

Robot Government

January 2, 2002

Categories: Film and TV, Thai Politics

Robot

Government

– January 2, 2002

You might be interested in this offsite link to the Thai version of *Spitting Image* called [Robot](#)

[Government](#). If you're not in Bangkok, you can wait for the half-meg intro that shows the characters in action (a new character enters as you pass the cursor over each link at the bottom—run your cursor across all the links and all the characters crowd the screen). The site's all in Thai, but you can still get an idea of what it is about.

If you're in Thailand, the show is broadcast seven days a week at 8:05pm on [ITV](#).

On weekends the puppets do their stick from the beach. The Thai word, *hun*, can apply to robots and puppets, so that's apparently how they got the name of the show. The laughs on the show come mostly from wordplay—the gentle Thai love of misusing words humorously.

Scammed by Komkien Gems and Jewelry

January 4, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

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Scammed by Komkien Gems and Jewelry

January 4, 2002

From a letter we received:

My husband and I returned from Bangkok on the 29th December 2001. We thought we would inform you that we were one of those who had been cheated by Komkien Gems and Jewelry. Their address on their so-called Certificate of Guarantee is 849/59-61 Chula Soi 6, Bantadtong Road., Phatumwan, Bangkok 10330 Thailand. Tel: 6123337 and Fax: 6123339.

Since you have taken the initiative to create an excellent website to warn visitors to Thailand of gem scams, we thought we would do our part in telling you our story. You must bear in mind, however, that in doing so, my husband and I do not seek any earthly help. We appreciate what you are doing, but wars against evil are truly victorious only when fought in the Spirit and not in the flesh. My husband and I are devout Christians. In all things that we do, we commit them first to the Lord. As stated in Proverbs 16:9 : A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directs his steps. If God has still allowed this to happen, we believe that the time has come for God's wrath to be poured on all those involved in this gem scam because He will work only where His own children have been harmed.

This is our story. When we wanted to get around on the first day we arrived in Bangkok, we boarded a tuk tuk. We agreed that it would be the first and the last time we boarded one because the man literally never took us anywhere we wanted to go, but insisted on taking us to places of his choice. Firstly, we said we wanted to go to Chinatown, but he took us to some Buddhist temple. Not wanting to offend the man, we got off at the temple and decided to merely stand at the threshold a few minutes to please the driver before we determined to tell him to take us to the shops at Chinatown.

My husband and I prayed our Christian prayers quietly to ourselves while waiting. A man from inside the temple approached us. He began the usual conversation about where we were from and began telling us how we should not miss going to the Komkien export shop to purchase gemstones. He claimed he had bought a chain and earring set and sold it at Poh Kong and another established jewelry shop in Singapore and Malaysia. He claimed he had made US\$2000 from the sale.

I must say, prior to this, if my memory serves me right, the tuk tuk driver did mention Komkien. We are not jewelry buyers at all. I wear only gold and that too only a simple chain with a cross on it. Gems are furthest from our interest. The Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us abundantly and we could buy gems if we wanted to but we would rather our money be spent fruitfully and practically.

Anyway, after the Buddhist temple we now told the tuk tuk driver that we wanted to go to Komkien, mainly because we were looking for curtains for the new house God has blessed us with. So we thought the concept of an export shop was a whole array of stores under one roof and thought we might find good bargains. Since we were directed to Chinatown too by a local Thai who was not very certain the shops sold curtains, we thought we might have better luck at the export shop. When we went inside and saw only one shop selling jewelry, we were a little reluctant to stay, but since we were there, we listened to the lady who called herself, Nid, who we now know to have been spinning a whole load of rubbish to us. We were shown many gemstones to purchase.

We explained that we were not gem seekers. Not for ourselves or for business. She insisted they were having a promotion and just like the man at the temple, said it had been advertised on t.v. She claimed that many people bought gems from them for re-sale. She said even if we did not want it for ourselves, we could easily sell it for a high profit. It was perfectly legal. They had their own dealers and the Thai government controlled

the sale of blue sapphires so their company was part of the government. Therefore they only opened to the public once a year and sold at great discounts. So tourists could make a perfectly legitimate investment and jewelry shops would supposedly pounce on our newly acquired gem. They flicked through a receipt book with countless names of people all over the world. Our hearts go out to these poor people. They even said they would send us a brochure for next year's public opening. To think these crooks can actually wake up and go to a job where they cheat people everyday and then go home and sleep peacefully at night.

Finally we bought one stone costing about baht 23,000. Needless to say when we got back to Malaysia, none of the jewelry shops would accept the stone. It was not worth the price we paid. We began to get suspicious and only then checked the internet and that is when we found your website.

You may want to know another important point. During the next few days after we made our purchase, we met at least three other strangers on the street, at separate locations, separate times, totally random meetings, on the street, who advised us to go to these export shops. One also claimed to have made a profit from selling the gemstones in Malaysia. Can you believe the amount of people involved in this whole fiasco? From your website, stories even indicate how uncooperative the tourist police and other bodies are. This looks like a disease that has infected the whole nation. How sad for Thailand.

You may print our story if you like. Our hope is that if there are other Christians out there who have been affected and would like to pray along with us to bring down these evil establishments or need spiritual upliftment, they may write to us.

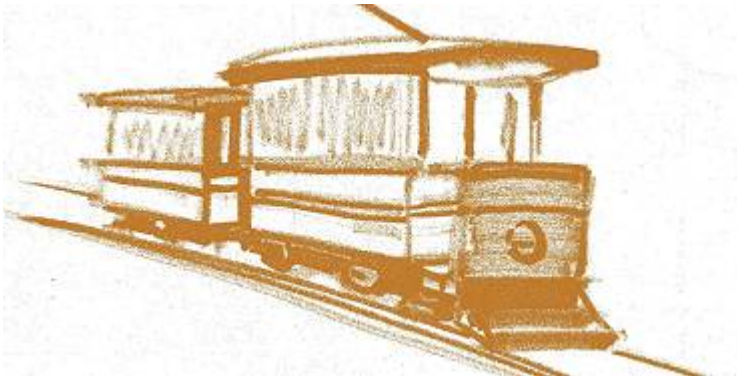
God bless you for your time and trouble in maintaining this website.

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Trams around town in the present day

January 6, 2002

Categories: Trams



The photos on this page are from the collection of Ric Francis.

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Tram at the Royal Theatre (no. 12)
[Return to the Bangkok Tramways n page](#)

Top: Tram at Tramway Workshop before being moved to the Royal Theatre.

Bottom: A later-type tram at the Government Hospital across the river from Royal River Hotel (apparently this tram is on restricted property and cannot be seen by the general public).

Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. II

January 10, 2002
Categories: Gem Scam

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THAI MIKIMOTO EXPORT CO., LTD.
68 Teethong Road, Wat-Rachabapi, Pranakorn, Bangkok 10200 Thailand.
Tel. 0-2622-0148, 0-2622-0149 Fax. 0-2622-0150

CUSTOMER RECEIPT DATE 4-1-2002

NAME _____ HOTEL _____ ROOM _____

Quantity	Description of goods	Unit Cost	Amount
1 Set	1st Blue sapphires with diamonds ring earring necklace set in 18K yellow gold.		฿177000-
	CASH	฿47000.-	
	gold	฿130000.-	
THE ABOVE MENTIONS ARE PRESENT BY E.M.S. CO. BUREAU THAILAND			
FREE + E.M.S.			
PAID			
No. EEO/6287408 TH			
TOTAL ฿177000-			
CASH	gold		
OR BY			
SELLER			

Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. II
January 10, 2002
From a letter we received:

Dear Sir,

...I visited Bangkok just for airplane transit.
Now I regret I've been to Thailand and swear
I'll never visit there again.

On internet site 'www.2bangkok.com', I knew
that the same scam using the same shop name
happened two years ago and I wonder how
bangkok police let it happen again.



My story, almost the same as what happened to Japanese tourist 2 years ago, is as follows. Last week, exactly January 4 Friday, I was walking along the street near 'Grand Palace'. One man approached to me and kindly recommended some places to visit in Bangkok. He marked several places on the map. One was 'Royal Temple', and he said there's big ceremony just for one day in the entire year. Another one was 'Thai

Mikimoto Export', and he also said there's some special promotion just for a week in the entire year. He told me to make hurry because Royal Temple is closed at 7 pm and Thai Mikimoto Export is also at 7 pm.

Since I didn't have enough time, I just wanted to visit Royal Temple and some seafood restaurant. Then he kindly picked a tuk-tuk for me at 30 baht to the Royal Temple. After arriving Royal Temple, I was a bit surprised to see there's few people considering it's big ceremony, what the man said to me.

One man kindly welcomed me and guided me to get inside of the temple. There's white budda statue and one another man was sitting in front of it. He also kindly welcomed me and began to explain about government promotion program for 'Thai Mikimoto Export'. He told me that I can get tax-free jewellery and I can get 100% profit by reselling it in my country. He said export promotion has been extended to tourists—to encourage them to come back and spend more money in Thailand. He said he knew it very well because he's government employee working in airport customs.

When I showed some interest and he stood up and said to tuk-tuk driver to take me to 'Thai Mikimoto Export'. (I think all these people including tuk-tuk driver were well organized to deceive tourist.) It took just 5 minute from the temple to the shop. I was surprised again there's no sign or banner about the promotion or exhibition.

At the shop, one lady came out and took me small room surrounded by jewellery display stands. She said their quality, grade and carat are the best in the world. I asked her why the company held this promotion. She answered this promotion is held to help Thailand student to earn their tuition and expense for foreign study and to invite more tourist to Thailand.

It was still unconvincing but she showed government license and customers list who bought the jewellery in the past times. Again she showed me reseller list in Korea where I can sell the jewellery again.

I said I didn't have enough money, but she said they accept cash, gold, and credit cards. The prospect of being able to return to Thailand by selling jewellery sounded too good to be true and I decided to risk it. Because I didn't have enough cash, they took me to the ATM machine and gold shop, far from the Mikimoto shop. I bought some gold there and paid the rest amount. They were very systematic in this kind of behavior.

After coming back to the jewellery shop, they made several documents and asked me to send the jewel set by myself or by EMS (maybe kind of delivery service..) I received some guarantee document and receipt and chose EMS service for the jewel set.

In that evening, I took flight in Bangkok international airport. Next day, in my office I was really frustrated by founding many similar scam cases on internet. Surely, the jewel set has not arrived until now.

Now I doubt if I can get back money USD 4,100\$, just wishing this kind of scams should not happen more in Bangkok. If there's a way I can get refund, please tell me what can I do for it.

The purchase details are as follows;

Date : Jan. 4, 2002 (19:00 ~ 20:30 pm)

Amount : 177,000 baht (approx. USD 4,100\$)

Place : Thai Mikimoto Export Co., Ltd.

68 Teethong Road, Wat-Rachapit, Pranakorn, Bangkok 10200 Thailand.

Tel. 0-2622-0148, 0-2622-0149

Contact person : Mr. Sompong

(certificate of guarantee and receipt is attached)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account I](#) (December 18, 2001)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account II](#) (January 10, 2002)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account III](#) (January 11, 2002)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account IV](#) (January 22, 2002)

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Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. III

January 11, 2002
Categories: Gem Scam

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Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. III
January 11, 2002
From a letter we received:

Dear Sir,

I just got back from Thailand last night and found out this morning that i have been tricked as well. Here is my situation which is probably similar to all others listed. I was on my way to Pratunam market for shopping. A person introduced himself as a policeman and told us that Pratunam will be opening later as it is a public holiday and asked us head towards the Lucky Buddha Temple.

THAI MIKIMOTO EXPORT CO., LTD.
121 Tachong Road, Wat Phithaklaya, Pratu Nam, Bangkok 10330 Thailand.
Tel. 0-2622-6148, 0-2622-6149 Fax. 0-2622-6730

CUSTOMER RECEIPT

NAME: _____ DATE: _____
NOTE: _____ ROOM: _____

Quantity	Description of goods	Unit Cost	Amount
1	Set Cut Rubies with diamonds set in 18 K white gold		104,000

THE ABOVE MENTIONS ARE SENT BY AIR MAIL TO THE CUSTOMER

TOTAL 104,000

CASH PAID

SELLER: _____



We stopped at the temple where another person who introduced himself as an employee in customs department and he told us Thai government is promoting tourism and jeweler business and that it was the last day to buy the jewellery and each by tourist can only buy one set. We later met another person who told us to buy Thai jewels, which we can sell at home at double the price. We thought since they are in a temple, they should be honest people as they wouldn't lie in a sacred place. When we left the temple and head wanted to head towards other shopping centres as we thought we do not want to take risks, the Tuk Tuk driver took us to Thai Mikimoto instead, we thought well, since we are here why not have a look.

Mr. Sompong
Assistance Manager.

Watch out for the infamous Mr. Sompong—the police are powerless to stop him!



The people arrange for us to withdraw our money using our credit card and even arrange for a tour to take us around for one day buying us dinner. We still had our doubts until we met a foreigner (a Spanish man) in the shop who claimed that he was a repeat customer and actually bought another set, in fact all this was an act! We bought jewels worth 104,000 baht in total. I am now back in Singapore and still hoping that I could get my refund back. I saw a similar case listed in the website and was wondering if they manage to get the refund back and is it safe to turn to the Internal Trade department? Please advise, thank you very much.

[Thai Mikimoto scam account I](#) (December 18, 2001)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account II](#) (January 10, 2002)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account III](#) (January 11, 2002)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account IV](#) (January 22, 2002)

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Bangkok.org becoming porn site

January 12, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Bangkok.org becoming porn site – February 19, 2002

We first speculated about this on January 12, 2002 ([see blurb below](#)), and now it is coming true. Presently, the page contains a casino ad and an "internet eraser" ad, but if you look at the source, the bottom part of the page is filled with porn links. Press control-A, and the porn links appear.

We also notice the contact info has been changed for the domain squatter who registered Bangkok.org. It no longer says "Domain For Sale | Email your offers!" We wonder if the previous owner is trying to get it back.

Previous:

Domain For Sale | Email your offers!
Vytauto Mail Box # 60
Radviliskis, LT-5120
LT
Domain Name: BANGKOK.ORG
Administrative Contact, Technical Contact, Zone
Contact:
Domain For Sale | Email your offers!
Web Master
Vytauto Mail Box # 60
Radviliskis, LT-5120
LT

Changed February, 2002:

Karalevskay
Vytauto Mail Box # 60
Radviliskis, LT-5120
LT
Domain Name: BANGKOK.ORG
Administrative Contact, Technical Contact, Zone
Contact:
Karalevskay
Web Master
Vytauto Mail Box # 60
Radviliskis, LT-5120
LT

Note: If you're a "mainstream journalist," please don't just steal this story without attribution (we're talking to you, AFP).

Bangkok.org – January 12, 2002

We think Bangkok.org was once held by [KSC](#), but it has now been lost to a Lithuanian reseller (according to the [whois](#)) for want of a domain registration fee. There's nothing at the address now, but if [experience is anything to go by](#) in cases of expired domains, it may soon contain links to porn sites. (And no, .org sites don't have to be non-profits.)

Remembering Sun Estate's Mor Chit development

January 16, 2002

Categories: Mass Transit



Pas Seangsong of [Bangkok Highrises](#) wrote: *I photocopied this from an old Bangkok Post newspaper. It shows a transport official with a model of the Mor Chit Terminal complex (remember the one proposed by Sun Estate?). I read in the Bangkok Post recently the cabinet is looking at ways to revive the project. Do you have any update on this? But whoa.. the building itself looks impressive and massive!!*

The complex (if it ever gets built) would be the world's biggest mass transit centre covering a million square metres (just imagine, each WTC tower was 406,000 sqm – 4.37 million sq. feet; the WTC complex is about 1.1 million sq m according to Guinness). Sun Complex would bring nearly a million passengers to Mor Chit daily (from buses, skytrain, subway.. etc.).

Right now, the site is a vacant lot often filled with water. The subway (with its tunnel over to the Skytrain station) should bring even more people to the area.

Thawatchai Wongrach found this informative link to the English-language website of [Bangkok Terminal](#). – *The name of Sun Estate Co., Ltd. was changed to Bangkok Terminal Co., Ltd. on January 29, 1998 in order to reflect the project we are developing which emphasizes more on transport infrastructure than on real estate development.* – Indeed, the "shopping center" component of the project is hardly mentioned.

[Revival of Mor Chit development sought](#) – Bangkok Post, June 20, 2005

...Chaiyos Sasomsap, a deputy minister, said the cabinet would be asked to consider whether to call new bids or allow Bangkok Terminal, formerly known as Sun Estate, to proceed under the old contract...

Airport Quick Facts 2002

January 19, 2002

Categories: Airports and Airlines

Airport Quick Facts

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It begins: the Suvarnabhumi Airport

On January 19, 2002, after 40 years of delays, the foundation stone of Bangkok's new international airport was finally laid by HM The King.

Official name

Suvarnabhumi Airport (this is the official name chosen by HM The King) – this will become Bangkok's only international airport and the present international airport, Don Muang, will be for domestic flights only.

BTW: The current airport, Don Muang, is the busiest in Southeast Asia and the 22nd busiest airport in the world.

Former names Include

Nong Ngu Hao Airport (which translates to "Cobra Swamp" – this is the name of the area where the airport is located), Second Bangkok International Airport (SBIA) & New Bangkok International Airport (NBIA) – this last name is also the name of the company set up to oversee construction of the facility

How is the name of new airport spelled in English?

New Bangkok International Airport Co. spells it "Suvarnabhumi Airport." The international press seem to be using this spelling also. (NBIA is one of two organizations in charge of the project—the other is the [Airports Authority of Thailand](#))

How is it pronounced?

"soo-wan-na-poom"

What does it mean?

"Golden Peninsula" or "Golden Land"—a traditional name for the Thailand-Cambodia-Laos-Burma region

Website?

The address has been changed once again, but the website is excellent: the [official new Bangkok Airport site](#).

What does the motto, "Towards Aeropolis Reality in 2004" on the official website mean?

We have no idea. **UPDATE** (October 23, 2002): We just noticed that the phrase has been changed to "Towards Aeropolis Reality in 2005."

