway Stations – translated and summarized

from *Manager Daily*, June 8, 2004

The BMA City Clerk said BMA and MRTA are preparing motorcycle taxis around subway stations and trying very hard to prevent mafia from grabbing motorcycle fleets. This can be done by picking existing fleets of motorcycle taxis to be employees of MRTA where they receive a salary, other welfare benefits and insurance. MRTA and BMA police will arrange the place for parking taxis and motorcycle taxis, bicycles racks, and new orders for feeder vans.

Farcino Pharmacy aiming for new branches in the subway – translated and summarized

from *Manager Daily*, June 8, 2004

Farcino (local franchise of Phamarcy) said they are going to open branches of Farcino at the following subway stations: Phetburi, Kamphaengphet, Ratchadaphisek, Lad Prhao, and Thai Cultural Center.

Golden space

in the subway–Not an easy game! –

translated and summarized from *Matichon*,

May 30, 2004

The subway is going to become a reality soon and Nestle, Maeng Pong, Yamazaki (Thailand), 7-11 (Thailand–run by the CP Group) as well as bakery and ice cream shops (Swensen & Aunty Annie–run by Central restaurant, a subsidiary of Central Pattana) have rented space inside subway stations with high business potential. However, it will take lots of time to boost the daily passenger to reach goals. Even BTS has only 380,000 passengers a day with an average ticket price of 20 baht even though BTS initially targeted 600,000 passengers a day with average ticket price of 26 baht.

This lower than expected numbers of daily passengers have forced many shops inside skytrain station to go out of business.

Mass transit systems like the Skytrain are for those who have a salary of at least 15,000 baht a month–those who may have private cars already. So far Skytrain has an inadequate number of gates with escalators. Most passengers decline to use automatic bank exchanges to break down large bills into coins since they have crumpled banknotes.

MRTA will have a really hard time boosting the number of passengers to reach 200,000 a day. Even Yum International (the local franchise holder of KFC) said they expect more revenue from KFC branches close to subway stations than retail shops inside subway stations.

Oishi group (the local franchise of Oishi restaurant) said they will wait until the number of daily passenger is high enough.

There are only 40% of possible shops inside Skytrain stations.

Central Pattana agree that most subway passengers rush from one place to another and shops take a long time to become successful.

Only shops in the station with high potential (Mochit – Victory Monument – Siam) will be profitable. Not surprisingly, stations like Phra Khanong and Saphan Kwai are virtually ghost stations.

The high rent rates also deter many people from setting up the shops inside subway stations–1500-3000 baht/sq-m compared to 2500 baht/sq-m for grade-A zone in Central Department Stores (especially true for Central Lad Phrao).

Disputes on advertising inside subway stations and tunnels already creates tussles between BMCL and MRTA. The telecom installation also creates a war of words between TOT and BMCL. The retailing inside subway stations will be another ticking time bomb for BMCL–ready to explode after July 1.

Suriya speeding up bidding

on 13-station Purple Line to Bang Yai to counter oil shock

– translated and summarized from *Siam*

Turakij, May 23-29, 2004

Suriya is Speeding up MRTA subway extensions: Bangyai Line (Purple Line) and Ban Khae Extension (Blue Line) as the way to counter the current oil hike. Bidding for the Bang Yai line will be held in October 2004 and the contractor will be signed in May 2005 and the Bangkhae Extension (Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae) will

follow soon.

It will take three years to finish the first leg of the Purple line while it will take five years to finish the Bangkhae extension of the Blue line. Bangyai line is all elevated while Bangkhae extension has to be underground when it passes through Rattanakosin Island.

There will be 13 stations for Bangyai Line – after Bangsue:

- 1) Tao Poon (near Taopoon Police Office)
- 2) Wongsawang (near Big C Wongsawang)
- 3) Nakhon In (the station at the road to Wat Nakhon In)
- 4) Rewadee (in front of Soi Rewadee – through soi to Bang Kwang and Nonthaburi Pier)
- 5) Khae Rai (Near New Nonthaburi Government center)
- 6) Sri Pornsawan (near Jusco Rattathibet)
- 7) Phra Nanaklao Bridge (should be called [Sanambin Nam](#) to differentiate from Saphan Phra Nanaklao on the western side)
- 8) Saphan Phrananklao (Bangyai side)
- 9) Rattathibet (Rattathibet Road)
- 10) Ratchaphruek Village (should be Bang Yai)
- 11) Wongchai Nakhon Village (should be Ratchaphruek since it is close to Ratchaphruek Intersection)
- 12) Bang Buathong Station (near Bang Buathong Intersection)
- 13) Bangyai (near Bangyai Sport Complex – Terminal Station with land expropriation for the new maintenance center (to complement the Huay Kwang Main Depot) as well as a Park and Ride facility to pick up passengers from Lad Lumkaeo, Pathum Thani, Bang Yai and Bang Buathong)

Commentary: The delay on joint ticket implementation between Skytrain and Subway has already frustrated Skytrain passengers even before the full service of Subway.

Buying the subway and building the extensions – translated and summarized from *Prachachat Thurakij*, May 27-29, 2004 and *Than Setthakij*, May 27-29, 2004

Local banks (SCB, KTB, KBank) have very strong interest to grant more loans at special interest rates for MRTA expansions and MTB is supporting the plan for purchasing BMCL (KTB is one of BMCL shareholders).

Local banks have sent financial auditors to check MRTA balance sheets and check the foreign debts and financial situation.

MRTA governor said the price for BMCL stocks would be 2 baht/share—very high compared to 1.50 baht/share purchased by Natural Park PCL since MRTA would like to give some profits to those shareholders who have already purchased BMCL stock to encourage more selling.

Therefore, MRTA is aiming to negotiate with shareholders and creditors since it is much easier to negotiate through the creditors and shareholders than the owners.

The MRTA Board will come up with the resolutions for 91 km of expansions with a price tag of 300 billion baht on May 31 and then the MRTA Board resolution will be submitted to MOTC before sending to the cabinet.