Location

Bang Phli District, Samut Prakan (30km east of Bangkok)

Est. Total Project Investment Cost

120 billion baht (\$US 2.7 billion)

See the [breakdown of engineering costs](#) at the *Bangkok Post*.

Who was the architect?

The winning design was from the MJTA group of consultants, comprising [Murphy Jahn Architecture](#) and TAMS consultant (US) and ACT Engineering consultant (Thailand). From the Murphy Jahn website one can see how the design is similar to their other work.

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KawsOne

January 20, 2002

Categories: Nothing to do with Thailand, but Interesting, The Simpsons in Thailand



Why won't you be art?!

Last updated January 20, 2002

You never know what you are going to find in Japan. One night I was exploring my favorite part of Tokyo, [Shibuya](#), when the distinctive flesh tones of the Simpsons caught my eye. It was on a poster advertising "KAWS TOKYO FIRST"—an art exhibition at the [Parco Gallery](#) (March 16, 2001-April 16, 2001). This gallery is on the top floor of a huge department store.

Inside was a bizarre collection of Simpsons characters, Mickey Mouses, and Michelin Men with crosses for eyes and bon through their heads. Photography was prohibited, but, of course, there was a book and other items for sale.



One wall was covered with oversize packages (16" x 16") modeled after the Simpsons Playmates figures, except that each one contained a beautiful oil painting of an x-eyed Simpsons character and instead of "The Simpsons," it said "The Kimpsons." This was the most arresting part of the exhibit, but unfortunately, it is not reproduced in the book. You can buy one of the packaged oil paintings for only 125,000 yen (approx. US\$1000).

An aside: Browsing the net looking for related material for this page, I was struck by the almost universal attempt to create non-sequitur imagery and "explore the boundaries" of this or that. But all things considered, there's probably nothing more thought-provoking than the found images in the [Ebay Conceptual Art Gallery](#). Honorable mention should also go to the elegant [covers](#) of [Relax](#), a Japanese-language magazine.



The KawsOne museum catalog and sticker set think maybe you are supposed to stick the stick somewhere in public. A [previous Kaws' exhibition](#) featured his bone-head faces [billboards](#).

Links

[An article explaining what Kaws is trying to do](#)



"Why does art hate me? I never did anything to art."

– "KAWS is a New York-based artist that "liberates" bus-shelter and subway ads, takes them home, and airbrushes strangely compelling cartoon-inspired imagery upon them before returning the poster from whence it came."

[Japanese-language webpage about the exhibition](#)

[More](#)

[photos of the KawsOne book](#) (not safe for work)

[Lots of photos](#)

[from the book](#) (interestingly, the copyrighted characters seem to be de-emphasized here)

[KAWS' previous exhibitions](#) (in German)

[Photo](#)

[of the slightly scary looking bonehead Mickey](#)

[Buy](#)

[stuff by Kaws](#)



Astrid: Your husband's work is what we call "outsider art". It could be by a mental patient, or a hillbilly, or a chimpanzee.
Homer: In high school I was voted most likely to *be* a mental patient, hillbilly, or chimpanzee!
from *The Simpsons*, "Mom and Pop Art"

Does Thailand have any “indigenous” magic traditions?

January 20, 2002
Categories: 2Bangkok News

**Does
Thailand have any "indigenous" magic
traditions? –**
January 20, 2002



*Penn & Teller's
Magic and Mystery Tour*
is a series of three fascinating and
engaging documentaries on street magic
in Egypt, India, and China. The one
on China aired on January 19. The others
will appear on upcoming Saturdays at
04:00 and 15:00 on [UBC](#)
X-Zyte (Channel 37). "Part documentary.
Part road movie. Part magic show. Entirely
bizarre and unforgettable."

In China we get to go along
with [Penn
and Teller](#) to a remote village where every
family performs magic and to a state-run magic
amusement park that is totally deserted except
for the performers. At the end of each day
back in their hotel rooms, Penn muses about
the experiences in such a conversational and
genuine way it is almost like being there
with them. CBC has some [info](#)
[on the shows](#) including a separate page
on the [China](#),
[India](#),
and [Egypt](#)
episodes. Another good article on the show
is [here](#).
This got us thinking. Does Thailand have any
"indigenous" magic traditions?

Lord of the Rings in Thailand

January 21, 2002

Categories: Culture and Society, Film and TV

THE LORD OF THE RINGS IN THAILAND

Last updated January 21, 2002

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main Lord of the Rings in Thailand page](#)



Countdown clocks in Bangkok

January 21, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

You heard it here first

– January 21, 2002

The *Bangkok Post* finally had an article on the countdown clocks. It includes the following:

The city has installed two such clocks—at the Ratchadamnoen-Nakhon Sawan crossing and the Lan Luang-Ratchadamnoen crossing. They were a gift from a China-based company to Bangkok Governor Samak Sundaravej...

Mr Samak said he was delighted by the public reaction and would seek about 90 million baht from the city budget to install the clocks at 500 intersections over the next two years. He plans to call public tenders. The company which donated the test equipment would not automatically get the contract, he said. The donor's name, however, remains a secret.

We first mentioned the clocks on January 12, 2002:

Countdown clocks in Bangkok

– January 12, 2002

Last November, 2001, Bangkok started installing "countdown clocks" at traffic

lights. This kind of system is used in many big cities in China (such as Changchun).

These timers count down the seconds a driver has to wait before the light changes.

The first countdown clock we saw was where Lan Luang Road connects with Ratchadamnoen Klang Road. However, sometimes during rush hour, it appears the stoplights are being switched manually and the clocks tick merrily away without regard to the lights.

Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. IV

January 22, 2002
Categories: Gem Scam

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Thai Mikimoto Export Co. Ltd. IV
January 22, 2002
From a letter we received:

To whom it may concern,

At first I really want to say a big thank you to this brave Internet journal for having the courage to speak out the truth about gem scams happening in Thailand. I will have some very interesting news to share with victims of this incredible Gem Scam organization.

My wife and I arrived (name withheld) on the 5th Jan., 2002 in Bangkok to enjoy our honeymoon which kind of ended on the 6th Jan., 2002. We were on the way to the Grand Palace and a Professor and his school class (about 10 girls in uniform!) approached us. We were told that the Palace is closed because of Buddhist reasons and we should not take any picture of people (to make sure that there is no picture of him or somebody else important!). He was wondering where we come from and so on. He suggested to visit some Wats and markets, and mentioned on the side that it might be interesting to also drop by at so-called "Export Promotion". Interestingly, he marked all locations for us on a map including the Export Promotion center. (Astonishingly, we did not end up at this center, but at another one which is close by!).

Of course, there was immediately a tuk-tuk available which took us to a nice Wat where (oh what a surprise) a Thai student started to talk to us very smoothly. At first, he introduced himself and mentioned his trips in Europe by which he easily gained some trust. (I am from Austria and he had been travelling around there. He could pronounce the names of cities without making any mistake, and had even so called Austrian friends. One of them had just arrived some days ago in Bangkok, and was staying in the same hotel as us.)

After about 20 minutes just making small talk the business took off and Export Promotion was introduced. He explained us that usually the Export Promotion is only open for poor Thai people so that they also have a chance to travel around. He mentioned some real jewelry shops in Switzerland (we are doing our PhDs there) and how much money he had made there. Basically, here the brain washing session began.

Some minutes later, we were on the way to get our passports from the hotel. (Of course, the tuk-tuk had been waiting!) At this point there was still some doubt, especially about legal issues, but at least we were curious and wanted to see and get more information at the Export center.

We were warmly welcomed at the THAI MIKIMOTO EXPORT center. We were once again informed how it works, given address list of shops in Switzerland which really exist, shown certificates, and more and more introduced into the Export Promotion principles (which are all LIES!).

We started to discuss which Jewelry would be interesting and seriously considered buying Jewelry for my wife. Maybe we could sell one or two pieces, but I wanted something nice for my wife on our honeymoon. I was stupid enough to mention that I have a unlimited Golden Mastercard.

But we could not decide and it was a lot of money. We started to discuss about the whole thing and were then offered a nice tea which we drank (as stupid as we have been!). From there on we did not ask any questions any more!!!

We were convinced to buy two sets for total 337.360 Baht (basically all my savings!!!). At first we bought 780g of Gold in another Jewelry shop!!! I even had to call Mastercard twice to allow the transfer of such a big amount of money. My wife got even so high, that she started shopping in the other Jewelry shop.

Fortunately, the stuff was too heavy for her neck! (Please note that my wife usually discusses with me whether we should spend 500 Baht for something or whether we should not try to look whether we can get it cheaper somewhere else. She is born and trained to save money. For a moment I was wondering what was wrong with her, but as I did not really do anything after the tea consumption, I also did not confront her!)

Back at THAI MIKIMOTO everything went extremely fast. The Jewelry was sent off by EMS to our address in Switzerland. We did not get the EMS slip (and we did not even bother to ask about it!). The Gold was gone as fast as it came. We were brought out there as fast as possible, invited for dinner, went for Thai massage and then even taken to Patong where we saw all this young women selling their bodies (another big problem of Thailand!!).

At Patong my mind slowly started working again and my wife also came slowly back to planet earth. We insisted to be brought to our hotel, where we realized very fast that this was a gem scam.

Thanks to the LONELY PLANET book about Thailand we could reconstruct what had happened to us. Moreover, I checked whether there was really the Austrian friend staying at our hotel, which of course was not the case!

We left the hotel as soon as possible in the morning. We went to the real Export Promotion center, where we were informed that THAI MIKIMOTO is on the black list. We were sent to Mr. Manat Soiploy at the Ministry of Commerce (Department of Internal Trade), where we meet a US couple that had been betrayed by another Export center. We did not trust this guy. He expected us to just send him the jewelry and he will work out a deal. But he said that there is NO CHANCE TO GET ALL THE MONEY BACK! We can get around 70%.

Very disappointed, we went to the Canadian embassy (my wife is Canadian) which basically did not tell us something new. Once again Mr. Manat Soiploy was mentioned. The embassy closed and we were left on the street.

Thanks to God our Saviour, we know a Thai family which since that is helping and supporting us as good as possible. With their help and very good friends at Switzerland, we managed to get our so-called Jewelry back in our hands.

On Saturday, 19th Jan., 2002 (my birthday – what irony!) my wife and I went back to the shop to negotiate about money refund. This time we were not warmly welcomed and were brought into another building (so that we did not disturb the ongoing business) where the lawyer/manager (he called himself this way!) was already waiting for us. Mr. Sompong (the manager – whereas I have to mention here that I have asked several times for his identification – even together with the Tourist Police and our lawyer – I was never shown any. This was accepted by the Police! Foreigners have to give a copy of their passports, but a Thai person does not need to identify him or herself! VERY STRANGE!) wanted to initially pay 70% back in 2 month. I argued with him for 3 hours and was finally told that he would give me 100% if he could, but he does not have the money (oh, poor Mr. Sompong!). He offered a contract for full money refund, but earliest 90 days! Knowing that he has the money I did not accept. He had been lying all the time and did not have any ID. So, we did not accept and after further arguing we were "politely" told by 6-7 men to leave the shop. By the way, I once started threatening him a little bit by promising to take pictures, he only replied that "I am still young ...". (Very interesting! I personally do not believe that they do not get violent. Everybody says that Thai people are not violent. I would be very careful about that. At the police I was told secretly that the shops can send someone to give people a beating!)

So, we did not return alone some hours later, but with our Thai friends. Surprisingly, we were welcomed in the "real" shop and people were friendly. This time the excuse was, that they can not pay because only the big boss can allow such big payments, and he is not around. We were told to come back on Monday, and we will get all our money back. (While we were there, they "took care" of another poor Tourist. They do not stop there business, irrespectively who is around.)

So our hopes were high on Monday (21st Jan, 2002) as we went to the tourist police. Our Thai friends had organized a lawyer! The Tourist Police had promised to help as good as possible! We had excellent and honest translators! We could only win.

My dear reader, we were so wrong. We paid 337,360 Baht. Yesterday (Monday) we got 150,000 Baht in cash and a written promise that we will get another 100,000 Baht on Monday 28th Jan., 2002. If we do not get the money, Mr. Sompong will go to jail. Personally, I will only believe that when it really happens. Mr. Sompong seems to be Mr. Untouchable!

Basically, this was our story. Not completely finished yet. We will see.

BUT MUCH MORE IMPORTANT I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

- 1) SAY NO NO AND NO TO EVERYTHING IN THAILAND! (on the street!)
- 2) FORGET "WESTERN JUSTICE" IN THAILAND! (Even when you go for a law case. The maximum that you can get back is all your money MINUS 50,000 Baht lawyer costs!!! You can not charge for your ruined holiday, lawyer costs, and additional expenses in Thailand – at least not as a foreigner!!!)
- 3) ACCEPT 70-80% REFUND!
- 4) ACCEPT YOUR MONEY LOSS!
- 5) WARN AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE ABOUT GEM SCAMS IN THAILAND! (They happen now in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket!!)
- 6) DO NOT EVEN TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS STANDING BEHIND ALL THAT SHOPS!! (Trust me, I have tried and now I am living in fear. There seem to be very big people involved. I think that the police knows more than they tell. Just about THAI MIKIMOTO the have several hundred of pages! I have believed in justice and finally have realized that nobody is really safe in Thailand. I hope that you can publish my story on the net. I think it is very important to inform people that there is no way of getting all money back. And that they should leave it like that. I am now very scared. Luckily, I do not know names. I just know stories. I could tell you another 7 stories of other victims which I have meet at the Tourist Police. They have no problem to combine the drugging game with gem scams when they smell big money!)
- 7) DO NOT APPLY WESTERN THINKING! (I know that at home the story would end very different, but always remember you are far away from at home. You disappear here, you are gone forever. Just check the "missing" board at the tourist police!)
- 8) LEAVE THEM ALONE, THEN THEY WILL LEAVE YOU ALONE! (Unless you have very, very, very, very good connections to institutions e.g. secret service (which kind of nobody has!!), that can really protect you, do not provoke them by any kinds of means! There is a reason why this Thai family is basically hiding us in Thailand! Trust me. It is no worth it! They get your money. They are happy and you are save. Please, please leave it like that!)

I will provide you as soon as possible some documents concerning our case!

Thanks again for having the courage to publish about it.

Sincerely,

(name withheld)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account I](#) (December 18, 2001)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account II](#) (January 10, 2002)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account III](#) (January 11, 2002)

[Thai Mikimoto scam account IV](#) (January 22, 2002)

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

The Moon occults Saturn NOT on January 23 (as reported in The Nation), but on January 24

January 23, 2002
Categories: 2Bangkok News

The Moon occults Saturn NOT on January 23 (as reported in *The Nation*), but on January 24

– January 23, 2002

MCOT is [reporting](#)

the rare phenom will be visible January 24,
2002 from around 11:37 pm to 00:11 am in Bangkok.

The article has lots of times for other parts
of the country also. *The Nation* is reporting
this too, but it is just a shortened version
of what is on the MCOT site AND Worachate
Boonplod of the Committee of the [Thai
Astronomical Society](#) informs us that *The
Nation* got it wrong—the event will occur
January 24 NOT January 23 as reported in the
paper. The Thai page
[explaining what's going to happen](#). and [an
earlier space-related gaffe from *The Bangkok
Post*](#)

How many 7-11s are there in Thailand?

January 25, 2002

Categories: Business

How many 7-11s are there in Thailand? – AP, January 25, 2002

CP Seven Eleven Plc plans to have 2,000 convenience stores by the end of this year, 75 more than projected earlier, as many family-run traditional grocery shops have applied to become franchisees.

Europe has been talking about the 10 baht/2 Euro problem for some time

January 25, 2002
Categories: 2Bangkok News

The "10 baht Euro" has been previously reported in various places:

In the German magazine *Der Spiegel*: [Thai-Munzen uberlisten Automaten](#) (forgive the missing umlauts), November 26, 2001

From [Euro Trash \(an anti-EU site\)](#) – December 11, 2001

This site is getting some hits from people searching for variations on "baht euro vending," indicating that there is some interest in the story about spoofing euro vending machines with a Thai 10-baht coin.

Another offering from Euro Trash – [Coins from Thailand outsmart European vending machines](#) – December 12, 2001

Instead of 2-Euro coins, vending and other machines will also accept 10-baht coins which are worth 0.25 Euro each, Der Spiegel reports. That's a huge problem because over two million Europeans visit Thailand each year. The 10-baht coin has nearly the same size, weight and alloy as the 2-Euro coin, so the machines won't recognize the difference. If the machines are adjusted to be too sensitive, a lot of 2-Euro coins won't be accepted.

From Irish Newspapers, [Going Dutch with a Thai 10 baht coin](#), December, 2001

A DUTCH vending machine federation said yesterday the country's vending machines could distinguish the two euro coin from other coins, after reports that the piece could be substituted by a Thai 10 baht coin.... Asked if other eurozone countries faced the same problem with vending machines, Kobus said: "It goes without saying that in other European countries the vending machines have to be very accurate."

[Euro-look-alike Thai coin getting snapped up for misuse in Europe](#)

– January 26, 2002

Staff at currency exchange booths at Bangkok's international airport said Saturday that the sudden upsurge of demand for the 10-baht coin started about three weeks ago.

"Dozens of tourists, mostly Westerners, specifically asked for 10-baht coins. Some of them wanted as many as 50 coins," said Anucha Krut-hern, staffing the Thai Military Bank booth at the airport's departure terminal.

Pressure

put on Thailand to withdraw 10-baht coin?

– January 25, 2002

Apparently there's been pressure on the Thais to withdraw the 10-baht coin as Thai Treasury officials said in a letter: *"Why should we have to withdraw our coin, as they were minted and circulated long before the euro?"...*

The treasury officials said the first signs of trouble regarding the two coins cropped up last November when a Dutch report found that the Thai currency could be used in vending machines in the Netherlands...

The (Thai Treasury) department said the EU was well aware of the existence of the 10-baht coin, because several officials who were later appointed to help design the euro currency attended a Southeast Asian Mints meeting in Manila in 1989.

"Thai

Euro" – 10 baht coins work in Euro vending machines

– January 25, 2002

This is no hoax. We've got a 10 baht and 2 Euro coin here and they're practically identical.

Suddenly European travel is more economical for Thais.

More scamming by Komkien Gems and Jewelry

January 29, 2002
Categories: Gem Scam

January 29, 2002
From a letter we received:

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to make a report to you in the hope that it might save other people who visit Bangkok not to fall for the scam that ruined what would have otherwise been a great holiday.

I am nearly forty years of age and decided it was time to make my first trip overseas with my fiancée and her nine year old daughter. We decided on a three day stop at Bangkok followed by ten days in Phuket.

We woke up the first morning in Bangkok and decided to go outside the hotel for a walk and find somewhere to have breakfast. As soon as we were outside the hotel we were swamped by the tuk tuk drivers chasing business. We ended up being in a tuk tuk who we asked to take us to a place we could get breakfast and do some shopping, however he said the shops were not open yet and he would take us around the city until they were. We were taken to a temple where an elderly man approached us and started some small talk before telling us that he had just come from the government's gem shop where they were having a once a year sale and had purchased gems that could be sold in Australia for double the price due to the tax incentives. The man was not pushy and said we should check it out. The tuk tuk driver confirmed what the gentleman had said and said he would take us there for a look which we thought couldn't hurt.

We arrived a short time later at KOMKIEN GEMS & JEWELRY 849/59-61 CHULA SOI BANTADTONG ROAD PHATUMWAN where we were greeted by a woman who called herself Pairin. We were taken to a back room where we were given a nice cold drink before being shown a number of jewels. We were told a similar story as we were told by the man in the temple, that the store had the backing of the government and that we could sell any jewelry for at least double the price back home and if we could not then 100% of our money would be refunded. I would like to point out that normally my fiancée would question every purchase even if it was only worth twenty dollars however on this occasion the both of us accepted everything we were told and ended up purchasing a total of \$12,000 Australian dollars worth of gems. The store staff were so kind as to drive us to a bank outlet to empty both our credit cards as they insisted on cash. When we questioned why we could not take the gems with us they said it would be unsafe and it was better to post them which we quickly accepted.

We were told that a staff member would take us anywhere we wanted to go until we left for Phuket and we would not have to pay for a thing which we thought was very generous. After a few hours we slowly started questioning why we had spent so much money and quickly realised that the tuk tuk driver and the man in the temple were obviously scamming us along with the gem shop. The following day we went to the shop to try to get our money back but were told that the gems had been sent to Australia and we would have to send them back. The woman we spoke to the day before

was not available but we were given the registered slips from the post office to show that the gems had been sent. Needless to say the rest of the holiday was spent wondering if we were scammed as we expected or if we could at least recover our money.

As it turned out after having the jewelry valued in Melbourne it was worth about \$4500 for insurance purpose or about a third of that if we wanted to sell them. After returning to Melbourne I found a Internet site which contained a lots of other stories from people who were scammed in exactly the same way as us .I am sure our drinks were spiked with some sort of drugs to make us fall for the scam so easily. Please tell me if there is anything else I can do to stop these people ripping of tourists and making a fortune. The website containing other stories like ours is 2bangkok.com.

Thanks for reading

[Another victim of Komkien
Gems and Jewelry](#) (January 4, 2002)

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Trink stands firm: HIV does not cause AIDS

February 1, 2002

Categories: HIV-AIDS

Trink stands firm: HIV does not cause AIDS – February 1, 2002

Elderly Bangkok crank Bernard Trink once again says in his [column](#) that HIV is not the cause of AIDS. How can a major newspaper like *Bangkok Post* be content to broadcast such drivel week after week?

Here's what was said: *Q: I have a book by Johns Hopkins University with very different statistics from those released by CDC (Centres for Disease Control), Atlanta. Kindly stop green-lighting people to have unsafe sex. B.T.: As you can see, there is genuine disagreement between reputable scientists and doctors about whether sex is likely or unlikely to bring on HIV/Aids. Think of the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on research over the last two decades, yet that question remains unresolved. I say HIV-Aids is a false premise and studies begin at square one, with that not the premise. Makes good sense.*

Do you know the way to Bangkok beach?

February 2, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Do you know the way to Bangkok beach? – February 2, 2002

Although the signs say "beach" (in Thai), there is no beach, but you can take a boat ride out through the canals to the sea for 60 baht per person. Go to the Dao Kahnong side of the Chao Phraya River to Rama II Road. Go south (or left) on Bang Khun Thian Road. Turn left on the last left-hand turn before the end of the road. After a couple of kilometers, turn right into the grounds of a wat just before a steep bridge. From there you can take the hour and a half round-trip to the sea. And be sure to eat at one of the seafood restaurants along Bang Khun Thian Road. We recommend Krua Sawang Seafood (tel. 0-2849-3191). On the way back, take the newly completed (and virtually deserted) ring road (Road 9) from Bang Khun Thian Road to Suk Sawat Road and then over Rama IX Bridge and back into Bangkok.

In 1995 Thailand was the sixth-largest Mercedes market on earth

February 3, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

In 1995 Thailand was the sixth-largest Mercedes market on earth

– February 3, 2002

In 1995, 14,000 of the cars were sold. From

a [brief](#)

[profile](#) of Pakpiern Viriyaphant, Thailand's

Mercedes magnate, who died January 16.

How not to get kidnapped in Thailand

February 4, 2002
Categories: Crime

Interesting and sobering info from the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok.

We like this part: *To the degree Bangkok traffic allows, remain a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead to allow space for avoidance maneuvers, if necessary.*

and this

Remember, do not panic if surveillance is confirmed. Surveillance teams are normally neither trained nor have the mission to assault the potential target.

We hope they really are that hapless...

From: American Citizen Services – Bangkok

The following notice was sent to the staff of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok by the Embassy's Regional Security Office on February 4, 2002:

On Friday, February 1, the State Department issued a public announcement updating its Worldwide caution of October 2001 to note concern with regard to possible kidnappings and other terrorist actions. While we are unaware of any specific threat involving Thailand, the potential for retaliatory actions taken against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world by terrorists and those who harbor grievances against the United States must be taken seriously. The announcement noted that the Department of State has unconfirmed reports that American citizens may be targeted for kidnapping or other terrorist actions, and urged U.S. citizens living and travelling abroad to take all appropriate measures to ensure their personal safety. U.S. Government facilities, including those in Thailand remain at a heightened state of alert.

To assist you in reviewing your own personal security, the following basic security precautions are provided for your review. Please review them, share the information with family members, and take appropriate action to ensure your own personal security.

— The single most important security precaution is to remain vigilant and be aware of your surroundings. Be alert for surveillance. Report suspicious activity to local police and to the Embassy's American Citizen Services Unit immediately. If in doubt, REPORT IT!

Travel Precautions

— Never enter a car without checking the rear seat to insure that it is empty.

— Do not develop predictable patterns during the business day or during free time.

— Even the slightest disruption in travel patterns may disrupt a surveillance team sufficiently for them to tip their hand or abandon their efforts.

— If you have a driver, consider riding up front next to the driver sometimes, in keeping with the low profile concept and to confuse surveillance teams.

— When driving, keep doors and windows locked, and your seatbelt fastened.

— Be constantly alert to road conditions and surroundings, to include possible surveillance by car, motorcycle, or bicycle. All passengers should be vigilant.

— To the degree Bangkok traffic allows, remain a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead to allow space for avoidance maneuvers, if necessary.

— Check side and rear view mirrors routinely.

Surveillance

If surveillance is suspected, consider the following actions:

— Divert from originally intended destination, make a few turns to see if the surveillant still persists.

— Immediately determine any identifying data that you can observe. (For example: make, color of car, license number, number and description of occupants.) Report the information to the police and Embassy immediately.

— Remember, do not panic if surveillance is confirmed. Surveillance teams are normally neither trained nor have the mission to assault the potential target.

Parking Precautions

— Always lock the vehicle, no matter where it is located.

— Never exit vehicle without checking the area for suspicious individuals. If in doubt, drive away.

If you suspect you have been the target of surveillance, see something that looks out of the ordinary, or have a concern or question about security, please contact the Embassy's American Citizen Services Unit at 02-205-4049.

Scammed by Sukothai Jewellers? They've been closed so kiss your money goodbye!

February 5, 2002
Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Scammed by Sukothai Jewellers? They've been closed so kiss your money goodbye!
February 5, 2002
From a letter we received:

I was in Bangkok on January 22 when I became a target for the gem scam. Needless to say it was like all the stories on your website, except perhaps a more extensive effort on their part as it took a "teacher" at a temple to tell me the temple was closed for a special service but I could take the tuk-tuk at a special rate; the tuk-tuk driver who gave me the govt deal; a "student" at a temple from Chiangmai; a "French tourist"; a couple of "temple caretakers" posing as government workers, and no less than TWO shops as the first one couldn't convince me. I still don't know for sure why I snapped, as I wasn't even looking to buy jewellery. But I guess having so many people telling you the same story over and over, you start to wonder if you're making a mistake by not using the government "promotion". As I had never heard of the gem scam, and was not warned of it at any time during my stay in Bangkok, I guess I was a good target.

Anyways, the next morning I still wasn't sure, so I checked with the tourist authority and learned of my mistake. Mr Manat was out of his office at the Commerce Ministry, so I filed a complaint with his colleague and then returned the gems as soon as they arrived in Singapore.

However, Mr Manat tells me I'm too late, Sukothai Jewellers has closed down. Ironically, the most recent story on your site from the Bangkok Post was about a scam of a German tourist at the same shop and on the same day as my unfortunate incident.

Anyways, he says the only option besides accepting the 100,000 baht loss (more than a month's salary!) which I will have to pay my credit card bank for starting in March, is to pursue court action. I'm not averse to being a witness, but the question is, do I really stand any chance of getting any compensation through legal action?

2Bangkok.com responds: Probably not.

Why would the owner, who has already shut down his firm thus avoiding legal liability, even bother to show up, let alone comply with any ruling?

2Bangkok.com responds: The scams are not done by individual owners but by a kind of cartel that is protected at the highest levels here. The same shop will be open any day now under a new name. The police are powerless.

Have you heard of anybody successfully doing this, or would it be a waste of time and money?

2Bangkok.com responds: We haven't heard of anyone doing this. What you'll find is that at every turn people will try to discourage you—your paperwork won't be right so everything is delayed, the police will give you a friendly warning that the gem owners will send people to beat you up, etc. If you had the time and money, it would be nice to try something like this just to bring attention to this problem. Thais are sometimes swayed by bad publicity.

Thanks in advance for your help, and for a great website.
Wish I had found it before my trip....

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Around town: Bangkok's 220th anniversary

February 6, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Around town: Bangkok's 220th anniversary](#) –

The Nation, February 6, 2002

Bangkok's 220th anniversary, which falls on April 21 this year, will be marked with floral float procession, parade bands, and international performances staged by foreign embassies.... Samak said this year was particularly auspicious, not only because the Kingdom's capital was turning 220 years of age, but also because it marked His Majesty the King's 75th Birthday and HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn's 50th Birthday.

Bug 1113

February 6, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

FYI: For Thai directory assistance dial 1113 – February 6, 2002

It is no longer 13. The campaign to alert the public is called “Bug 1113” and consists of people dressed as green bugs (you can see these posters on the Skytrain).

‘Lucky nines’ budget for Thailand

February 7, 2002

Categories: The Thaksin Years

[‘Lucky nines’ budget for Thailand](#)

– February 7, 2002

How much things cost

February 10, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

How much things cost

– February 10, 2002

Rice barges: *Now most rice barges have been sold to hotels and restaurants to be transformed into floating dining rooms.... Since 1973, trucks have overtaken barges as the main way to get rice from the mills to Bangkok. Most barges sold to hotels and restaurants recently have brought between Bt250,000 and Bt300,000 to their owners. (from "Mighty river, changing ways," The Nation, February 10, 2002)*

Illegal software profits: *"We can sell up to 60,000-70,000 baht worth of goods during weekends...." He said he usually made profits of almost 80% selling pirated CDs. But his profits would halve if he sold legal CDs.... Another employee at an illegal CD shop on the second floor said her boss telephoned her to close the shop yesterday after he found out police would raid the shopping mall.... "Employees at most CD shops normally get notice from their bosses and some police before plainclothes policemen arrive for an inspection. That's why they usually leave Pantip Plaza empty-handed," she said.... Nattaphol Tangsuksant, 18, said he chose to buy pirated CDs at between 100-150 baht because it was much cheaper than legal ones of the same quality.... "As long as the price of CDs and software remains almost ten times more expensive, people will always come to Pantip and buy pirated CDs." (from "Pirates unfazed by police crackdown," Bangkok Post, February 10, 2002)*

A charmingly worded dispatch from MCOT

February 12, 2002
Categories: Humor

We admire those who attempt the bizarre language of English. We're not making fun, we genuinely like this:

China town becomes most tourist attraction during Chinese New Year

BANGKOK, Feb. 11 (TNA) – China town area here becomes the most tourist attraction site for this year's Chinese New Year celebration as expected, as a number of foreign arrivals, even those from western countries, are seen wandering in the area enjoying events and activities organized to celebrate the auspicious event. Apart from lots of Thais with Chinese origin, a number of foreign tourists, including those from Europe, are visiting Yaowaraj Road, known as Thailand's China town, to have their own personal touches on the varied celebration, according to a news report of iTV. ([this article online](#))

Old films of the city

February 14, 2002

Categories: Film and TV

Old films of the city – February

14, 2002

2Bangkok.com is trying to track down some old footage of the trams.

Wisarat reports: I have been to the National Archives

and found that all film, TV reels, and videotape has been transferred to the new facility at Salaya. Nevertheless, they have a list of the films. The oldest one is King Chulalongkorn visiting Stockholm in 1897.

Trams are definitely in the following films:

1) V2 00079/2 – Tramways

2) V2 00079/5 – Tramways

The tramways might also be in the following films:

3) V2 00079/4 – Bangkok Flood in October 1942

4) V2 00087 – WWI, WWII, Korean War

5) V2 00092/1 – King Anadhamahidol Visiting Bangkok in 1938

6) V2 00092/4 – King Anadhamahidol Visiting Bangkok in 1938

7) V2 00125N – Bangkok in the Past

8) V2 00129/1 – 150-Year Anniversary of Bangkok in 1932

9) V2 00139/2 – Life before 1932

10) V2 00150N/2 – Thailand during the reign of King Chulalongkorn

11) V2 00196/3 – Land Transportation (Thai Heritage Series)

12) V2 00199/2 – Thailand during the time of "The Leader"

(Field Marshall Plaek Phiboonsonggram)

13) V4 00228/2 – Chotmaihet Krungsri (a daily documentary from TV 7 – recorded in VCR PAL format)

14) V2 00303/2 – Land Transportation

15) V2 00345/8 – Thailand in 1951

16) V2 00376 – Life before 1932

17) V2 00461/3 – 150-Year Anniversary of Bangkok in 1932 (7 minutes)

18) V2 00723 – Bangkok Flood in October 1942

Their new address is:

National Film Archives

93, Moo 3, Phutthamonthon Sai 5 Road

Phutthamonthon, District, Nakhonpathom, 73170

Tel: 0-2441-0263

BMTA bus 123 (Sanamluang – Suan Samphran)

(Where else but 2bangkok.com could you find info like this?)

Welcome to the smoggy future

February 15, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Welcome to the smoggy future

– February 15, 2002

A colleague mentioned that the late afternoon sun looked like the moon. The sun was still high in the sky, but it was very dim outside.

Once again, smog envelops the city.

The canal between Sathorn Road is choked with garbage—not mysterious pollution from some unseen factory far away, but actual, identifiable bags of trash someone had thrown in. Overhead there is an incredible roar, like someone continually exhaling, from the traffic stopped on Taksin Bridge. The streetlights change every 7 1/2 minutes. The police and various pedestrians wear face masks.

I remember when I was a kid hearing about some dismal future when the sky was dark during the day and people would have to wear masks because of pollution. Bangkok is still a fun place to live and I love it, but I think in some ways, this is the future we were warned about... -Ron

Morris

BTW: [Thai](#)

[auto sales soar 45 percent in January](#)

The vertical wreck

February 17, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

The vertical

wreck – February 17, 2002

Frank Paschold has [some](#)

[photos](#) on his [site](#)

of the incredible "vertical wreck"—

the Pak One gas tanker suspended in the Gulf

of Thailand. The latest news is that the Thai

Navy is waiting for confirmation from the ship's

insurer before blowing the ship up.

Lord of the Rings in Thailand

February 21, 2002

Categories: Culture and Society, Film and TV



THE LORD OF THE RINGS IN THAILAND

Last updated February 21, 2002

The following was originally part of [A Glimpse of Thailand](#) the week of January 7, 2002.

It proved so popular (on January 8, 2002, we received 8,143 unique visitors), a permanent page was created [fo here](#).

The complete [Glimpse of Thailand Archives](#).

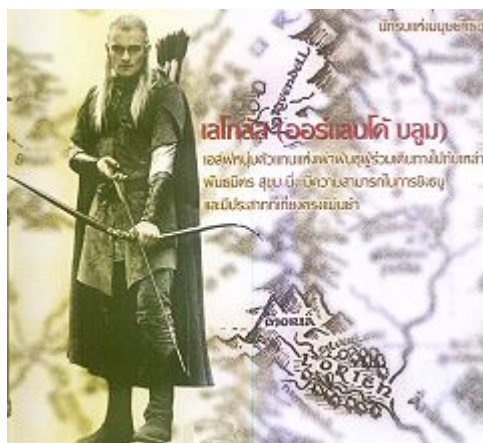




(Right) A painted billboard at an intersection in Hat Yai (a city in southern Thailand) advertising the December 28th, 2001 release of LOTR. They also have billboards like this on trucks that drive around town announcing films on loudspeakers (like old time political ads).