For the 91-km extensions, there are two major sections:

1) These sections already have through studies:

1.1) Southern extension of Blue line (Hua Lamphong –

2) Additional New Section

2.1) Blue Ring -> Bangsue, Charan Sanitwongse – 1 km – all elevated across Chao Phraya at Bang Or

2.2) Bang Bumru Extension of Orange Line (Sam S

Bang
Khae) – 4.8 km underground and 9.1 km elevated ->
total
13.9 km
1.2) Orange Line (Bang Kapi – Sam Sen) – 18.5 km
underground
and 1.5 km elevated
1.3) Purple Line (Bang Yai – bang Sue) – 20 km all
elevated
1.4) Purple Line (Sam Sen – Rat Boorana) – 9 km
underground
– 6 km elevated total 15 km

Bang
Bumru) – 2.5 km underground (with underwater tun
and
1.5 km elevated – total 4 km
2.3) Samsen Connector of Purple Line (Bangsue – S
Sen)
– 5 km all elevated (Actually there should be a 1.5 k
underground
section when it has to pass the main gate of Sukhoth
Palace
(Palace newly renovated for the Crown Prince) near
Watchira
Hospital.

MRTA is waiting for 386 million to fund the
detailed design (300 million baht) and the land expropriation
(86 million baht) for the subdepot and maintenance center as well
as the stairways for elevated sections.
The purple line (Bangsue – Wongsawang – Phra Nanaklao – Bangyai)
will be executed first since the elevated tracks are much easier
to handle.

MRTA System Maintenance Director said the Radianz Networks is
going to finish the installation of the mobile phone antenna inside
the station by the end of June 2004. After that, it is up to the
telecom companies whether they are going to pay 300,000 baht/month/station
to rent the space for installing telecom substations.
However BMCL complained that MRTA has not transferred the area
to BMCL yet. Even worse, during the decoration as well as the
maintenance, they found several kinked power lines inside the
tunnel.

Commentary: The interchange stations at Sanghee
Intersection, Bang Plad Intersection and Tha Phra intersection
are too critical to be abandoned.

Subway extensions delayed
due to confusion and red tape – translated
and summarized from *Manager Daily*,
May 9, 2004

MRTA Governor said MRTA has to submit a report to MOTC so as
to get cabinet approval on the budget for subway extensions
(Hua Lamphong – Bangkhae, Phra Nanklao – Rat Boorana). While
waiting, MRTA is hiring a consultant to examine the results
from the existing studies and make a new cost estimation so
that they can start the project immediately and fulfill the
6-year plan.

Even though the Traffic Policy Office told the public at large
that the subway extensions have been approved by the cabinet,
it is only an announcement causing lots of red tape when asking
for a budget since there is actually no cabinet resolution to
back up the announcement.

It seems to MRTA that the Traffic Policy Office is telling a
big lie to the public with impunity. MRTA has to get the routes
approved first before starting the construction. Even though
there are financial resources available, it is up to the government
to either borrow for MRTA or ask MRTA to borrow the money on
their own.

However, MRTA is asking for the budget from the budget bureau
to make a detailed study as well as studying the social impact

and the land expropriation. The budget would be 300 million baht to hire the previous consultant to handle detailed studies along with designs of the projects to speed up the project and be done in eight months. After ironing out those details, MRTA will call a new bid for the contractors to handle the projects.

Commentary: MRTA is feeling the same bitterness as BTS (the Skytrain company) when their extensions have been delayed even though the government and Traffic Policy Office (actually another government mouthpiece of propaganda) make a strong claim that the project will be done in six years. However they have created more red tape which they are not supposed to do if they want the project to be done in six years. If the government really wants to win both the hearts and minds of Bangkokians, they must cut red tape to speed up the project even though the routes will pass the Opposition Party's houses instead of passing the cabinet member's houses.

MRTA Park and Ride parking rates proposed
– translated and summarized from *Matichon*,
May 8, 2004

MRTA Board are proposing the parking rates for the park and ride to promote more usage of the subway system.

1) 2.5 baht/hour -> 25 baht/10 hour for those who have Subway Smart Card Tickets

2) 20 baht/hour for those who are not subway passengers in all stations except the following stations: Sukhumvit, Phetburi, Sam Yan

3) 30 baht/hour for those who are not subway passengers who park in the following stations: Sukhumvit, Phetburi, Sam Yan
These high rates will discourage those who want to park overnight.
These parking rate will need cabinet approval to be enact.

Siam Turakij

and the subway – May 4, 2004

Wisarut reports: *Siam Turakij*

still writes negatively about the subway, but at lower tone due to the high popularity of the subway as well as positive responses despite the malfunction of brakes and the screen doors. They said in the latest issue (April 25- May 1, 2004) that:

"Bangkokians, you better wake up about your popular MRTA Subway! It costs 100 billion baht. You could create two sets of motorways from Chaing Rai to Sugai Kolok for that amount—or even a 4-lane highway with a total distance of 5000 km – 60 km/province – or 13 billion baht/province."

However, I would respond to the *Siam Turakij* editor that:

If the SRT workers and SRT unions still use corruption, collusion and nepotism as well as sticking with old mindsets , they do not deserve trillions of baht investment through my tax payment.

Because of my strong response toward the posts from SRT workers who stick with their old mindsets, the SRT webmaster deleted my post on SRT webboard.

Investment on new motorways? This only pleases those automobile/oil vested interests as well as highway contractors. Many politicians get started as road contractors as the first step to become corrupt politicians.

Earlier: [April](#)

[test run review](#) – *Matichon Daily*,

April 23, 2004

Earlier: [Criticisms of the subway](#) – *Siam Turakij*,
April 18-24, 2004

MRTA rejecting the price offered by BMCL
– translated and summarized from *Komchadluke*,
May 1, 2004

The MRTA Governor said the BMCL stock price is too high—100% profit is too much. Thus MRTA is threatening not to extend the contract. Suriya said the final conclusion for Subway/Skytrain purchasing will come out soon.

BMCL has invested 7 billion baht and the 3 baht/share of BMCL will enable BMCL to reap a profit of 14 billion baht which is too much. BMCL is claiming that the system will have a future, but have doubt if the future is coming from the private sector or at the expense of public sector. If the problem persists MRTA will not extend the contract.