On January 4, 2002, *The Nation* reported that the Thai-language version of *The Fellowship of the Ring* sold out at bookstores. "The book has become the hottest one in town, said an executive at Amarin Printing, which publishes the Thai version. Amarin has reprinted the book six times since October. More than 40,000 copies have been sold so far, he said. He said it is selling much better than other books made into movies as they only sell an average of 10,000 copies each." [Amarin's cool-looking LOTR webpage](#)



Detail from a poster given out at the theater explaining the characters in Thai



UPDATE January 21, 2002 – Due to popular demand, click on the thumb above for the [full Thai-language LotR poster \(82KB\)](#) that explains tl characters.



The cover of *The Lord of the Rings* in Thai



Flyer for a local LOTR contest



LOTR ticket subs from the Emporium o Sukumvit Road

The complete [Glimpse of Thailand Archives](#).

Or how about [The Simpsons in Thailand](#)?



HSBC Bank LOTR tumbler offer

7-meter granite slab with the name of the city

February 24, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[7-meter](#)

[granite slab with](#)

[the name of the](#)

[city](#) – February

24, 2002

Short mention of
the forthcoming
monument with Bangkok's
full name from the

[official](#)

[2002 Thai tourism](#)

[site](#).

Thailand's net mess

February 25, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Thailand's net mess –

February 25, 2002

In case you had not heard, in-country connection to the Internet is still at a crawl since an undersea cable was severed on February 21. If you want a net connection here you have to buy it from an ISP that has to buy their connection from a government monopoly ([CAT](#)) that charges an outrageous markup. This monopoly is housed in a massive complex outside of town that can only be compared to Versailles. The CAT decided that no backup was necessary for Thailand's net access and now businesses that depend on the net [are at a standstill](#). Best case scenarios point to the end of the week before things get back to normal.

Prawat Nagvajara's Olympic try

February 26, 2002

Categories: Sports



[Prawat Nagvajara's Olympic try](#)

– February 26, 2002

Prawat Nagvajara, the first Thai to compete in the Winter Olympics, finished 68th in 30-kilometer cross-country skiing. Also see:

[It's taking part that counts](#)

from the *Guardian* and his

[info](#)

[page at Drexel University](#).

First article about Prawat: [First Thai to participate in the Winter Olympics](#)

– *Bangkok Post*,

February 3, 2002

Ring Road/Railway Projects 2001-2002

March 1, 2002

Categories: Mass Transit

[Ring Road/Ring Railway Main](#)

[Ring Road/Ring Railway News 2003](#)

[Ring Road/Ring Railway News 2002-2001](#)

Routes for the Ring Railway – translated and summarized from *Matichon*, July 15, 2002

Sanan Tothong (BMA Deputy City Clerk) who is now chairman of the Bangkok Ring Railway Project committee told correspondents from *Dailynews* and *Matichon* that Krungthep Thanakhom (Bangkok Bank) had proposed four routes for the Bangkok Ring Railway but the details are not clear enough. However, Krungthep Thanakhom submitted details on two feasible routes after submitting the study results to the committee on July 11, 2002:

Route one – 80-km ring from Chao Phraya River (Poochao Samingphrai Pier) to go along Poochao Samingphrai Road, turn left to Sukhumvit at Poochao Intersection and then turn right to Thepharak Road, turning left to Sri Nakharin Road at Sanam Daeng Intersection, Rama IX, Pradit Manootham Road (Ekkamai – Ram Indra Road, parallel with Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway), Ram Indra Road, Chaeng Watthan Road, Tiwanon Road, Pathum Thani Bridge, Highway 345, Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road before ending up at the Industrial Ring Road.

Route two – 120-km from Chao Phraya River (around Phrapadaeng) to Bang Krajae (the green island in Chaophraya – between Klongtoei Port and Phra Padaeng which now becomes a public park with orchards belonging to local people) turn left to Sukhumvit at Poochao Intersection and then turn right to Theparak Road, turning left to Sri Nakharin Road at Sanam Daeng Intersection, Rama IX, Pradit Manootham Rd. (Ekkamai – Ram Indra Road, parallel with Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway), Ram Indra Road, Chaeng Watthana Road, Tiwanon Road, Pathum Thani Bridge, Highway 345, Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road before ending up at Industrial Ring Road.

When Krunthep Thanakhom comes up with the conclusion (the final ring route) for the preliminary studies, the committee will submit it to a full committee consisting of SRT, OCMLT, BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau, BMA Civil Works Bureau, BMA City Planning Bureau, and BMA Treasury Bureau to make a comprehensive analyses of the pros and cons and an environmental assessment of the project, especially the land utilities due to the fact that this ring will cover Bangkok and vicinity.

If the full committee approves the final route of this project, BMA will start a study on the project details including construction techniques, budget, the investment plan, as well as the management for the final ring.

Governor negotiating with JBIC for loan for Skytrain Ring Road Project – translated and summarized from *Thairath Daily*, May 20, 2002 & *Matichon Daily*, May 20, 2002

Governor Samak Sunthoravej told the press that he submitted details of the Skytrain Ring Project to JBIC representatives in Japan so as to speed up the process to obtain JBIC loans to finance the project. If BMA follows through the normal process, it will take at least 18 years to realize the project. Therefore, the BMA governor submitted the project details directly to JBIC. After the negotiation, JBIC representatives told Governor Samak that JBIC has strong interest in the project since it is a transportation project necessary for the Bangkok suburbs with little environmental impact.

The next step will be for JBIC officers in Bangkok to collect data and assess the feasibility of the project. If the negotiations with JBIC are successful and the process runs according to plan, BMA will be able to start the project by the end of 2002.

Where the Skytrain Ring Road sections have to go across the Chaophraya river, Governor Samak said that BMA wants to construct a Skytrain bridge below the new bridge across the Chaophraya River at Pakkret instead of underwater tunnels since the bridge is much cheaper than an underwater tunnel. The new bridge across the Chaophraya River at Pakkret is a project of the Highway Department, with 40% funding from BMA.

The normal process states that BMA must ask OCMLT to study the project details and then OCMLT will submit the study results to the cabinet for approval which is a time-consuming processes.

Commentary: If BMA wants to put Skytrain pillars on the foundations of the new bridge at Pakkret, BMA

and Highway Dept. have to lay very strong foundations to ensure that they can handle huge trucks and the bridge for Skytrain (with 10-meter-wide double tracks) without problems. If BMA wants to go along Krunthep bridge, the Skytrain Bridge would have to be high enough to accommodate ships from the Royal Navy and cargo ships.

More commentary: The route could be changed to pick as many passengers as possible even though the preliminary route for Ring Road starts from Bang Plee, and then goes along the Eastern section of Kanjanaphisek Outer Ring Road to Lam Lookka and then turns left to Patumthanee via Future Park, Wat Sadet, Nonthaburi Bridge (AKA Nuan Chawee Bridge) and Pathumthanee Provincial Hall, Highway No. 345, Bang Bua Thong Intersection, western section of Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road, Bang Bon, Rama II Highway, Bang Pakok, Bukkhalo, Krunthep bridge, Rama III, Chong Nonsee, Klong Toei, Watsaphan, Bang Chak Refinery, Bang Na, Sanphawut (Naval Ordinance), Samrong and ends up at Bang Plee.

[Four ring railway routes must be approved by the end of March 2002](#)

[Samak's commuter ring project delayed – Japanese government said approvals from NESDB and OCMLT needed](#)

[Governor Samak feels confident that the suburb ring railroad will be approved](#)

[Japanese keen on the Bangkok Ring Railroad](#)

[EDITORIAL: BMA train plan is off the rails](#)

[Premier Ju Rong Ji declines Samak's proposals for \\$2 billion Skytrain](#)

[Samak preparing for the 80-km Bangkok Ring Mass Transit System](#)

Our billionaires

March 2, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Our billionaires

– 17:06, March 2, 2002

[Dhanin](#)

[Chearavanont & family](#) – US\$1.3 billion

– rank 351

[Prime](#)

[Minister Thaksin Shinawatra & family](#)

– US\$1 billion – rank 445

The [complete](#)

[list](#) from *Forbes*.

Secret features in maps to catch copiers

March 3, 2002

Categories: Maps

Secret

features in maps to catch copiers

– 12:50, March 3, 2002

Recently we met Suchai Lowhakasamevong, owner and chief map maker at Bangkok Guide. This company is the only local map company (that we know of) without glaring errors in their maps that are repeated printing after printing. Suchai showed us some secret features he puts in his maps to catch cheaters who copy his work—and plenty of people do. You would be surprised how many major foreign-produced maps of Bangkok are copied directly from his work. He then has to take them to court and have the offending maps removed from the stores. Suchai also demonstrated how his surveys show that Vietnam War-era maps of Thailand produced by the US military are still more accurate than official maps of Thailand produced today.

Nation employees fear closure

March 7, 2002

Categories: Thai Newspapers and Magazines, The Thaksin Years

Nation employees fear closure – 9:17, March 7, 2002

A source reports that [*Nation*](#) employees expect the newspaper to be "raided" by the authorities at any time and many people are "lining up back-up jobs." This in light of the *Nation's* continuing unflattering coverage of the Thaksin administration. Today's headline screams "THAKSIN-GATE."

Less than 10 years ago (in 1992), during the last coup government, the *Nation* was one of the few newspapers to refuse government censorship and continue to print all its articles. *The Bangkok Post* left blank spaces in their paper where the censored articles were to be printed (these papers are interesting collectors' items if you can find them). At that time, the *Nation* expected it would be closed for its defiance, but thankfully, it never happened.

Gem Scam Report: Benjarong

March 8, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

เลขที่ 01 Benjarong เลขที่ 0022

27-29 ซอยเฉลิมเขต 2 ถนนลาดพร้าว 1 แขวงจตุจักร เขตป้อมปราบศัตรูพ่าย กรุงเทพฯ 10100
27-29 Soi Chalewaket 2, U-kol 1 Street, Thepsirim, Pomprabsatrupai, Bangkok 10100
Tel : 0-2231126-7 Fax : 0-2231128

บิลเงินสด

CUSTOMER NAME _____ HOTEL _____ DATE 9 / 02 / 02

จำนวน QUANTITY	รายการ DESCRIPTION	จำนวน BAHT	จำนวน AMOUNT
1 set	Lat Poley with diamond ring, earrings, pendant, and gold chain in 18k white gold setting	212850	


MAILED MERCHANDISE TO _____
BY INSURANCE - IN CASE OF MISSING OR DAMAGE
DUE TO TRANSPORTATION * EXPORT CENTER
WILL ACCEPT ALL RESPONSIBILITY

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE _____

PAID

รวมเงิน TOTAL \$212850

RECEIVER _____
PAY BY _____



Gem Scam Report: Benjarong

March 8, 2002

From an email we received:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

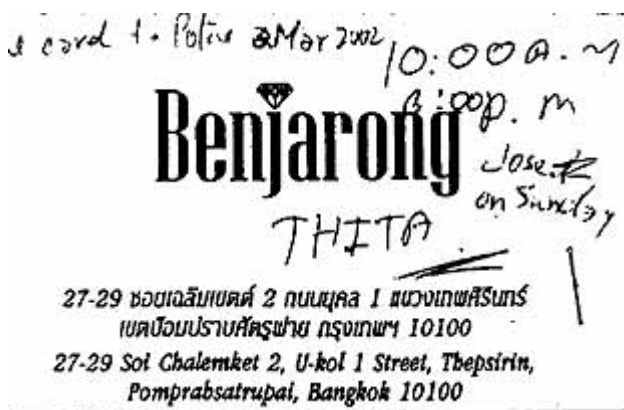
Ever read/heard from the newspapers, magazine, TV, promos or public media about experiencing beautiful and wonderful Thailand? But my experience was a terrible one which I have lot of doubts about Thailand now. Frankly speaking, it used to be one of my favourite traveling places.

After this incident, I know I am not the only victim on this but this has been going for long time – jewelry scam. I truly hope that all the relevant government authorities/organizations and tourists will be aware of it and to be brought together to crack down this crime. Very typical one but seems not much help from the police and the tourists has to take care by themselves.

I arrived on 9 February, 2002 in Bangkok for a stopover before heading to the next destination the next day. Went to Wat Po and was told by a man standing outside the Wat that the Wat was closed due to Buddha's Day Ceremony. After a small talk, he then suggested me to visit other Wat instead such as Lucky Buddha and Happy Buddha (oh! he definitely meant I was his lucky and happy Buddha!) He also said that there was a jewelry exhibition going on which was promoted and supported by the Thai Government. In fact, it was the held once a year and happened it was the last day of the promotion week and I could have a look after visiting wats. He then asked a tuk tuk driver to drove me to the wat and the jewelry center – "Benjarong" situated at 27-29 Soi Chalewaket 2, U-kol 1 Street, Thepsirim, Pomprabsatrupai, Bangkok 10100 (Tel: (0) 2223-1126; Fax: (0) 2223 1128).

Arrived in the center at around 4:30 p.m., a lady called herself, Thita came to me showing lot of jewelry with ruby and sapphire. Then we discussed about the jewelry was intended for my mother for her birthday. She then said the same thing again about this was the promotional week supported by the Thai government. They were only allowed to be opened to the public for sale this week. The jewelry are all in very good quality and prices, it was impossible to get the same good quality jewelry from other places. She also reassured me that I could always get the full refund if I was not satisfied about this. What a big promise! Then I was convinced to buy a ruby set of jewelry in the sum of 212,850 Bahts (approx. US\$5,020). When we discussed about the payment and delivery, she said since they were merely the wholesaler and the jewelry was expensive, they could only accept cash or gold for payment and they arranged the jewelry to be delivered by mail/courier with full insurance cover to my home country. I was then accompanied by their colleague to go to the goldsmith and get the gold and then this deal was made.

On 15 February, 2002, I went back to Bangkok for a stopover before going home, I spotted a notice posting outside the police station regarding jewelry scam. It was so much like I came across a week ago. I realized I was being set up.



I immediately went to the Tourist Police Station, Patdamnirn Nok Road to ask for help. A police officer attended to my story and said nothing I could do because I did not have my jewelry in hand. Even I had, the chance of getting a full refund is not good and the shop might be closed any time. He suggested me going back my home country and bringing back the jewelry as soon as I can. I then asked him to check the name of the center to see whether there were any similar case regarding this center. Bingo! It was blacklisted. But still the police could not do anything for me. At that moment, he would check if the center was still open and then call me the next day. Since then, I had not heard from him. So I was in the plane the next day heading home.

On 23 February, 2002, I received the jewelry by post together with a wrong description printed on the Guarantee as sapphires instead of ruby). I then kept on calling the police and sending him emails to ask for the situation. Finally, he returned me an email on 26 Feb saying that the manager of the center told him that the center could buy back my jewelry or refund the customer just 60%. And I could get the money on the day I come to Bangkok. The officer said he had no power to accept and suggested me to compromise directly with the center and come to Bangkok as soon as possible.

I immediately told the police officer that I would definitely come to see him on 1 Mar, 2002 and asked him to arrange a meeting with the jewelry center for further discussion.

On 1 March 2002, I came back to Bangkok. As I had an impression that the police was not eager to help, I went to seek legal advice from the local Thai lawyers before the meeting. When my lawyer called the police officer, the police officer said the shop was closed on 27 Feb. But how come he did not tell me right before my coming!! He had all my contact details like phone and email address. Anyway, I decided to go to see him with my lawyers and asked for an explanation and the truth.

When I asked for his explanation, he said tourists seldom come back to him even though they promised they would. So he assumed I was kidding! And he was not very co-operative when I told him that I wanted a criminal case against this jewelry center. The atmosphere of this meeting was very tense. He then tried to convince me to drop the idea of going after these people cause nothing I could gain from it but wasting time and money (appointing the lawyers and those expenses on flying back to Thailand). The process would take long time and it was not worth to it. Yes, he was right on this point – I did lose a lot of money already. A bit

strange was that he requested a private conversation with me (without my lawyers' presence) on persuading me to forget about filing a criminal case.

After 4 hours liaising with the police officer, our persistence paid back, a formal written report was officially filed with the police even though the police told me that the chance of getting back the money and tracking down the relevant persons was not looking good or seemed zero. I left the jewelry to the police to check for the real market value with the gem association and my lawyers would act on behalf of me as I am not living in Bangkok.

This is not the end. Cracking down and nailing down the crime/bad guys should be the job of the Thai police and the relevant authorities but not the tourists. At least the Thai Government has to take the initiatives to do something. Other organizations like gem associations and professionals should come together to discuss about implementing new rules and regulations. I do everything I can on my part to report and voice out my opinion. Someone gets richer and I become poor. Lost all my money and I have to work even harder to pay the legal fees as well. I believe if no one speaks it out, there will be more victims. And the Thai government is not even care for tourism or its reputation, I can't see why this is a beautiful and lovely country. Bad guys are protected and no justice at all. **EVERYONE SHOULD THINK ABOUT THIS BEFORE GOING THERE. THE BAD PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR YOU. THERE IS NO ONE YOU CAN TURN FOR HELP.**

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

The “crackdown” is over at Pantip

March 12, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

The "crackdown" is over at Pantip

– March 12, 2002, 08:25

From [Stickman's weekly column](#): *Business is back to normal at Panthip Plaza and all of the pirate software that one could ever want is once again available, just as it used to be. Gotta say that I am surprised to see it back, but hell, I'm not complaining.*

March 13, 2002
Categories: Gem Scam

[illegible]

From an email we received:

My girlfriend and I (we are from Germany) have been in Thailand from the 17th of February until the 9th of March 2002. On the 19th of February we left the boat on the Klong San Sap near the Golden Mount. We were looking on our map for orientating us (we wanted to go to the Golden Mount), when a friendly (???) Thai person asked, if he can help us.

He told us to take a Tuk Tuk for 20 Bath (because today it is Buddahs day and the Tuk Tuk drivers get a voucher for fuel from the government-???) and to go to the standing and lucky Buddah and to the Thai Export Centre, and then come back to the Golden Mount because now it was closed (???). So we took a Tuk Tuk and visited standing and lucky Buddah.

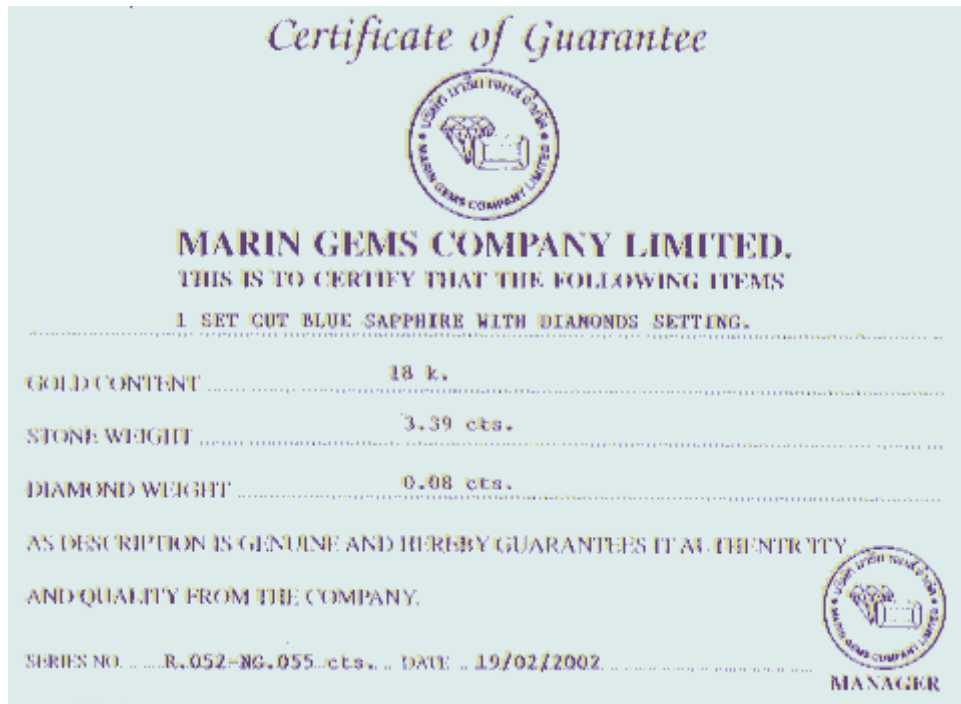
At lucky Buddah we met another friendly (???) Thai person. He told us, that he was a student and that he has been in Germany before and now he wants to go to Australia and wants to pray at the lucky Buddah (ha, ha...). He told us, that he pays his travels by buying jewellery in Thailand at the Thai Export Centre, where students don't have to pay the 195 % of taxes. And then he sells the jewellery in the country in which he is travelling for the double price.

And then he told us, that we were very lucky people (good place for this story), because today it is the last day of the promotion of the Thai Export Centre for tourists to buy jewellery without paying the taxes. And we can sell them when we are back in Germany also for the double price.

This all sounds very good to us, because of the government-stuff and so on. So we decided to go there and told the Tuk Tuk driver to bring us to a shop of the Thai Export centre.

In the shop (there were some other tourists also in the shop) they told us the same story again, showing us some copies of passports of people from Germany who have done this before, and they showed us addresses of shops in Germany, where we can sell the jewelry. So we decided to take a set with earrings, a ring and a chain for 80000 Bath. We wanted to pay cash, because if we payed with credit card we wouldn't get the discount and had to pay 100000 Bath instead. We visited a bank using a driver with a car, where we got the money.

We were told, that we should pay our Tuk Tuk driver and that we would get a taxi that will bring us where ever we want to go in Bangkok (this is more save, because the Tuk Tuk driver would know that we have bought something and would maybe stole it...).



Back in the shop, a postman has arrived and we packed the jewelry and a certificate of guarantee in a small package and send it to Germany (because we wanted to travel through Thailand and this is more save...).

So we get our own driver from the shop who brought us to the Vimanmek Mansion... After this, we had a bad feeling, but everything looks so professional...

Now we are back in Germany and get our package from the customs authorities on the 11th of March, where we had to pay 398 Euro customs duties to get our package (18,5%). We checked the address of the shop where we should sell the jewelry, but the shop doesn't exist. Now we were very feared and furious... So we went to another jewelry shop (a Turkish one) and asked how much they would give us. He told us 77 Euro (!!!).

So we have lost 80000 baht (price) + 16000 baht (customs duties) – 3000 baht (real value) = 93000 baht (= 2300 Euro)!!!

After all this, our nice Thailand holiday gets a very bad taste for us: we think, that we won't never travel to Thailand and that you can't trust the Thai people. This is very pity, because Thailand is a nice country and some Thais are nice, but you never know...

We can't understand, why the government and the police doesn't do anything against it. And why aren't the tourists aren't warned enough...

Maybe some of you can help us to get some money back. Or is it possible to get customs duties back in Germany?

[Return to Gem Scan main page](#)

Did you notice The Nation's free press banner?

March 14, 2002

Categories: Thai Newspapers and Magazines, The Thaksin Years

Did you notice *The Nation's* free press banner?

– 07:25, March 14, 2002

If you read any stories on *The Nation's* [website](#),

you'll see a banner at the top of the page that says "Stop Media Interference!

The media's freedom is the people's freedom."

McSomtam at McDonalds

March 14, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News



Wow! McSomtam at McDonalds – 07:25, March 14, 2002

...McDonald's is offering the northeastern Thai salad famous for its spicy kick – Somtam – from tomorrow. Priced at Bt25 each, McDonald's named its Somtam dish "Thai Spicy McSalad Shaker", or McSomtam in Thai....

McDonald's first Thai-style dish, the Hot Basil Pork Burger, was introduced in 1998, followed by the Panang Chicken Burger in 1999 and the Satay Chicken Burger in 2001. All have become popular; the company said.

(from [McDonald's menu](#), The Nation, March 14, 2002)

Pantip.com boards down

March 17, 2002

Categories: The Thaksin Years

Pantip.com

boards down – 08:43,

March 17, 2002

The most popular Thai webboard, Pantip.com, known as the most wide-open forum for expressing one's opinion in Thai, had extended downtime over the weekend and rumors started to fly that Big Brother was at it again ([‘Public Sphere: Even Web Broads may not be so safe’](#), *The Nation*, March 17, 2002). According to the article, webmaster Wanchat Pantip (his real name?) issued the following statement, *"I confirm that the downtime: 1. Did not occur due to government interference or any attempt to limit the rights of expression; 2. or to interference by the opposition and any attempt to discredit the government..."*

More

– 07:25 March 20, 2002

Wanchat P. writes with further clarification of what happened: *When our system went down, I also worried about media interference, because the situation is so hot right now and the opinions people post on our website are not censored or compromised in any way. However, we found that it was only a hardware failure on our server. Unfortunately, it happened on Friday midnight so we couldn't get technical help right away. It was just a bad thing happening at the worst time.*

More

– 08:32, March 23, 2002

The Nation has an [editorial](#)

about the fear of censorship of webboards: *Shortly before the last general elections, accusations began pouring in about "hired writers". These writers, the frequenters of Pantip.com claim, are employed by certain people to influence the opinions on the board.*

More on the Bangkok eccentric

March 17, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

More on
the Bangkok eccentric
– 08:05, March 17, 2002

The *Post* has [more](#)
about the woman who filled her house with
trash.

*However, when the bubble burst in 1997,
she lost 1 million baht. Her husband later
left her while she was two months' pregnant
and her first child was only two years' old....
The authorities were shocked to find a mountain
of rubbish, infested with rats and cockroaches,
piled up to the ceiling.... Dr Udom Petchsangharn,
a psychiatrist and director of Rachanukul
hospital, said it was possible Mrs Pathira
was suffering from schizophrenia, adding her
condition and habits were similar to those
of individuals who had suffered a great loss.
She was attempting to replace whatever she
has lost with garbage, he said, which she
believes to be of great value to her life.
(from "'Garbage lady' reliant on refuse",
March 17, 2002) [ITV](#)*

has also been reporting on this.

A Bangkok eccentric
– 10:14, March 16, 2002

The Bangkok Post has an interesting
[article](#)

on a mania that is well-known in the West:
someone compulsively fills their dwelling
with "collected" garbage: ...*The
woman has been collecting tonnes of all types
of garbage covering virtually every square
inch of her home, a two-storey shophouse,
in Soi Prachasongkroh 24, Din Daeng district,
they said. The rotten smell from her collection
has been a real torment for the entire neighbourhood
for years, they said. The house of stink belongs
to Pathira Juthasuwanisiri, a 47-year-old widow
living with her elder sister and two children.
The neighbours said Ms Pathira started her
garbage collection elsewhere before moving
it into her present home in 1995 after losing
most of her assets in the stock market....
Her two children, a girl and a boy, were sometimes
seen climbing over the hills of garbage in
their home to get to the upper floor.....
The authorities are now trying to clean out
the house. (from "Neighbours in uproar
over woman's refuse collection", March
16, 2002)*

The dark age of cowardly dumbled-down TV

March 18, 2002

Categories: The Thaksin Years

The dark age of cowardly
dumbled-down TV –

07:26, March 18, 2002

You might be interested in this [brief critique](#) of Thai TV: *Turn on your TV at 10pm 18 months ago and you would have a choice of two or three programmes offering debate and comment on the affairs of the day.... Turn on today and you find nothing like this. Blank. Zero. Zilch. This is the television equivalent of book-burning.*

UNESCO says Bangkok could be World Heritage Site

March 19, 2002

[UNESCO](#)

[says Bangkok could be World Heritage Site](#)

– 08:36, March 19, 2002

A very brief article from MCOT: *(UNESCO official Richard) Favis named Bangkok as one of the cities in Southeast Asia that was capable of becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site, along with towns and cities in Laos, Vietnam, and Nepal.*

Parking structure under Sanam Luang coming up for a vote

March 20, 2002

Categories: Communities

[Parking structure under Sanam Luang coming up for a vote](#)

– March

20, 2002

The Bangkok

governor yesterday

refuted rumors

that plans were

afoot to kill

off a highly controversial

scheme to build

an underground

car park beneath

the historical

Sanam Luang, insisting

that modern technology

would ensure the

preservation of

the site.

When Thais are the villains

March 21, 2002

Categories: Film and TV

When Thais
are the villains

– 07:41, March 21, 2002

Here's a [short article](#) about *Decho Domden*, a patriotic Cambodian film in the vein of *Suriothai*, in which Thais are the bad guys.

Mindful of the importance of maintaining friendly ties with Thailand, the CDCD and the Ministry of Fine Arts and Culture are still mulling the wisdom of portraying the predecessor of Cambodia's neighboring Kingdom as an imperialistic aggressor.

Vanthy told the (Phnom Penh) Post that in order not to create a potential diplomatic incident... the CDCD will ask the film's producers to replace references to "Siam" in the script with the more generic term "enemy."

Ayuttaya treasure hunters

March 23, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Ayuttaya

treasure hunters

– 08:28, March 23, 2002

CNN has an [article](#)

on treasure hunters in Ayuttaya

who use homemade diving gear to

search for for medieval artifacts

in the waterways around the ancient

capital: *For four decades,*

Chuay Kaewprasert — who does

business as Boonchuay Pradanam,

or Boonchuay the Diver — has

set out almost every morning in

a wooden boat to see what treasures

the Chao Phraya river will yield....

Chuay has earned as much as \$680

from a single piece of Chinese

pottery more than 700 years old.

On bad days, he can still make

a few dollars from selling small

trinkets he recovers, such as

Pod Duang, an ancient Thai coin

shaped like a grub.

True white elephants

March 23, 2002

True white elephants

– 08:12, March 23, 2002

A small blurb about white elephants
from the April 2002 [Fortean
Times](#):

The world's second true white elephant—an eight-year-old bull—was caught in Rakhine state, western Burma, last October; the other one, which lives in Laos, is poorly. Thailand claims to have 12 (one of which lives in the king's palace), but do not have the pearl eyes, white hoofs and white hair of the true—and highly-prized—albino.... The New Light, the organ of the military junta, promptly declared, in a full-page report, that it augured well for Burma's prosperity. 9 Nov 2001.



Also David
Shurville's [cloud
that looks like a white elephant](#)
over a chedi in Chiang Mai.

Some weekend links

March 23, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Some weekend links

– 08:12, March 23, 2002

How much things cost: Ananova reports that [Thailand](#) [will pay 2 million pounds a year for 10 years](#) for a pair of pandas. Considering the the incredible amount of tourism pandas generate, it is probably well worth it.

From MCOT: [Govt](#) [to open technical entertainment centre for youths](#) ends with the following: *Student and youths would enjoy learning useful on-line knowledge, which is screened and controlled by authorities concerned, instead of spending their times on things or in places where are not suitable or useful for them, said Suwat. Like reading the Economist?*

From the fascinating [Museum of Hoaxes](#): A [Thai](#)

[hoax](#) featuring a "monk" who congers up tall, skinny spirits

Being Thai: Here's a short [article](#) on a woman who had her win on the Thai-version of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" invalidated because of a technical glitch. Anywhere else the lawyers would be called in, but the gentle Thai says: *"They told me to play it again. I didn't mind, since I didn't want them to get in trouble..."*

Whatever happened to nothaksin.com?

March 24, 2002

Categories: The Thaksin Years

Whatever

happened to nothaksin.com?

– 14:28, March 24, 2002

In late 2000, the papers were full of news of the first "hate" site for a Thai politician—nothaksin.com.

The politician who had the honor of such attention was Thaksin Shinawatra. It was registered through [Namezero.com](#)

which hides the identity of a domain's true owner and hosted on free servers. Whoever did run it eventually gave up renewing their account with Namezero and the site vanished after little more than a year. You can still see [cached](#)

[versions of the site](#) at the

Internet Archive (part of an effort by the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian to preserve transitory net content). Thaksin's official site is [here](#)

(in Thai and English).

Thaksin and Absolute Power

March 24, 2002

Categories: The Thaksin Years

Absolute power – 10:13, March 24, 2002

Interesting [Washington Post article](#) with a relatively balanced overview of Thaksin's term so far: *Critics fear that Thaksin is trying fashion himself into a leader like Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad or Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, both of whom enjoyed near-absolute control of their legislatures and imposed strict controls on the media but are credited with spurring rapid economic development....*

Since taking office, he has followed through on many of his promises, declaring a limited moratorium on farmers' debts, doling out millions of baht to villages and introducing universal medical care for just 30 baht, or 70 cents, per consultation. His spending programs have made him a hero to the rural poor who make up a majority of the population. But the programs have been less popular among the urban elite, particularly journalists, academics and opposition leaders who live in Bangkok. They assert that the country can ill afford to make such large grants to every village, and they contend that lower medical fees have led to worse care.

...After a polling organization reported that his numbers were slipping, authorities raided the firm's office, seizing confidential survey forms and warning that they might censor future questions. After the Far Eastern Economic Review published a short article alleging tensions between Thaksin and the country's king, the police ordered that the magazine's two Bangkok correspondents be expelled. And after printing highly critical articles about the prime minister, several newspaper editors and executives discovered their bank accounts were being investigated by the country's Anti-Money Laundering Office.

The original link is broken. This article uses some of the same quotes from the Post article: [Opponents Say Thaksin Is Trying to Drown Out Criticism](#)

BANGKOK — Most Thai politicians would have been content to be in Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's position 13 months ago. His political party had just taken control of parliament after a resounding victory at the polls. Television reports fawned over him, newspaper headlines were almost always favorable and opinion surveys pegged his approval rating at more than 70 percent.

But Thaksin, a telecommunications tycoon, was not satisfied.

He set about extending his dominance of parliament by adding three smaller parties to his ruling coalition, giving him an unprecedented two-thirds majority in the lower house that allows him to amend the constitution at will and block any attempts to censure him. He sought to wipe out what little negative news was reported about him by imposing greater controls on government-controlled broadcasters and asking at least one newspaper to scrap a popular column that regularly criticized his administration.

In recent weeks the government's efforts to muzzle unflattering coverage have become even more intense, leading to howls of protest from media organizations and prompting opposition leaders to criticize Thaksin as thin-skinned.

After a polling organization reported that his numbers were slipping, authorities raided the firm's office, seizing confidential survey forms and warning that they might censor future questions. After the Far Eastern Economic Review published a short article alleging tensions between Thaksin and the country's king, the police ordered that the magazine's two Bangkok correspondents be

expelled. And after printing highly critical articles about the prime minister, several newspaper editors and executives discovered their bank accounts were being investigated by the country's Anti-Money Laundering Office.

"He'll stop at nothing," said Pana Janviroj, editor of the Nation, one of the newspapers whose employees were targeted by the money-laundering office. "He believes everyone should be on his side, and he doesn't believe dissent should be tolerated."

Opposition leaders contend that efforts to muffle criticism raise concerns about his drive to consolidate power. They fear that Thaksin, who remains popular with the public despite the media-related controversies, could use his new clout in parliament to reshape the country's political landscape and roll back reforms enshrined in a 1997 democracy-promoting constitution.

"He has absolute power now," said Akapol Sorasuchat, a senior member of the Democrat party, which lost control of the government last year to Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party. "Our biggest concern is that he listens to no one — not to private sector, not to the media, not to the academics."

Thaksin's advisers insist that his dealings with the press and parliament have been misunderstood and blown out of proportion. They contend that Thaksin, 52, a former police officer who founded Thailand's largest telecommunications company, has simply brought his private-sector style to the prime minister's office in an effort to unclog a gridlocked political system.

"When he works, he thinks more in terms of efficiency, in terms of getting things done," said Suranad Vejajiva, one of Thaksin's senior advisers. "He's trying to say, 'Don't criticize me yet. Let me finish my work.' But some members of the media are not giving him a chance. And he finds that frustrating because he comes from a world where there was not as much criticism."

Thaksin has insisted that he had nothing to do with the money-laundering investigation or the effort to expel the two Review correspondents. Earlier this week, a special government committee chaired by Thaksin's cabinet secretary concluded that two officials from the money-laundering office were responsible for launching the probe.

"It shocked me when I learned that such a thing had happened," Thaksin said this week.

But media executives, opposition figures and many political analysts find that hard to believe. "It's inconceivable that they would have done it without high-level encouragement," said Pana, the Nation editor. "In Thailand, mid-level bureaucrats don't do this sort of thing without orders from the top."