April test run review
– translated and summarized from *Matichon Daily*, April 23, 2004

There are tens of thousands of people went down 15-25 meters to the subway stations to escape the flaming April weather and have a free ride despite brake malfunctions.

After passing the gate, they found the concourse area is very wide—18-25 meters wide and 150-200 meters long—stunning lots of people because of the size. The concourse section is for PR, control rooms and ticket vending machines which allow passengers to purchase either smart tokens for single trips or smart card stored value tickets. However, the TVMs are not delivered from France yet.

Klong Toei, Sukhumvit and Lad Phrao has sections for stores.

There are 3 forms of platforms:

- 1) Staggered platform at Silom, Sam Yan, and Hua Lamphong
- 2) Central Platform at Hua Lamphong and most of the stations
- 3) Side platform at Bangsue and Klong Toei

The interior part of subway rolling stock is almost the same as Skytrain rolling stock. Only the seat and handles are blue. Not a surprise since Siemens is the producer of both Skytrain and Subway. The special feature is the wheelchair lockers for the handicapped.

It is pretty fast—80 km/hr reaching the destination in 25 minutes.

The actual time from end to end of the system is 35 minutes—almost the same as the Skytrain.

There were tens of thousands of subway passengers a day reaching 80,000 people by April 18. Most people said "they like the subway system as an alternative to driving."

For those who miss the April test run, the May test run will be held during the rush hour period during designated dates and times for about 10 days . If both BMCL and MRTA could make a settlement, even those who have no access cards will be invited as well.

Mr ron Binmadnee (a Muslim Bangkokian) who brought his family from Ram Indra to have a free ride told the *Matichon* correspondent: "It is a good alternative for us – even though I ride the Skytrain from Morchit to work at Chitlom. The subway is faster, but very loud during the trip. So, a good thing about the subway is the convenience. The only worries are about the safety despite

the PR effort. Even we get stuck on the Skytrain, we can still see, but the subway tunnel is dark..."

Criticisms of the subway

– translated and summarized from *Siam*

Turakij, April 18-24, 2004

Professors in Traffic Engineering, the Parliament's Traffic Committee, Pol Gen Salang Bunnag have the following criticisms of the subway:

- 1) No telecom stations installed – creating mobile phone blindspots.
- 2) The stations are too big and wide for getting much area for renting. Even Piccadilly Station of London Tube is not that big.
- 3) The distance between stations is too far way in the central business district area. The distance for each station should not exceed 2000 feet (600 m), but it is 800-1000m (some even 2.2 km for Kamphaengphet to Bangsue, Queen Sirikit to Sukhumvit and Lad Phrao to Phaholyothin. It could cause passengers to become exhausted before reaching the station especially in the case of those who live between Sirikit-Sukhumvit station as well as those who live between Lad Phrao-Phaholyothin.

Same can be said for those who want to change the train at Silom-Salaend interchange station. They need to have the stamina of Hercules to change the train at Silom-Saladaeng since they have to climb 42 meters up and walk about 500 meters at the ground level to reach the station. Even escalators are not much help at all.

- 4) Queen Sirikit, Lad Phrao and Sukhumvit Stations should be elevated since the underground sections will cause lots of troubles. Generally, the subway stations should be 800 m away. Thus the ventilator has to be designed to ventilate the air at a maximum distance of 400 meters. The distances between Queen Sirikit Station and Sukhumvit station as well as the Lad Phrao-Phaholyothin stations are 2200 m away – thus the ventilator is not powerful enough to handle the tunnel section.

- 5) Stacking platforms like Samyan, Silom and Lumphinee will cause inconvenience for changing to other modes of transportation especially in the case of Silom station.

- 6) Ticket Prices–The rate of 14 to 36 baht (12 to 31 baht for first year) as well as half the price for children under 12 and those over 65 are still too expensive since MRTA has not come up with special passes as BTSC has already. The 30-day passes as well as 1-day pass and 3-day pass have drastically cut ticket prices.

Commentary: This shows the bias against the subway by *Siam Turakij* editors. These are very corrupted ideas imported from America during the 1960's which are obsolete today. Furthermore, stopping MRTA-BMCL from making commercial development is actually the way to cripple the subway system as the way to please those Automobile interests.

Roadshow along the subway route

– translated and summarized from the MRTA

Website

MRTA and BMCL feel very happy that 90,000 passengers have trusted the subway system as an alternative for traveling around Bangkok and came to the subway stations to try ride for free during the April test run from April 13-18, 2004.

Therefore, BMCL is going to set another road show along the route to attract those who live and work along Subway route to know how to use the system.

Date	Place
April 26, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	Fortune Town – Ratchadaphisek
April 27, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	Lake Ratchada – Ratchadaphisek
April 28, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	Abdul Rahim Building – Rama 4
April 29, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	CMIC Buidling – Asok
April 30, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	Olympia Building – Ratchadaphisek
May 4, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	Lumphinee Tower – Rama 4
May 6, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	PTT PCL – Vibhavadee Rangsit
May 6, 2004 – 2:30pm-3:30pm	TMB PCL HQ – Phahol Yothin
May 7, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	Silom Complex – Silom
May 10, 2004 – 11:30am-1:30pm	Le Concord Building – Ratchadaphisek

Radianz

wins subway project – *The*

Nation, April 22, 2004

Subway operator Bangkok Metro Co LTD (BMCL) yesterday said it had allowed its subsidiary Radianz Communication Network to provide wireless communications services along its underground line...

Radianz has hired a sub-contractor to install the antenna system in the subway, allowing for mobile phone communications along the commuter line...

Another telecom source said Advanced Info Service (AIS) Plc had also won a similar deal from Radianz to install a system for its own use.

Without mentioning names, Total Access Communication (DTAC) recently criticised the project as favouring one telecom company by allowing it to monopolise fibre-optics installation.

Earlier: Cell

phone service in subway not complete – *Siam Turakij*,

April 9-16, 2004

Slum fire

April 23, 2004

Categories: 2Bangkok News



Slum
fire – 1:30pm, April
23, 2004

[Fire](#)

[Engulfs Slum in Thai Capital](#) (Reuters)

Fire engulfed a slum area near the Australian and German embassies in the Thai capital on Friday, sending a huge pall of thick black smoke into the sky, Reuters witnesses said.

(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: Wesley Hsu)

Phan Phiphop Lila Bridge

April 24, 2004

Phan Phiphop Lila Bridge

– April 24, 2004

Nils writes: *An old aerial photo (circa 1946) from Heinrich Damm's [virtual walk through Rattanakosin Island](#)..... looking north and showing the northeastern corner of Sanam Luang, the Mae Thorani Fountain, Phanpop Lila Bridge, the Royal Hotel (right), Ratchadamnoen Avenue, the mouth of Khlong Lord which is now covered by the ramp of the Phra Pinklao Bridge, The National Gallery (left), Khao San Rd (middle right), Chakraphong Rd and Wat Chanasongkhram, Banglamphu Intersection (Phra Sumen/Chakraphong/Samsen Rds). Note: What might look like a bridge over the Chao Phraya at first glance rather seems to be part of the plane's wing.....*



This photo is from the post-war aerial survey of Bangkok taken in 1946 by Peter Williams Hunt.

Democrats deny copying Thaksin's policies

April 27, 2004

Categories: The Thaksin Years

[Democrats](#)

[deny copying policies](#) –

The Nation, April 27, 2004

This amusing incident has been all over the news in the last day. MCOT had the full, sarcastic statement made by Thaksin about the Democrats' new populist policies: *Asked about a new policy of the Democrat Party, which is emphasized on 'free education', the Thai leader said that it was a good development of the leading opposition party to change its policy to be people-oriented, adding that it was also a good development of the Thai politics that there was now another political party planning to use resources to bring about what are considered constructive development to the society and the nation, rather than using the resources to destroy rival parties. "I welcome the Democrat Party to the club", he said.*

Troubles in the South – December 2006

April 28, 2004

Categories: The Thai Deep South

Troubles in the South
– December 2006

[Troubles
in the South index page](#)

Exclusive: Burning teachers – December 29, 2006

Mr. John reports: *The officers investigate the dead bodies of Mr. Manoon Sornkaew, a teacher at Ban Bado, Mu 3, Tambon Yupo, Amphur Yala and Mr. Jamnong Choopattanapong, the director of the same school. They were shot by insurgents and after that the insurgents burned them including a car—brand Isuzu Dmax, bronze color, license no. 1J – 7254, Yala. This event happened 100 meters from Bado School on December 29.*

2Bangkok.com has exclusive photos of this incident that are EXTREMELY graphic. After deliberation, we think it is important for people to see what is really happening (this is 2Bangkok.com's mission in the first place). Also, unlike newspapers, the internet allows the option of presenting primary sources and an uncensored vision of events where people can draw their own conclusions. So, if you choose to view them, here are photos of the incident: [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#)



(Photo: Mr. John for 2Bangkok.com)

Chasing away Thai Buddhist families –
December 18, 2006

Mr. John reports: *Last night (December 18), an unknown number of insurgents fired at the house of Mr. Song Maneeprawat, a 70-year-old Thai Buddhist, who lives at 20 Mu 6, Tambon La-ae, Amphur Yaha, Yala. He was injured. They burned his house, two motorcycles and one car and his assets. The police thought that this was done by the insurgents who want to chase and threaten Thai Buddhists because in that village there are only three Thai Buddhist families.*

Below: Note the curing rubber...



(Photo: Mr. John for 2Bangkok.com)

Almost like being there: City of three cultures –
December 29, 2006



(Photo: Mr.
John for
2Bangkok.com)

Mr. John reports: *City of three cultures* – Here are signs telling the cultural place for tour, Chao Mae Lim Ko Nio Shrine, Kru Se Mosque and Wat Chang Hai located at the join of Amphur Tepa, Songkhla and Amphur Nongjik , Pattani.

This points that Pattani in the three southern borders is the city of multiple of cultures of Thai, Chinese, and Muslim people who live peacefully together for a long time for many hundred years.

Although, at present there is the unrest that threatens people in area including the unrest group trying to make complications of religion and race.

Interior Minister not concerned about southern separatist flag-fliers – translated and summarized from *Phujatkan*, December 4, 2006

Most schools in the southern border provinces reopened today. However, schools did not reopen in the following areas out of local security concerns: Narathiwat Province's Rueso, Rangae and Cho Airong Districts, Yala Province's Education Zone 2, and five other districts in Pattani Province.

The unrest in the deep south still continues unabated. The Minister of the Interior–Aree Wong-araya–has recently stated that he is not particularly concerned about separatist plans to fly the "Patani State" flags in some southern villages. The minister was giving an interview to mark the end of 1,000 days since southern criminals raided a Narathiwat Province army camp and stole a large quantity of firearms. Aree said that it was illegal for the flag of an unrecognized state to fly over Thai sovereign territory and that the only legal flag was the red, white and blue of the Thai tricolor. He opined that the criminal flag-fliers were trying to exert a psychological influence over local villages and that their intended action was futile. He confirmed that the government was well-prepared to handle any major insurgent incidents that might occur in the deep south in the next few weeks.

1,000 days since Narathiwat arms raid – translated and summarized from *Matichon*, December 3, 2006

General Sonthi Boonyaratglin (the Royal Thai Army Commander-in-Chief) is worried that southern terrorists might organize a major attack in the next few weeks. The military has found that criminal groups are preparing for a major incident which could be followed by some kind of victory celebration and a declaration of the independence of the "Patani State."

Prime Minister Gen. Surayud Chulanont has recently said that if opinion polls show public dissatisfaction with his government's handling of the southern unrest during the next three months, he is ready to make adjustments to the procedures and plans that are currently in place to deal with the problem.

General Surayud also confirmed that refugee Buddhist villagers in the deep south have been given the freedom to make their own decision as to whether they wish to return to their home villages. He said that if the villagers wanted to return to their homes to check on their property, the army would be there to escort them. He also stated his belief that those villagers who have already returned home would be able to provide reassurance that it was safe to return home. Many of the refugees have taken temporary shelter in a local Buddhist temple...