The case, which has dominated the news here for the past two weeks, has turned into a major political embarrassment for Thaksin. "His media coverage today would be a lot more positive if he had not gone around trying to control the media," said Sunai Phasuk, a political science lecturer at Thamassat University in Bangkok.

"He misread his mandate," Sunai said. "He thought it meant he could do whatever he wants."

Even with the controversy, Thaksin has made contradictory statements about whether he intends to allow Thailand to maintain one of the freest media environments in Asia. This week he insisted he was not "against press freedom at all," but he also has warned the media to be cautious and not "to scold others."

Critics fear that Thaksin is trying fashion himself into a leader like Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad or Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, both of whom enjoyed near-absolute control of their legislatures and imposed strict controls on the media but are credited with spurring rapid economic development.

"He seems to want to establish a parliamentary dictatorship like what happened in Singapore and Malaysia," said Somchai Homlaor, the director of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development. "But how many of our freedoms — press freedoms, academic freedoms, our civil society — will be lost if he does that?"

Although he is reported to be worth as much as \$2 billion, Thaksin ran for office on a populist platform. Thai Rak Thai, his party, translates as "Thais Love Thais."

With the nation's economy still feeling the effects of a region-wide financial crisis that struck four years ago, he accused his predecessors of being too deferential to foreign investors and of adopting economic policies that neglected the rural poor. He pledged to give 1 million baht, or \$22,600, to each of Thailand's 70,000 villages, and he vowed to fight drugs and corruption more aggressively.

Since taking office, he has followed through on many of his promises, declaring a limited moratorium on farmers' debts, doling out millions of baht to villages and introducing universal medical care for just 30 baht, or 70 cents, per consultation.

His spending programs have made him a hero to the rural poor who make up a majority of the population. But the programs have been less popular among the urban elite, particularly journalists, academics and opposition leaders who live in Bangkok. They assert that the country can ill afford to make such large grants to every village, and they contend that lower medical fees have led to worse care.

Questions about conflicts of interest have arisen because of Thaksin's large business holdings, most of which have been transferred to his son. Opposition politicians said a cabinet decision to limit foreign investment in the telecommunications sector provided a huge benefit to his company, as did several lucrative government contracts that were awarded to an advertising company in which his family holds a stake. Thaksin has repeatedly denied any conflict of interest.

Media executives also have accused him of steering his company's advertising away from newspapers he deems critical of him.

Before the election, the National Counter-Corruption Commission charged Thaksin with failing to fully disclose his assets while he served in a previous administration. The Constitutional Court acquitted him in August. Critics contend Thaksin strong-armed some of the judges, but no one has presented evidence to support those claims.

Suranad, the senior adviser, said Thaksin's policy decisions have "benefited the country more than his personal interests." But Suranad acknowledged that Thaksin "needs to explain himself more clearly."

Even the country's beloved king, Bhumibol Adulyadej, a constitutional monarch who assiduously avoids interfering in politics, has chided Thaksin for failing to listen to criticism while "the country is in a state of disaster instead of prosperity."

"Everyone," the king said in his birthday address in December, "needs to lower his ego."

Last glimpse of Saphan Kwai Market

March 27, 2002

Categories: Communities



March 27, 2002

The old Saphan Kwai Market (northeast corner of Saphan Kwai intersection 100 meters from the corner) is completely gutted except for an evocative golden shrine. We took a walk through the debris and found it almost like the movie *Ben*, with waves of rats flowing over everything. Some locals told us the huge vacant area will be the home of a Big-C grocery store.

UPDATE: The day after we walked around the site, someone put up a gate so you can no longer see into the site and posted a guard to keep everyone out. Lucky we took lots of photos while we had the chance.

UPDATE – May 31, 2002

We have noticed that a huge section of land about 100 meters north of the northeast corner of Saphan Kwai intersection is being cleared. Two months ago the [Saphan Kwai market was leveled](#). Now all of the shophouses along Phahonyothin that front the street as well as another smaller market near the hospital are being razed as well.






Our scanner malfunctioned and created this Escher-like image of the photo above.



Burapa Lapidary Co. Ltd.

March 28, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam



ทะเบียนเลขที่ ๘.๐๒๕๐
คำขอที่ ๐๒๗๖/๒๕๔๕

แบบ ทท. ๐๔๐๓

**กรมทะเบียนการค้า
ใบทะเบียนพาณิชย์**

ใบสำคัญนี้ออกให้เพื่อแสดงว่า

นาย เสวย ศิรินอก

ได้จดทะเบียนพาณิชย์ ตามพระราชบัญญัติทะเบียนพาณิชย์ พ.ศ. ๒๔๙๙

เมื่อวันที่ ๘ กุมภาพันธ์ ๒๕๔๕

ชื่อที่ใช้ในการประกอบพาณิชย์คือ

บุรพา แผลบคำวี่

เงินลงทุนจดทะเบียน

จำนวนเงินประกอบพาณิชย์

จำนวนเงินประกอบพาณิชย์ เลขที่ ๐๒๗๖/๒๕๔๕

ที่สำนักงานใหญ่


เลขที่ ๑๖๔ หมู่ที่ ๘ ต.ระบองเพชร อ.บางพลี จ.สมุทรปราการ

ตำบลระบองเพชร อำเภอบางพลี จังหวัดสมุทรปราการ กรุงเทพมหานคร

ออกให้ ณ วันที่ ๘ กุมภาพันธ์ ๒๕๔๕

(นางสาววันชัย สิทธิสมบัติ)
นายทะเบียน

Burapa's business registration



BURAPA LAPIDARY

164 DAMRONG RAK ROAD KLONGMAHA NAK SUB
POMPRAB DIST. BANGKOK 10100
TEL. 0-2627-0078

เลขที่ ๐๕ วันที่ ๐๒๑๗

RECEIPT

ได้รับเงิน

NAME _____ DATE OF PURCHASING ๒๘, ๓, ๐๒

จำนวน QUANTITY	รายการ DESCRIPTION	ราคา UNIT PRICE	จำนวน AMOUNT
1 SET	Cut Blue Sapphire and Diamond with in 18 karat gold. 30% discount.		206,400
	product fee Tax not included. 19%		
TOTAL			206,400

RECEIVER _____

A Burapa receipt

Burapa Lapidary Co. Ltd
– March 28, 2002

Dear 2Bangkok Team,

You have been doing a great job, thanks a lot.

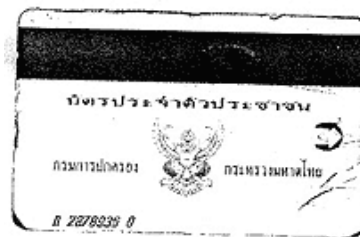
I was scammed in Bangkok on March 28, 2002 by the shop named Burapa Lapidary, located at 164 DamRong Rak Rd, KlongMaha Nak Sub PomPrab Dist. Unfortunately, the shop was closed soon afterwards and I was not able to get the refund as all the jewelry from the shop had been confiscated by the police. At least that's what they told me. Then the shop reopened under a different name Thai Manee, 165-167 Tanao Rd., Bowon Niwet, Bangkok 10200. I had to come back home but... another victim of the same shop, carried on with my case. Owing to the complete lack of cooperation of the Tourist Police and other Thai authorities, he achieved nothing.



Burapa's manager



1/800 5/5 Man



Below: a police "Jewelry Complaint Form"
with the delightful final question: "What do you want the police
to do for you?"

COPY RIGH

**TOURIST POLICE, SECTION 5, SUB-DIVISION 2
JEWELRY COMPLAINT FORM**

DATE: 28 MAR 2002

Date: 28/03/2002

Mr./Miss/Mrs. Surname Age
 Nationality Occupation Passport no.
 Home address
 Country Phone no. Fax no.
 Date of arrival in Thailand: 28/03/2002 Date of departure from Thailand:
 Hotel of residence Room no. Phone no.

Date and time of Incident: 28/03/02 2:30 p.m.

Name of the Jewelry shop: Klongprachan Sub. Township Dist. Bangkok Prov. 10100
 Phone no. 0-2627-0078

How many people did you meet and where?
 a passer-by at Th. Rajadamree Univ. Tuk Tuk driver met
 det. by the passer-by, not passed by at Chaisatong Temple
 and finally in the shop a woman manager Mrs. Piyachit

Could you describe these people? ☒ Yes ☐ No
 all were v. friendly and speaking good English
 except the tuk tuk driver. He spoke little English.

What did he (they) tell you?
 it's the end of the permanent promotion for selling
 jewelry to foreign tourists. It's been advertised
 on TV. It is guaranteed to get the full refund of
 the money.

How did you go to this shop?
☐ By myself ☒ With tuk tuk, No. black & white
☐ With the man who approached me ☐ Others

In the shop, what did the seller tell you?
 it's a tax-free shopping. We gave
 195% of the value. We can sell it at least at a double
 price. If not they'll pay the difference.

What did you buy?
 cut blue sapphire and diamond set (a ring
 & earrings & a pendant), so-called 'Lucky Diamond'.

How much does it cost?
 206,400 BHT

You paid by
☐ Cash ☒ Credit card ☐ Others

Where is the Jewelry now?
 EHS package probably going to

Why do you want to make a refund?
 because I don't like it. I don't like it. I can always get
 the full refund. I realized the jewelry was not worth
 the money. Who recommended you to come to the Tourist Police?
 Tourist information at Hanoi

What would you like the police to do for you?
 to assist me to get my refund, please.

Signature

SALE RECEIPT

TO: TOURIST POLICE

FROM: KLONGPRACHAN SUB. TOWNSHIP

REF. NO.

DATE: 28/03/02

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

APPROVAL: CEE

TOTAL BHT: 206,400.00

SIGN: K.

NO REFUND

SALE RECEIPT

TO: TOURIST POLICE

FROM: KLONGPRACHAN SUB. TOWNSHIP

REF. NO.

DATE: 28/03/02

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

APPROVAL: CEE

TOTAL BHT: 206,400.00

SIGN: K.

NO REFUND

[Return to Gem](#)
[Scam main page](#)

How much things cost

March 30, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

How

much things cost

– 15:41, March 30, 2002

Pending Cabinet approval, all 500

MPs and 200 senators will soon see

their monthly salaries rise to Bt100,000...

Currently each MP and senator earns

a salary of Bt77,000 and enjoys free

domestic flights and free train and

bus travel. Each receives Bt500 for

each House or Senate meeting he attends.

(from the *Nation*: SIX-FIGURE

MPS: Lawmakers set to get big pay

rise, March 30, 2002)

English on Thai TV

March 31, 2002

Categories: Film and TV

English
on Thai TV

– 13:08, March 31, 2002

In the early 1990s, English-language movies each Saturday and Sunday night at 10 pm on [Channel 7](#) were dubbed in Thai. If you wanted to hear English, you had to tune in to an FM radio station that was broadcasting the English soundtrack. There was a strange ambiance created by watching a movie on TV and listening to the sound on a crackling radio station. But that's no more. We just noticed that the films on channel 7 are shown in original English with Thai subtitles.

Official denies dogs tranquilized for Thaksin visit

March 31, 2002

Categories: The Thaksin Years

[Official denies dogs tranquilized for Thaksin visit](#)

– 06:52, April 1, 2002

The chief Narathiwat livestock officer yesterday denied that dogs at a temple here were shot with tranquilliser darts because of a visit by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his Cabinet....

He claimed that dogs needed to be to tranquillised before they were given rabies shots because they were difficult to catch.

He said that there were about 80 dogs at the temple.... Meanwhile, Padung Limcharoenrat, the prime minister's personal secretary, yesterday expressed his dissatisfaction to a local livestock officer over the incident. Padung was heard complaining about what he called an "imprudent decision" by the local livestock officers to carry out the operation just ahead of the premier's trip.

(ANIMAL WELFARE: Temple dogs not drugged for PM, The Nation, April 1, 2002)

[Dogs tranquilized for Thaksin visit](#)

– 13:55, March 31, 2002

Scores of dogs were shot with tranquilizer darts as part of a tight security clampdown for Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's visit to a Buddhist temple in southern Thailand... "We are afraid that the dogs here will be frightened by the crowd and attack the prime minister," the paper quoted an officer of the Livestock Department as saying.

The unconscious dogs were laid out at the back of the temple on Saturday while others were seen staggering around the vicinity of the temple struggling to stay

*awake, oblivious to the visiting
dignitaries.*

Robinsons at Victory Monument being torn down

April 1, 2002

Categories: Buildings

Robinsons at Victory Monument being torn down – April 1, 2002

The Robinsons on the northeast corner of Victory Monument is being torn down. Its lease ran out last year.

Anyone know what is planned for the spot?

Update: It seems the top floors are being removed, but the first and second floors are now housing small, private shops.

Also: some old photos of [Victory Monument](#)

Jang Kuom

April 1, 2002

Jang

Kuom

– 08:34, April 1, 2002

[ITV](#)

has an interesting show
on the law each Saturday
and Sunday night at 9 pm.
Hosted by two lawyers who
are also twins, [Jang](#)
[Koum](#) features dramatizations
and humorous commentary
on everyday legal issues.
Sunday's show featured information
on minors wanting to be
with older men, adoptions,
and the consequences of
hit and run accidents.

Part of Thailand that's China

April 2, 2002

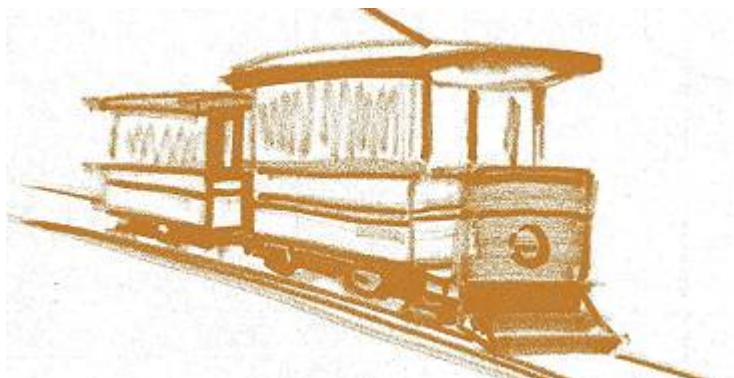
Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Part
of Thailand that's
China](#) – *Time*,
08:15, April 2,
2002

Twilight of the Trams – 1964-1965

April 6, 2002

Categories: Trams



[Bangkok Tramways](#)

[main page](#)

[Tram Overview](#)

[The Bangkok Tram Song!](#)

[End of the Line](#)

[Links](#)

[Tram Routes](#)

including the 1996 proposal
for tramlike buses

[Tram Fares](#)

[Tram Photos – from the](#)

[collection of Charlie](#)

[Sullivan](#)

[Tram Photos – three](#)

[awesome color photos](#)

[Tram Photos – Various](#)

[Tram Photos – Trams](#)

[Around](#)

[Town Today](#)

[Thai Tramway](#)

[Accounts from Famous](#)

[Thai Writers](#) – Cost of

living in 1941-1942,

cost of living in 1946,

Japanese arrive in Ban

Allied bombing of

Bangkok & bombing of

power plants, the Great

Flood of 1942 (with ca

boat

collisions!), tram drive

strike (with old-time st

busters!), the

Thai people sue for lib

and Bangkok Triad Wa

Profiles of companies

involved in Thai mass

transit in the past

[Mae Klong Railway](#)

[Siam Electricity](#)

[Company Ltd.](#)

[Bangkok Electricity](#)

[Authority](#)

[Siamese Tramway](#)

[Company,](#)

[Ltd.](#)

[Menam Motor Boat](#)

[Company, Ltd.](#)

[The Paknam Railways](#)

The photos on this page are from the
collection of Charlie Sullivan, a serviceman in Bangkok from 1964-1965.



Probably around Saphan dam area



Probably around Wat Tuek area



Probably near Wat Liab terminal



Probably at the City Pillar Shrine



Saphan Phut Area (Memorial Bridge) near MEA (Wat Liab office) and Suan Kularb High School



Ban Mailwan on Phra Athit Road (the terminal for the Inner Bangkok section)



The banner on the side of this tram advertises the Thai film *Mon Rak Nang Phi* (the Charming of Forest Lady). It is for Chaloem Krung Cinema with advertising for Texas Cinema in the Yaowarat area.



Probably around Samranrat (Pratoo Phee-ghost gate)



Probably around Wat Tuek area

The photos on this page are from the collection of Charlie Sullivan, a serviceman in Bangkok from 1964-1965.

You can also see a tram at the [Thailand Railway Hall of Fame](#).

Songkran in Hat Yai 2002

April 15, 2002

Categories: Songkran



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

2002 – Songkran in Hat Yai

This is not an explanation of what Songkran is about, but what you will see if you venture out on the street.

Dave Hester writes (April, 2002): Having just experienced my first Songkran Water festival, which celebrates the start of the “wet season” in Thailand, here is what happens !!

Ingredients

Rent a pickup truck
Install 2 or more 30 gallon plastic dustbins nearly full of water
Buy large amounts of talcum powder and/or flour
Purchase appropriate number of high power water squirting devices (they look like huge plastic bicycle pumps)
Buy sandwich bags to put cigarette, mobile phones in to keep them dry
Buy beer, Thai whisky and put in icebox
Having put all this in the pickup truck, put as many people in the back of the pickup as you can without lifting the front wheels off the ground.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

It is time to set off, and we roll out of the village towards the main highway where you see a lot more similarly “heavily armed” pickups cruising toward town. Somewhat reminiscent of the

pickups you saw on the news when the US Army was fighting the Somalian warlords, but a little less lethal.

The objective of the exercise is to inundate as many people as possible with streams of water, and everyone is fair game, including police. However, it is difficult to know which police have a sense of humour, and which do not. Risk of arrest !!! The police have water pistols as well as the real ones, but may make the wrong choice, so care is necessary.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

You have the right to remain wet!

As we cruise up along the streets, we see a large wet patch on the road. This indicates a likely ambush from ground based troops.