(Photo: Mr. John for 2Bangkok.com)

Almost like being there: Burned school –
December 8, 2006

Mr. John reports: The students of Kuruchonpattana, Mu 1, Tambon Pohseng, Amphur Muang Yala see the ruins of a school after it was burned insurgents. This is expected this was done by the unrest group.



(Photo: Mr. John for 2Bangkok.com)

PRD warns local security units of massive insurgent attacks early this month led by Sapaeing Baso – translated and summarized by *Phujatkan*, December 2, 2006

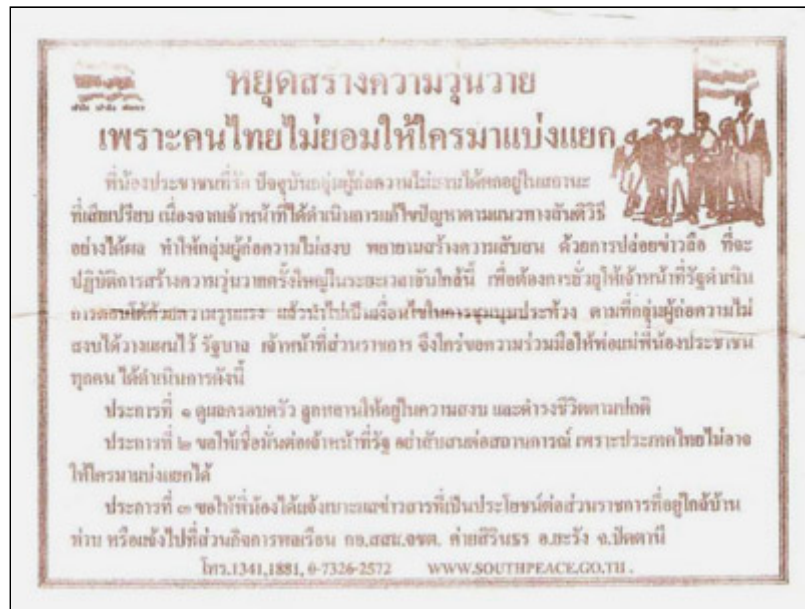
The government's Public Relations Department (PRD) has warned all local security units to prepare for an unprecedented series of attacks by insurgent groups in several locations during early December. It also named Sapaeing Baso as the current commander of the insurgent groups that will carry out the attacks, and said that the attacks would occur in several places simultaneously. The PRD urged security units to be well-prepared for "significant incidents" at the beginning of December, after it had been informed that thirteen core insurgents—led by a Syrian called Dato Faday—had recently held a meeting in a "neighboring country."

The meeting's participants were apparently ordered to return to their hometowns and incite local Muslims to participate in a series of attacks between December 1 and December 11. The participants were also asked to enter into cooperation with insurgent cells already in position in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla Provinces and to prepare 60 to 100 uniforms to be worn by militants during the attacks.

The incidents are planned to take place in many locations simultaneously as happened at the time of the Kru Sae Mosque incident on April 28, 2004. The idea, yet again, appears to be to draw soldiers into using violence to control the ensuing chaos of such attacks. The clandestine members of such insurgent groups are all too willing to sacrifice their lives to create an extreme psychological impression on the public. They also hope to bring the incidents to international attention. Sapaeing Baso's groups have even prepared a declaration of victory to be read out after the attacks.

Deep South Diary for November – December 9, 2006

Usually our info on incidents in the deep south is compiled for research purposes, but last month the pace of incidents was unusually brisk and we thought 2B readers might be interested to see the [report](#) (pdf, 58kb) from the [2braa.com](#) site. The report is edited, just for a part of the month, and mainly from Yala, but it gives an idea of the pace and nature of the events of November. Many of these incidents never show up in the press.



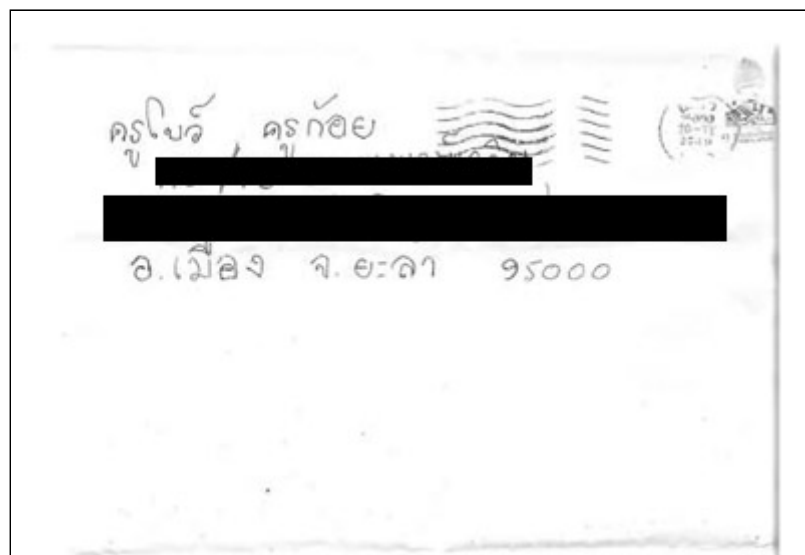
Example of a leaflet dropped by helicopter in the deep south – December 7, 2006
 This is a leaflet scattered by helicopter by the Southern Border Provinces Peace-building Command.

It reads:

Stop making troubles as Thais won't let anybody to spoil our unity.

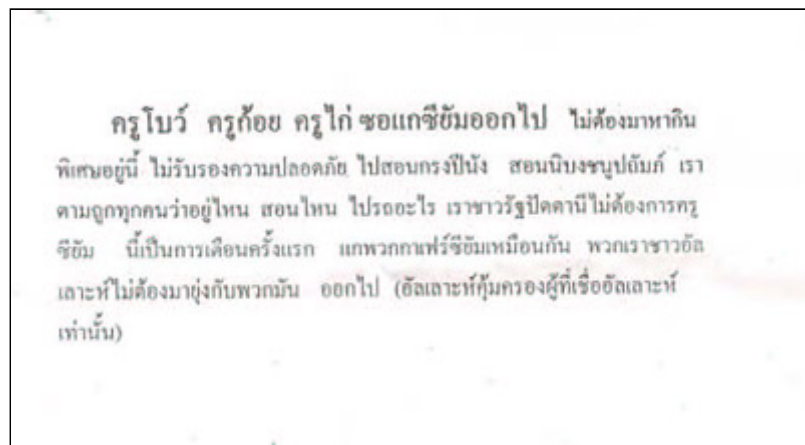
Currently, militants are in a disadvantageous position as the government's peaceful methods resolving southern unrest are effective. Southern militants are spreading rumors, trying to mislead the civilians. The move is a bid to trick government officials into using violence which would lead to opposition and demonstrations. We, therefore, would like to ask you to follow the following advice:

1. Keep an eye on your family members and keep your routine.
2. Trust government officials. Don't be misled. No part of Thailand will be separated.
3. Inform government officials of any useful information by contacting the Civil Department of the Southern Border Provinces Peace-Building Command, Sirindhorn Campus, in Amphur Yarang of Pattani Province, call 1341, 1881 or 0-7326-2572, or on www.southpeace.go.th.



Example of a threatening letter sent by separatists –
 December 2, 2006

Above: Kru Bow Kru Koy (Kru is teacher), ,
 Amphur Muang, Yala 95000



Above: Kru Bow Kru Koy Kru Kai, the Thai Buddhist get out. Don't work here. Not guarantee for safety. Go to teach at Krongpinang at Nibongchanoopatam. We know and can follow where you are, what you teach, and how you go.

We, Pattani state, do not want Thai Buddhists teachers. This is the first warning.

You are also the Thai Buddhist . We are Allah people and don't get involved with them. Get out. Allah protects people who believe in Allah only.

King and Queen worried about teachers in south, suggest them practice shooting – Foreigners condemn southern militants – translated and summarized from *Komchadluek*, December 1, 2006 Naphol Boonthap, deputy aide-decamp general, on November 30 visited Yala and Narathiwat Provinces and expressed concerns on behalf of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen over the people. He said he was willing to help teachers. A project providing shooting training to teachers is being held so that they can learn how to protect themselves when being attacked. The pilot project of "Protecting teacher battalion" at present is only being conducted in Narathiwat. It will be expanded to Yala and Pattani.

Thawat Saeham, president of the Teachers Federation in Narathiwat Province, said teachers in the province are not confident in security measures as teachers are still attacked despite tight security measures.

Human Rights Watch, an international organization that conducts advocacy on human rights, stated that attacks on teachers by Thailand's southern separatists are terrorizing the population and preventing children from enjoying their right to education.

[Troubles
in the South index page](#)

War and Peace at the Southern Border

April 28, 2004

Categories: The Thai Deep South

War and Peace at the Southern Border – April 30-May 5, 2005

These are chapter summaries from the Thai-language *War and Peace at the Southern Border* by Dr Rung Kaewdaeng, Deputy Education Minister. This is the book that Democrat leader Abisit Vejjajiva suggested that PM Thaksin should read.

Here is the index:

Introduction: I am a Yala resident

Part 1 – War, War and War

Chapter 1 – A Peninsula of Diversity

Chapter 2 – Lungkasula Domain

Chapter 3 – Pattani Domain

Chapter 4 – Pattani when it was independent of Siam

Chapter 5 – Crisis and Solutions in the age of King

Rama V and VI

Chapter 6 – Role for Foreigners (Islam religion, western, Chinese, Malayu thief, Malaysia, Arab, international Muslim organizations, and international terrorist

) and the Pattani problem

Chapter 7 – Southern border problem in the age of Field Marshal Plaek (Por) Piboonsongkarm

Part 2 – War at the present time

Chapter 8 – Separatist land movement (BIPP, BRN, PULO, BBMP, GMIP, BRN Coordinate, PANYOM, etc.)

Chapter 9 – Fight at the present time

Chapter 10 – Southern people' lives that changed

Part 3 – Sustainable peace

Chapter 11 – The grandeur of the King and Queen

Chapter 12 – Education Reform for all Thai people

Chapter 13 – Designing the Educational System

Chapter 14 – Peace College

Chapter 15 – Other factors for sustainable peace

Chapter 3 – Pattani domain

Pattani from 1500-1849 was an independent domain having a governor do trading and has relations with Ayuthaya.

The Kingdom of Ayuthaya tried to expand power to the south but could not win Pattani, because it had trade relations with many countries in Europe and Malaka, and also has religious relations with the head city of Malayu, so it was supported with weapons and people.

The history of Pattani domain is the same as any other, seizing property (treasure), killing, a brilliant era and then an era of decline. The last war with Siam was in 1849. Lots of people from the Pattani domain are Muslim, but there are also Siamese Buddhists.

The Muslims, Chinese and Buddhist live together in peace.

Chapter 4 – Pattani when it was independent of Siam

An initial history of Rattanakosin of 116 years said Thailand won Pattani many times and after that Pattani could gather its people and restore its sovereign although its population was not large (3000-4000 Chinese, Malayu, and Siamese).

The impact of war between Siam and Pattani was that lots of Pattani people were forcibly moved to Bangkok. Some of the original city dwellers evacuated to Kalantan (in Malaysia). Many Malaysians of Pattani origin are now in Kalantan, Perak and at the border. These people have bad attitude to Thailand up to now.

Chapter 5 – Crisis and solutions in the age of King Rama V and VI

Changing Governor from 'dependency governor' system to municipality system in the King Rama V era impacts Pattani status . This causes Praya (Lord) Wichit Pakdi to lose his position in controlling Pattani. He and his family had to move to Kalantan state. After that his heirs fought with Thailand up to the present.

Dr. Rung thinks the Thai secret police perhaps have information on the movement in Malaysia of these people and know of their communication. The first cause of the security problem in the three southern provinces has roots in Malaysia which starts from the historical movement of Ton Kumuhamad Muhaiyiddin . This movement is thought to be not only in Malaysia, but also has support in many countries and is difficult to conquer.