Far from avoiding confrontation, our driver (my wife – Jintana), who is nice and snug and warm and dry in the car with the windows done up as tightly as possible, slows down, nearly to a stop. The onslaught begins with small kids, big kids (adults) lobbing vast amounts of water from buckets and water guns all over you. High power jets of water thump you all over, people run up and put flour or talc on your face, and you retaliate appropriately.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Whilst this is taking place another marauding pickup truck passes and we get attacked from both sides. Jintana in the relative safety in the driving seat, having checked her make up is OK, and amending the lipstick, decides it is time to cruise off to the next ambush, a mere 50 metres away. It is customary to stop at all points that offer a potential drenching. The next ambush is less comfortable, as the gang there has got barrels full of ice cold water. The problem is, that being a European (or falang), of which there are few in Khon Kaen, you are a prime target. Amidst cries of “Oooooooo falang”, this little group makes a bee line for me and douses me in ice cold water flour and other strange substances. Most pleasant But at least the sun’s out and you soon warm up.

Plan B is employed. To the “ice factory” and buy three big bags of ice to put bin the water, and thus inflict more “painful” injuries to the enemy. Then on to the town centre where total bedlam is in progress. Motorbikes with two,three or even more people on them, and the occasional damp dog on the back, taxi pickups (songthaews), trucks, all circle the streets blasting anybody or anything.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

After about 20 minutes of battle, water is running low in our truck, so time for a refill. We find an enterprising Thai family who have attached a four inch rubber hose to a fire hydrant and are selling public water for 10 baht a dustbin full. Tanked up we set off again, absolutely soaked through, and move back to the battlefield at a less than sedate 60 km/h which chills you to the bone, but Jintana, in the comfort of the tightly sealed cab, remains totally oblivious to our discomfort, and accelerates to get back quicker. Some of the 15 odd occupants in the back of the pickup are hanging on by their fingernails in a desperate attempt to stay on board.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

This festival goes on for up to eight days, all over Thailand. We got through about 200 gallons (800 liters) in about 2 hours. What is absolutely amazing is that there is no hostility—everyone smiles and laughs even when hit full in the face with a water jet. I sneaked behind a wall, got out my carefully waterproofed cigarettes and lighter, and lit up. Mistake! Instantly spotted, and suitably blasted with water. Maybe I will give up smoking, during Songkran at least.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

A ten minute halt is called as it is time for beer, whisky and soda or whatever else has turned up in the ice box. People come up offering you glasses of beer, and everyone seems to have a drink in one hand and a water cannon in the other! Coupled with that, stereo systems are set up everywhere, covered in plastic sheets, and turned up to maximum volume. Never mind blowing out the speaker cones or peoples' eardrums!

After two hours its time to head home. Not because anyone is tired , or fed up with being wet, but the Thais, especially the girls, have not had anything to eat since just before we set off. So true to form, back to the house, and the little food stall next door, for the bi-hourly feast. How do they stay slim?



"(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Day one of the battle concludes (only four more to go), and we are sitting in the sunshine in the garden getting warm again. Great fun. I cannot quite imagine this sort of festival in Europe without people suffering from hypothermia. Suddenly, the beer runs out, and no ciggies—they are all wet. So off to the shop 100 meters away to get more. Unfortunately, it is Songkran and on the way there and back I get absolutely soaked again. As the Thais say, *mai pen lai* (never mind)! *Sanook* (fun)!



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Drunker and drunker...

Why two spirit houses?

April 16, 2002

Categories: Local Beliefs

Why two spirit houses?

– 23:32, April 16, 2002

On our way back from the south of Thailand, we noticed that most buildings between Hua Hin and Petchburi had two spirit houses side by side—a tall pedestal with a spirit house in the style of a Thai wat and a low pedestal with a larger spirit house often in the style of a traditional Thai house. Does anyone know the reason for two spirit houses?

An answer – 07:45, April 19, 2002

Suchada writes: *The smaller spirit house is a shrine for a dead person who has been deified. The taller is the shrine of the household god (or spirit).*

Where to put the new parliament building?

April 18, 2002

Categories: Buildings

Where

to put the new parliament building? –

00:07, April 18, 2002

Don writes: *Did you*

see that there's a serious suggestion

put forward to have the new

parliament housed in Lak Si

Plaza? In the past, areas

near Chutuchak Park and Muang

Thong Thani have also been suggested.

[Thailand](#)

[to construct new parliament](#)

[building](#) – AFP, April 15,

2002

Thai urban legend: dangers of lychee and longgan?

April 19, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Thai

urban legend: dangers

of lychee & longgan?

– 07:59, April 19, 2002

We have received word of a suspect story circulating by email. It is a plea to boycott Thai lychee and longgan because farmers allegedly use gunpowder as fertilizer, making the resulting fruit not safe to eat. It does not seem like it could be true, especially considering the line, "These fruits could be ignited after picking..."

An idea from Don:

*This is just a guess,
but I'm thinking it must
be connected somehow to
that big explosion at
that lychee plantation
a few years ago. It was
the fertilizers being
stored there that blew
up...*

Editorial cartoons by from the Thaksin years

April 20, 2002

Categories: Editorial Cartoons - Thairath - Sia, The Thaksin Years

These editorial cartoons are from *Thairath's* Sia. They are from a new collection of Sia cartoons, *Political Record*.



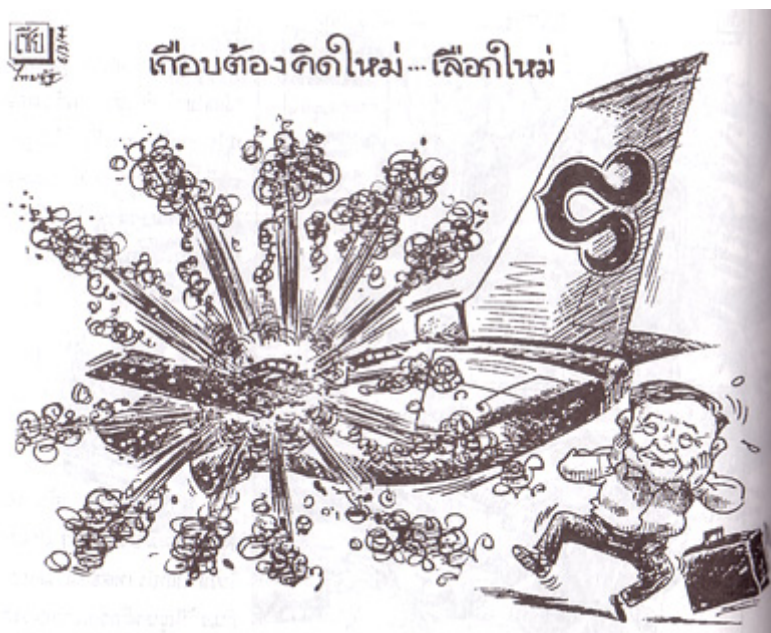
Above: This cartoon is circa-2002. The man is Chalerm Yoobamrung whose two sons have been involved in altercations and a shooting of a police officer in nightclubs in the past.

At the top it reads: Follow the saying. if you love your cow, keep it fastened . If you love you children, go and find them at the night pubs

Words on the marquee in the background: Places of allurements destroying the country's future.

Signs on the girls: Drug addicted, sexual abuse

The cartoon implies Chalerm should look after his rambunctious sons and the decadent pubs they are frequenting.



Above: Needing to rethink and choose again



Above: Birthday cake – Village Fund



Above: Cartoon title: Catching a thief of the superpower-level
On rice bag in Uncle Sam's hand: Thai jasmine rice stolen by the U.S.
On file in hands of Thaksin Shinawatra: Friend of Bush



Above: Cartoon title: Money and women or... religion's parasite?

On the monk's fan: Detached from worldly pleasure

On bags, read from the one in the back: treasure, titles, fame



Above: It reads: They are powerful when they are alive. But, it's ok, let's retaliate against them when they are dead

Written on the bodies: MP Chon is obsessed with sex – MP Samai Sanun is obsessed with sex

Bangkok Anniversaries of the Past

April 21, 2002

Categories: History

Bangkok's 100 anniversary: King Rama V built the Grand Palace (also called the Chakri Palace).

Bangkok's 150 anniversary: King Rama VII had Pra Buddhayodfa Bridge built across the Chao Phraya River with a monument to King Rama I on the Bangkok side. The monument was designed by Silpa Bhirasri and the rest of the structure by Prince Narisaranuvattiwongs. On April 6, 1932 King Prajadhipok officially opened the bridge. The King was carried across the bridge on a royal chair carried by government officials, and traveled back to Bangkok in a procession of royal barges.

Bangkok's 200 anniversary: Citizens donated money for a complete restoration of Wat Pra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald) area.

Also, for Bangkok's 200 anniversary the private sector organized an International Trade Fair at the Indoor Stadium at Hua-Mark from April 4-May 4, 1982.

Source: *Rattanakosin Bicentennial*, Kurusapha Business Organization, 1982

Two Thai films to be shown at Cannes

April 27, 2002

Categories: Film and TV

Two Thai films to be shown at Cannes

– *Bangkok Post*, 08:03,

April 27, 2002

Short [article](#)

on two Thai films to be screened at Cannes: *Blissfully Yours* by director Apichartpong Weerasethakul, and *Monrak Transistor* by [Pen-ek Rattananarung](#).... In fact, it was only last year that *Fah Talai Jone*, or *Tears of the Black Tiger*, became the first Thai movie to appear at the glittering Riviera festival.

They're probably both good films—*Monrak* flopped locally and *Blissfully Yours* is an independent production with little hope of being distributed in Thailand (theaters' schedules here are tied up by big Hollywood studios).

PM backs breaking up contract work

April 27, 2002

Categories: Airports and Airlines

[PM backs breaking up contract work](#) – *Bangkok Post*, 08:14, April 27, 2002

In the army now...

April 28, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[In
the army now...](#)

– 06:04, April 28, 2002

Vietnam-era snapshots from foreign
soldiers stationed in Thailand.

This site leads to a whole network
of veterans' sites.

Three bits of weird Thai news

April 29, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Three bits of
weird Thai news

– 07:47, April 29, 2002

1. [Black](#)

[magic for beginners](#) – a school
for sorcerers – from News24.com

2. Notice the use of the word

"alleged" – *The premiere*

of Thailand's version of "The

Weakest Link" TV show was

deeply controversial because the

show's trademark brutality and

selfishness so much contravened

the country's alleged sensitivity

and generosity. (from Chuck

Shepherd's [News](#)

[of the Weird](#))

3. There's also a full-page photo

of the Bin Laden sculpture at

Klang Kaew temple in the May,

2002 *Fortean Times* (here's

the photo at [Ananova](#)).

Temples that install sculptures

like this are often regarded with

embarrassment by Thais, who see

it as a heretical, money-grubbing,

publicity seeking enterprise.

The foreign press loves it though

and makes no mention that such

practices are viewed by locals

as bizarre. See BBC's [Beckham](#)

[meets Buddha](#).

Old photos of the Giant Swing

May 1, 2002

Categories: Giant Swing - Sao Ching Cha, Old photos and films

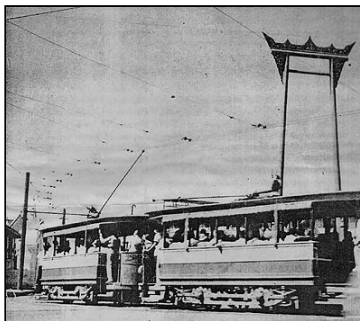
The local papers beat us to publishing photos of the recreation of the Giant Swing ritual. A smaller swing (about one-third the size of the old one) has been constructed and several times over Songkran, the swinging ceremony will be reenacted. This has been shown on TV several times.

(For whatever reasons, it seems the actual schedule of events for the 222th Bangkok anniversary is not easily available. TAT, BMA, and the English-language papers have a generalized version without specific times for individual events—only showing the six different zones where activities take place. Neither BMA nor TAT would give us a schedule or admit one was available. Finally a sympathetic person faxed us one in both English and Thai. This is the only way to see that the recreation of the giant swing ceremony is occurring on April 7, 9 and 11 from 17:15-17:45.)



(Photo: National Archives)

Here is a vintage photo of the actual Giant Swing ceremony. The pole on the right has coins for the swinging monks to reach out and grab. A boy is underneath pulling on a rope to move the swing. There is also a support wire for the trams crossing through the photo near the top.



(Photo: National Archives)

Bangkok has always been a city crisscrossed by overhead wires—maybe even more so in the past when [tram](#) cabling covered Rattanakosin Island like a spider's web.

So why are so many photos of the old days so blissfully free of wires? Because they have been edited out. Right is a photo from the National Archives showing electrical wiring partially erased to create a clear view of the offices of Barrow, Brown and Company (circa 1925-27).



(Photo: National Archives)

UBC among the best cable TV in Asia?

May 4, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

UBC among the
best cable TV in Asia?

– 07:41, May
4, 2002

We just saw a [CNN story on companies](#) in selling decoders so viewers in Hong Kong can watch [UBC from Thailand](#). For about US\$2000, Hong Kongers can get a decoder to see UBC. Apparently people in Hong Kong are impressed by UBC's sports coverage and over 20 channels! Typical cable subscribers in the US feel deprived with less than 75. Of course, this is all prefaced as being a terrible crime, since a few companies in Hong Kong have *exclusive* contracts to give local viewers the bare minimum at the highest prices.

The Rama VIII Bridge

May 6, 2002

Categories: The Rama VIII Bridge



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Placard for the mini-marathon held on the bridge earlier in the morning.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

One the elevated road heading up to the bridge:
Samsen Road looking south towards New World
Department Store in Banglamphu



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Approaching the bridge from the Bangkok side of
Chao Phraya River



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Looking south toward Pin Klao Bridge



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Looking north. The railing design has an art deco-
appearance.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Heading across the bridge



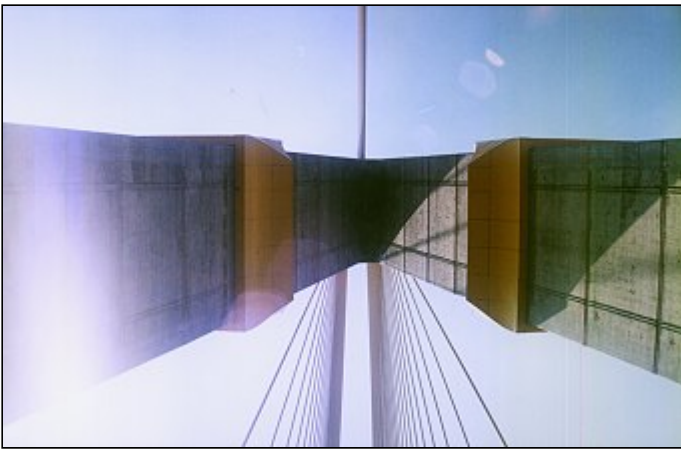
(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Approaching the Thonburi side.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The tower. Notice the single, centered cables that come out the Thonburi side of the tower.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Directly under the tower.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

A workman standing in an access door for the tower



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Looking back to the Bangkok side. The cables appear to rise directly up and create a strange sense of vertigo

Left: One of two unfinished ornamental pillars (?) on the Thonburi side. The pedestrian stairway wraps around it and it looks like it could contain an elevator.

Right: The cables coming down in the center of the road on the Thonburi side.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



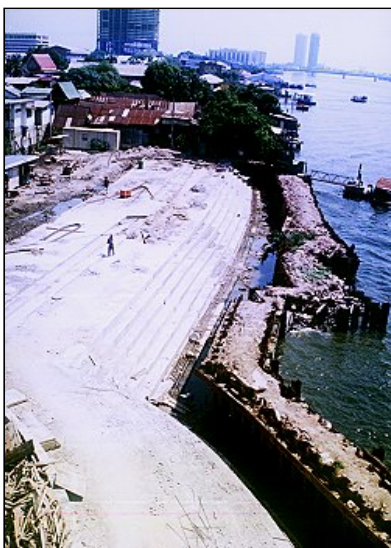
(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The side of the bridge looking back towards Bangkok.

The bridge roadway heading toward the



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The cables appear to be wrapped with some kind of yellow PVC covering.

A cable attached to the bridge decking

Waterfront park area under construction on the Thonburi side



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Can police require everyone in a disco to give urine samples? Yes

May 6, 2002

Categories: Drugs

[Can police require everyone in a disco to give urine samples? Yes](#)

—

Phuket Gazette,

May 6, 2002

Three bridges

May 6, 2002

Categories: Bridges



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Three bridges – December 23, 2006

Left to right: The [Mega Bridge](#) (it has a number of [unofficial names](#)), the outer ring road bridge (under construction), and the Rama IX Bridge. Link to [larger image](#). Google Earth placemarks – [Mega Bridge](#), [outer ring road bridge](#), [Rama IX Bridge](#)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The Rama VIII Bridge

[Walking day on the Rama VIII Bridge, May 6, 2002](#)

[Installing cables – July-September, 2001](#)

[Various construction photos – August, 2000-August, 2001](#)

[Rama VIII Bridge news](#)

[Rama VIII links](#)

Other bridges

[Outer Ring Road Bridge](#)

[Pakkret Bridge](#)

[The Mega-Bridge](#)

[Chulachomklao Bridge](#)

[The Laem Phak Bai Bridge – The 50 kilometer bridge over the Gulf of Thailand](#)

[Mukdahan bridge to Laos](#)

[Various Chao Phraya bridge plans](#)

[Other bridge news](#)

Also: [Shenzhen Western Corridor photos](#)

Also: [Prasumen Fort and Santichaiprakarn Park](#)

Also: [Rattanakosin Island Waterfront Reclamation](#)

Universal Gems and Jewelry Export Co. Ltd. (Final Scam)

May 12, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)



A gem scam store driver...

Gem Scam Report: Universal Gems and Jewelry Export Co. Ltd. (Final Scam)

May 12, 2002

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you to tell how stupidly I was cheated!!

When I arrived near Sao Chin Cha, I decided to go to Gland Palace, then I asked a man, who was just standing near me with his friend, how to go there. At first I did not know he was a driver. He said "Gland Palace is not open at the moment, so I offer you a lift only 20B for 1 or 2 hours." It sounded fishy to me, because I had read such trouble on the web, so I asked him why it was so cheap. He said he could get ESSO coupon. At that time I did not understand what he meant. He said "I will take you to some temples and silk shop and jewelry shop." I insisted I would not go to such shops, but he said "you don't have to buy it. It is up to you." Then he circled where to go in my map.