Chapter 6 –

Role for Foreigners (Islam religion, western, Chinese, Malayu thief, Malaysia, Arab, international Muslim organizations, and international terrorist) and the Pattani problem

To solve problems in the south, one has to consider the factors of history, language, religion and cultural difference. Moreover one needs to consider the outside factors such as the neighbor country Malaysia, the World Muslim Organization, and the most important are world terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and J.I.

Since the crisis surrounding the Takbai event, foreign countries asked for information, but some helped with moral support, money, and terror-fighting techniques. Some foreign soldiers may have come to help also. Foreign involvement of all kinds in the three southern provinces should not be overlooked.

Chapter 7 – Southern border problem in the age of Field Marshal Plaek (Por) Piboonsongkarm

The government of Gen. Praek (Por) Priboonsongkram did not understand the problem in the south and neither did many powerful persons of the time in Bangkok. Few studied or understood the history, religion and culture and this caused lots of problems that persist up to now. Most citizens, the military, police, politicians, liked to say “there is no crisis.”

The main train of thought was to regain and hold onto sovereignty. However the rebels did not vanish with time, but passed their philosophy from father to son with new organizations built to regain the Pattani state all the time.

The development of the three southern provinces in Gen. Sarit Thanarat era was a good strategy although it could not solve whole problem. Unfortunately the development was not continuous.

Part 2 – War at the present time

Chapter 8

– Separatist land movement (BIPP, BRN, PULO, BBMP, GMIP, BRN Coordinate, PANYOM, etc.)

The separatism in southern Thailand started before WW2 and was set up by Ton Kumamad Mahaiyiddin, the founder of the terrorist organization. They stay in Malaysia and have offices there, but the fighting forces are in Thailand. When the organization suffers a setback, they retreat back to Malaysia to work.

Some are teachers in the National University of Malaysia because terrorists have dual nationalities to easily enter both countries.

These terrorism organizations have moved continuously.

They start and stop operations continuously. Dr. Rung contends that they never stop and the system has developed thoroughly. In the first era, they operate in the forest with old persons and those with a low education level. Eventually it expands to many ages. Old and young students and operate and train in town. The newer terrorists are highly educated. Some are doctors from religious educational institutes in and outside the country. They have ideology and willingness to sacrifice. Some are believe in black magic. They have skill using weapons, making bombs, have studied in foreign countries, and use the internet very well.

Development of Terrorist movement in the three southern provinces

	Early period	Middle period	Present period
Place	Founder in Kalantan, Malaysia	Mountain at the border of Thailand-Malaysia	Towns, villages, private religious schools
Person	High level governor and followers	Head persons, middle level politicians	Ustas (religious teacher), students, politicians

Nowadays, the face of terrorist is changed with the era and world situation. If we investigate, we will find the terrorist and national and local politicians, including the religious teacher (ustas), are sometimes the same person or group.

Chapter

9 – Fight at the present time

The cause of the fighting at Pattani in 2004 are as follows:

1. There is still traditional ideology remaining concerning separatism.
2. The coming of the "Malaysian magician" that can influence youth.
3. The role of ustaz to incite separatism and lead students in the wrong way concerning religious doctrines.
4. The mistake of the government in many areas such as dissolving the administration groups in the southern provinces, poor education, and the police and military being disunited.

These do not include the ongoing old problems such as official government corruption, persecution of people by the government officials, and fighting between national and local governments for influence.

Chapter 10 – Southern peoples' lives that changed

2004 is the year of the crisis in the southern border provinces. Guns are stolen, there are riots, burning of government buildings, school, and police stations, and killing of the officers and innocent people. Peace changes to a great upheaval. Unity and love for each other, which had long been ours, had been destroyed. Nowadays it is only crisis, killing, hate and apprehension instead.

Part 3 – Sustainable peace

Chapter 11 – The grandeur of the King and Queen

Following the The King and The Queen's speeches, the government should have respect for their important strategy by considering that Thais are people of all nationalities, religions and cultures. And that all must take responsibility to solve problems starting from the level of villages, thambol, amphur (district), province, throughout the country and this should be the national agenda.

Chapter 12 – Education reform for all Thai people

The urgent mission of the government is to conquer the terrorists. But the long term goal is educating all Thais to study the real and accurate situation.

This is because Thais are misunderstanding the idea of 'Thai-Muslim' in many things and think that Muslims and terrorists are the same. The truth is that the terrorist is a person who does not respect strictly the Islamic religion and the terrorist ustaz teach the wrong religious doctrines.

Chapter 13 – Designing the educational system

One factor to solve problems and build peace is designing a new educational system which teaches those of different religions the ability to live peacefully together in the society of the southern provinces.

Chapter 14 – Peace College

A 'peace college' could be set up to will solve the problem of people who do not know how to work and understand each other.

Chapter 15 – Other factors for sustainable peace

To solve the problems of the three southern province problems, the government must dare to think creatively and do new things in many areas. Because the old ways prove that is less chance for success, especially for the situation of terrorism in present.

YellowTimes editorial on the Akha activist

April 28, 2004

Categories: Refugees and Migrants

[YellowTimes](#)

[editorial on the Akha activist](#) –

April 28, 2004

*... In short, after a long reign of being the authority, it is my belief that he had become Joseph Conrad's character, Colonel Kurz, from his novel "Heart of Darkness" (Film, Apocalypse Now) about a westerner who makes himself a god among the hill tribes of Lao. He was given to delusions of grandeur and megalomania. He suffered from paranoia, and subscribed to conspiracy theories. Among the people he professed to hate were the government, the police, the army, the DEA, the missionaries, other NGOs, the CIA, journalists, researchers, photographers, The Shan State Army, Americans, backpackers, tourists, Thais, and any person, connected with any project involved with the Akha, other than his own. He even hated the volunteers who came to help him in the village, calling them hippies with cameras and free loaders. Over half of the volunteers who worked with Matthew, during my time in the village, either left, or were kicked out, after a heated argument...
...Irrespective of personality flaws, over-zealous behavior, and indelicate treatment of our Thai hosts, Mathew's cause, helping the Akha people, was a just one. And now, there is no one to take up the baton.*

Matthew McDaniel

responds – April 26, 2004

Matthew McDaniel, the detained Akha activist, responds to [comments](#) made on 2Bangkok.com last week about the Akha.org website:

*The site sounded shrill?
Is that as in the sound that and Akha makes
when they are beaten to death?*

*Shrill is something people
say when the reality they are looking at can
not possibly make them feel more comfortable
than they already are.*

*The real reason, and the ongoing
reason that people don't speak out about the
Akha situation is because they too feel they
would loose their beer and hooker licenses
in the Kingdom if they took up the life and
death cause of these people.*

*To not like a website is not
convenient reason to not know the facts. And
had you or more people asked that facts be
verified, you would have found out that the
facts were very easy to verify, and that being
the case, the site was not accusations or
shrill, it was very serious data that just
didn't meet people's desired view of Thailand
or the world.*

*I reported on murders, torture,
disappearances, extortion, the removal of
children, all of it, and it was all based
on request from the Akha and facts, none of
it speculation, there was far too much going
on for me to need to water down my work looking
at speculation rather than real cases, which
I couldn't keep up with anyway.*

*So I hope that you will take
a look at army reports, other reports, and
consider that web sites are not based on how
much money can be spent to build them but
on how readily one can verify the cases they
identify?*

*The chances for people at
the Post or the Nation to come up and see
the cases were ample.*

*The Bangkok Post ran numerous
cases till they were reprimanded by the Army,
then claimed that I was exaggerating, that
the cases were not there, which was an outright
lie, and quit covering the stories. This was
in events where wives lost husbands who have
not come home to this day and the Bangkok
Post was cowardly in the extreme to say that
I exaggerated these cases, as in maybe their
husbands were on extended drunks that lasted
years, and that really they were not dead,
not murdered by the Thai army after all.*

*But then the newspapers wouldn't
look good and could be shut down if they printed
the truth, all of the truth, all of the time
about what was going on in Thailand, rather
than a constructed reality about things like
Thai forestry stealing all the hilltribe land,
and the forced prostitution of a good percentage
of the female Thai population.*

*Country wouldn't look like
land of smiles then now would it?*

*Problem with Falangs in Thailand
is they start thinking with corrupted little
minds just like the Thais.*

The truth is not flexible
Matthew McDaniel

Matthew McDaniel

also comments in a separate email about the details
of his arrest:

*...I just now last evening
got back to Oregon after 9 days at immigration
detention.
I was never told I was charged with a crime
by the Thais but am told by the embassy now
that I was charged with violation of the Thai
immigration law and was arrested under section
54(12)7 of Thai immigration law stating that
I was a nuisance or danger to the public. Of
course the Thais could not tell me how this
occurred, what the danger was, as in was I protecting
Akhas from being killed, therefore I was dangerous,
if one considers that maybe killing Akhas is
a normal process and not killing them is dangerous.
The Thai Human Rights Commission came to IDC
and decided to take my case and investigate
it.
...The arrest itself put the Akha situation
in many newspapers and media sites around the
world. This case follows on the tail of the
Special UN Envoy Hina Jilani whom I saw last
year in Chiangmai, who is the Envoy for Human
Rights Defenders, speaking out at Geneva and
saying that Thailand was failing to protect
its human rights defenders.
The technical term for what happened to me is
"retaliation against a human rights defender(HRD)"

...We will be identifying Thai exports and trade
partners in the western world, and beginning
calls for international boycotts of trade and
tourism to Thailand including but not limited
to Thai Airways...*

[Embassy
helping activist in Thailand](#) –

Statesman Journal, April 22, 2004

*...Matthew McDaniel, 46, remains jailed in the
Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok, where he
has been held since his arrest a week ago.*

*He will be deported at the "earliest opportunity,"
a U.S. Embassy spokesman said. The embassy is helping
McDaniel find a flight from Thailand to the United
States and to gather his own money to buy an airline
ticket.*

... McDaniel was being held under a Thai immigration

law that allows deportation of people whose behavior is dangerous to the security of the public and the nation, the embassy spokesman said. The Thai government revoked McDaniel's visa.

All of McDaniel's years in Thailand have been supported by 30-day or 90-day tourist visas, which alone stretched Thai immigration law, the spokesman said.

...Portland human-rights activist Edith Mirante said she can imagine what McDaniel is going through. Mirante has followed McDaniel's work since she met him several years ago.

In 1988, she was imprisoned in the detention center where McDaniel is detained now. She later was deported. She thinks her detention was an attempt by the Thai government to make an example of her.

Mirante said McDaniel has exposed what he thinks is the role of the Thai government in exploiting the tribal Akha people...

Matthew McDaniel's site has been [updated](#).

Earlier:

[U.S.](#)

[activist detained at Immigration](#) – *The*

Nation, April 17, 2004

We have followed this person's website for some time, but never linked because it was full of shrill accusations and looked like a crank's site (one enormously long page, various text sizes, hysterical headlines, etc.).

Recently, it was switched to a slashcode-type interface and started to seem a bit more mainstream. It will be interesting to see how this case turns out...

Fierce thunderstorm sweeps through Bangkok

April 28, 2004

Categories: Weather



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

7:22am, April 28, 2004

Fierce thunderstorm sweeps through
Bangkok...

Gory stories

April 29, 2004

Gory stories –

April 29, 2004

A decade ago, the *Post* and *The Nation* rarely covered the same gory news stories as the vernacular Thai press, but in the past few years these attention-getting murder cases are getting covered in English too.

Yesterday was a good example: [‘Vengeful’ man slays brother, baby niece](#) (*The Nation*, April 28, 2004). The only thing missing in the English-language press were the gruesome photos that made the story front-page worthy in other newspapers.

A negative take on the economy: Thai miracle fizzling out?

April 29, 2004

Categories: Uncategorized

A negative take on the economy:

[Thai
miracle fizzling out?](#)

– *Bloomberg News*, April 29, 2004