First we went to the temple where there are standing, sitting and big belly Buddha. I walked around, then a man started to talk to me. I thought it was a good idea to ask him whether I can trust Tuk Tuk driver. He said "Are you going to the silk shop? (seeing my map) I bought a suits this morning because today is the last day of big discount. I have a members card.(showing me a card) With this card I can buy everything 20% off." After the driver took me to the silk shop. I did not buy any. The name was V-something. Maybe Venus??

Next, he took me to the temple. It was closed. I met an American man who was traveling in Thailand and talked to me. I do not think he was one of culprits, but he said today was the last day of good offer, so Tuk Tuk is very cheap. At first I was very suspicious to a driver. But I became to believe "Today is holiday, so some temples close in the morning or evening! Today is the special day because of Royal Family Day!"

Next, he took me to another temple. There was a huge Buddha, 40M. I wanted to make sure whether what the driver said was true or not, so I was listening to conversation between a Thailand man and an American couple. He said today is special day, so some temples open, some are not.

Then we headed for a jewelry shop. I do not remember the name. It was a quite small shop. I did not buy any. After that we went to the Chinese temple. When I entered inside, a woman was praying and taught me how to pray and left there. In few minutes, when I was about to leave there she came back with a man. He tried me to stay there, then conversation began. When I said I was Japanese, he started speaking Japanese fluently. I can speak English to some extent, so at first I talked to him in English. He said "My mother is from Thai, father is Japanese and lives in Tokyo." I asked him why the driver could get ESSO coupon or whether today is holiday. He taught the system. It was like that;

?Today is the last special offer day.

If Tuk Tuk drivers take tourists jewelry shop, they can get ESSO coupon from the government, because the government want tourists to buy more jewelry with reasonable price.

The government levies 195% tax on jewelry, but until today you can get jewelry without tax.

He have bought a jewel about 300,000 yen then went to Japan to sell it to where the jewelry shop introduced to him. He sold it for 600,000 yen.

His aunt bought a lot of jewelry during special offer, then went to Europe to sell them. She went well.

He asked me whether I watched this commercial on TV.

He said I could trust the driver. Nobody has no intention of cheating me.

I trusted what he said completely, because I did not think Japanese did not cheat Japanese.

After that, we went to the jewelry shop, UNIVERSAL GEMS & JEWELRY EXPORT CO., LTD.

At first I was not interested in jewelry, but I completely believed that the government was running. In the shop, a Thai woman was buying a set of jewel and said to me "This is the second time I have bought jewel at this shop. When I bought the jewel last time I went to Switzerland to sell it and earn a lot of money." She was filling in the documents.

When I decided which jewel I buy, a woman and a driver took me to ATM. I needed 115,000B, but I could withdraw only 90,000B. It was limitation. The woman was a bit nervous. Then we went back to the shop, I paid money and filled in the documents. A man who are charged of the shop said to me, "We will send you your jewel by EMS. When you receive it, the shop you choose will contact you when I can sell it to the shop. You can get 180,000B worth yen." Unfortunately I do not have EMS sending copy.

Next, I left the shop with a man who was a driver. The car was Honda, White, Sedan car. He took me to a temples and shopping centre. He told me he was going to Germany to work with German boss for BMW. He showed me the boss's photo. Then we went to the express way and went to the restaurant which the jewelry shop had contracted with. He took me to the airport. Then I asked him to tell me his e-mail address and his address. He started to write them but he said he could not. I thought Thai people cannot spell well because they write Thai language we cannot read and write. At the airport I took his photo.

I am in panic now. I cannot get enough sleep and lost a lot of weight. I hope next victim never appear. Do you think I had better go back to Bangkok and visit at the tourist police? I called the tourist police but they said just "Go back to Bangkok, then negotiate with the boss of the gem store." I could not believe it!!

I will attach a picture of one of culprits photo.

May 12, 2002

Thank you for your reply. Unfortunately I got reply from Mr. Manat saying he could not help me because the shop had closed down!!!

He said all he could do is that he is going to bring my case to the Court for criminal case. But I have to appear in the Court as a main witness. I cannot get long holiday, so it seem to be difficult. I might be going back Bangkok. I do not know at the moment.

The man in the photo is the one who took me to the temples, restaurant and the airport after cheated me. He said he was Chinese, but I do not know.

I was planning to go to Malaysia in June, but now I am so scared of going abroad.

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Should the handicapped be allowed to become judges?

May 12, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Should the handicapped be allowed to become judges?](#) – May 12, 2002

"'Imagine when a judge sits on the bench and the involved parties laugh at him, how can the judge get his work done?' said Sriamporn Salikhup (Court of Appeals Judge Region 3)." An activist notes (apparently with amazement), "in Germany or Britain there are many judges who are handicapped."

DISABLED LAWYERS: Backlash grows against ruling

Published on May 12, 2002

Human-rights commissioner says barring handicapped from bench 'discriminatory'

The backlash against the Judicial Commission's decision last week to bar two disabled lawyers from the bench gathered steam yesterday with a human-rights commissioner joining the chorus condemning the "discriminatory" ruling.

"Thailand is a signatory to the United Nations Charter on Human Rights. The Constitution also prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical disability," said human-rights commissioner Dr Pradit Charoenthaitawee.

Disabled persons who have been discriminated against should take their grievance to court via the Human Rights Commission, Pradit said.

His comments follow Tuesday's decision by the Judicial Commission to reject for the second time two handicapped lawyers' applications to become associate judges. The commission voted 13-2 that Sirimit Boonmoon and Boonjuti Klabprasit were too weak to cope with the workload.

The law preventing the disabled from becoming judges is obsolete, said the chairman of the Foundation for the Handicapped.

It was written more than 50 years ago by those who believed the disabled were capable of nothing, Narong Patibatsorakit said.

"The world has come so far. In Germany or Britain there are many judges who are handicapped," he added.

"Instead of saying that it's impossible for a handicapped person to reach the bench, we should ask: Have we built a ramp for them to get there?" Narong said.

The president of the Association for the Handicapped of Thailand said barring the disabled from qualification examinations was discriminatory and unconstitutional in theory, but in practice things are different.

"I filed a petition with the Constitution Court for amendment of more than 40 laws, but it was turned down," said Maj-Colonel Sirichai Sapsiri.

"This year is supposed to be the year to promote the handicapped in the workplace. The government has been telling the private sector to admit the disabled, but the government itself is discriminating against them," Sirichai said.

"If they want to continue the hypocrisy, there's no use promoting the year of handicapped," he said.

The disabled and concerned NGOs will soon gather to fight for justice, Sirichai said.

“We will have a workshop with the prime minister by July,” he said.

Meanwhile, a judge in Court of Appeals Region 3 judge spoke out in favour of the decision to keep the bench disabled-free.

“Imagine when a judge sits on the bench and the involved parties laugh at him, how can the judge get his work done?” Sriamporn Salikhup said.

“Judges must meet the highest standards of society. They must earn respect and trust,” Sriamporn said.

“I want to say that the judicial circle has no bias against the disabled. It just depends on whether society is ready to accept them as judges.”

Napanisa Kaewmorakot and Opas Boonlom

Earlier: [Lawyers cannot become judges because they limp.](#)

Politics in the Age of Thaksin

May 21, 2002

Categories: The Thaksin Years

[The](#)

[‘Latin Americanisation’ of the Thai economy](#) – *The Nation*, May 20, 2002

[Radio DJ threatens to sue PM over long speeches](#) – Ananova

Every radio station in Thailand has had to air Thaksin Shinawatra’s 15-minute lectures since he came to power last year.

[Political attacks define the true limits of Thaksin’s revolution](#)

– *Taipei Times*

This is a very interesting editorial on how Thaksin came to power and what it all means:

...The Democrat Party, which headed the previous government, claimed that it offered similar reforms and cannot understand why the voters rejected them. The answer is simple. The Democrats asked people to sit quietly and trust the bureaucrats and politicians to look after their interests. Demands and protests—the Democrats huffed—will get you nowhere. That old bureaucratic paternalism, Thaksin knew, was ripe for overthrow...

[In praise of Purachai](#) – *The*

Straits Times, May 13, 2002

Mr Purachai’s efforts have put him high on public polls and he has received support from the much-revered constitutional monarch, King Bhumibol Adulyadej. But, says Mr Thongbai: ‘...nobody in the government is on his side.’

‘Our Gang’ actor and Thai missionary dies

May 25, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[‘Our Gang’ actor and Thai missionary dies](#)

– 16:04, May 25, 2002

Darwood Smith,

[‘Our Gang/Little Rascals’](#)

actor and Thai missionary, has died at 72. He played the snooty rich kid ‘Waldo’ and was credited as "[Darwood Kaye](#)" (remember the boat race when his fancy boat sinks at the end?). Apparently he was a Seventh-day Adventist who spent 14 years in Thailand. Anyone know anything about his time in Thailand?

Drive a tuk-tuk

May 27, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Drive a tuk-tuk

– May 27,
2002

E3 (a videogame convention in LA), featured "Stuntman", a Playstation game that allows one to drive various vehicles including a tuk-tuk. [Here are some screenshots.](#)

Interestingly, several game reviewers seem to think the tuk-tuk sequence is set in Hong Kong. BTW: The license plate is clearly visible on the front of the tuk-tuk. I wonder what driver helped inspire the game?



Right: A driver taking a shortcut off the elevated expressway downtown. BTW: Tuk-tuks aren't allowed on expressways.

Taxi drivers help with the scam

June 6, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Taxi drivers help with the scam

– 08:22, June 6, 2002

A tourist writes in warn about taxi drivers helping with the scam:

I wish to add that taxi drivers are part of the gem scam network too.

I was on my to the Erawan shrine from my hotel when I was stopped by a couple of taxi drivers who asked me where I wish to go. As the norm, one driver told me Erawan shrine would be closed until 11am that day because it was Buddha day (it was 10.30am when I boarded the taxi).

I thought it was a little strange because the only Buddha day I knew of was just 2 days before and it is known as Vesak day! He suggested that he takes me to another temple where I can be blessed with holy water and can pray to “Guan Yin” (a popular deity amongst Buddhist Singaporeans). He said he would wait while I pray, and when I am done; he will take me to Erawan shrine. I said that was fine, and told him to start the taxi meter but he told me that he could fetch me to both temples at just 40 bahts instead. I insisted that he starts the taximeter; he obliged. He cut through several small lanes, and went up the highway, and finally reached the destination, which was strangely, a small and quiet temple. He said he would wait as I make my rounds, and so I did. I climbed a small flight of steps and overhead a Thai speaking to a family of Singaporeans (we speak with a distinctive accent and can be spotted from miles away... haha). He was enthusiastically pointing to their map and suggesting places to go. I thought it might be a good idea to eavesdrop since I didn't really know where to go myself. Soon he suggested shopping, and that the best gift dad could buy for his daughters was jewelry. I dismissed him as a jewelry tout and went on my way. Now that I am back in Singapore, I learnt that he isn't merely a jewelry tout. I had witness first hand, a scam of epic proportion... 😊 I went back to look for the taxi but it was nowhere in sight.

The next day I learnt that the temple I was taken to was merely a stone's throw away from my hotel. The driver had taken a detour to arrive there to confuse me deliberately. So why hadn't a 2nd guy come by to tout jewelry to me? I ruled that either he was busy with the other victims, or I simply didn't look like a good catch. The latter was true.

Having graduated less than 2 months ago, I had nothing more than US\$1000 to my name so bringing me to a gem store would have been a fruitless attempt whether I was interested or not.

I was offered not once but thrice by drivers to take me to another place of interest because it was Buddha day so temples were closed. The 2nd time, it was 1.30pm. The tuk tuk driver told me that Wat Pho would be closed till 2pm. The 3rd time, a tuk tuk driver claimed that he is a good man and asked to see my map. I didn't bother to listen.

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Gem Scam Report: Vandee Gems Gallery

June 13, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)



Gem Scam Report: Vandee Gems Gallery

June 13, 2002

I read them. I don't know if it is aloud to keep copies of passports in a shop but never mind.

He also showed me addresses of shops in Germany where I can sell the jewelry at once. All this sounded reasonable to me.

So after intensive persuasion I bought a Sapphire set for 122.500 Baht.



It was paid with Credit Card and withdrawn at a Gold Shop.

The name is: Sin Suwan Gold Store, Prasuman Road, Tel: 02-6292224-5, Tax ID: 3030323408.

The man at Vandee said it is safer to send the sapphire set with EMS to Germany and he ordered a messenger who was there in a minute.

I have scanned all documents of merchandise as jpeg Pictures for you to read.

I was told to pay the tuk tuk driver and go with a taxi driver who works only for the shop.

He would take me for a free meal, but later I had to pay it for me and the driver.

Afterwards he drove me to the guest house where I was staying.

The next day I went to the airport und was flying back.

The whole flight I was thinking about the purchase and that something must be wrong.

When I returned to Germany I found out at a jewelry shop that the set is worth 70 Euro that's 2730 Baht.

The address of the shop in Frankfurt does not exist.

So I lost about 3000 Euro, that is quite an amount of money to me.

It's a pity, that I did not read anything about the gem scam before.

In my travel guide there was only a small sentence: don't buy gemstones if you are not an expert.

But in the internet I found out that it happens to many tourists every year.

I really want to warn tourists not to buy jewelry and hope that my story will help as much people as possible.

I have rejected the gems and all original documents with registered mail to Thailand, and hope that they can help me to get some of the money back.

Certificate of Guarantee



VANDEE GEMS GALLERY CO.,LTD.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

1 SET CUT BLUE SAPPHIRE WITH DIAMONDS SETTING.

GOLD CONTENT 18k.

STONE WEIGHT 3.32cts.

DIAMOND WEIGHT 0.3cts.

AS DESCRIPTION IS GENUINE AND HEREBY GUARANTEES IT AUTHENTICITY
AND QUALITY FROM THE COMPANY.

SERIES NO. 2771-2774 DATE ... 29/05/2002


MANAGER

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Peas originated on our border

June 13, 2002

Categories: Food and Drink

Peas

originated on our border

– *New York Times*, 08:43,

June 13, 2002

A snippet from the

[*Times*](#): *Peas arrived*

in America in the 18th century;

Thomas Jefferson raised 30 different

kinds at Monticello. But the

Greeks and Romans were eating

them centuries before —

Apicius had several recipes

for peas in his cookbook —

and the oldest find of peas,

at least according to Waverley

Root, was carbon-dated to 9750

B.C. on the border between Thailand

and Myanmar. (Of course leave

it to the French to raise the

pea to a level now reserved

for beluga caviar: In the court

of Versailles, they curried

favor with the king by sending

him peas.)

A vision of Bangkok

June 17, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

A vision of Bangkok

– June 17, 2002

The webmaster of this site wrote an article for *The Nation*:

[Bangkok: rapid change and forgotten history.](#) Pas Seangsong

of [Bangkok](#)

[Highrises](#) points out this related article:

[The city isn't chaotic, says a leading expert, it's postmodern](#)

Don't eat live geckos

June 26, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Don't eat live geckos – 07:18, June 26, 2002

Here's an "aren't foreigners weird" [story](#) from Ananova (sure to be picked up as a 'weird news' item all around the world). Contrast it to [this story](#) which has Thai officials warning against eating the lizards uncooked.

Cars from 1959 to 1970

June 29, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Cars from 1959
to 1970

– 15:37, June 29, 2002

A tidbit from *Thai-American
Business*, May-June, 1971:

*...the number of cars on the road
in Thailand soared from the mere
2,000 in 1959 to over 400,000
in 1970.*

Remembering the grounds of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel

June 30, 2002

Categories: Buildings



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Remembering the grounds of the Siam
Intercontinental Hotel – June 30, 2002

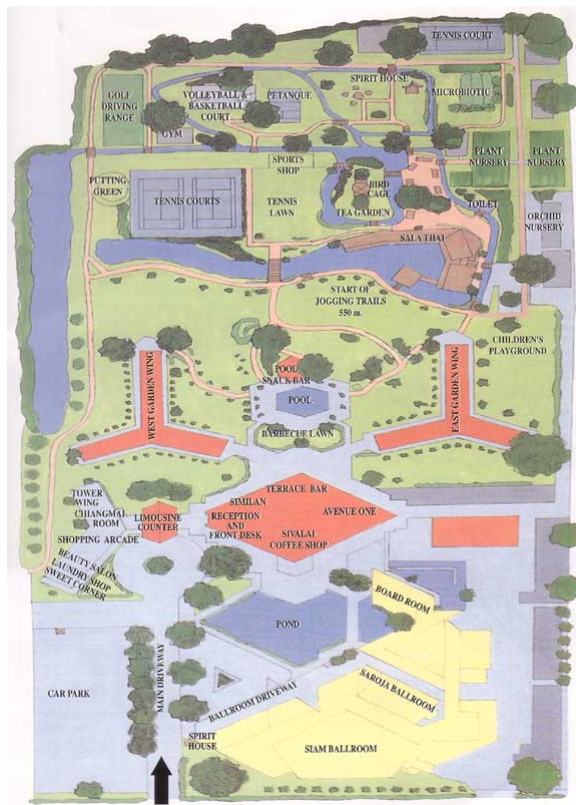
Also: [Last Day at the Intercontinental
Hotel](#) – June 30, 2002

[Back to Siam Intercontinental Hotel/Paragon
main page](#)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

June 30, 2002 – Last day at the pool



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Also: [Last](#)
[Day at the Intercontinental Hotel](#) – June 30, 2002
[Back to Siam Intercontinental](#)
[Hotel/Paragon main page](#)

Last Day at the Intercontinental Hotel

June 30, 2002

Categories: Buildings

Last Day at the Intercontinental Hotel – June 30, 2002

Also: [Remembering the grounds of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel](#)
[Back to Siam Intercontinental Hotel/Paragon main page](#)

June 30, 2002 – 2Bangkok.com was there around noon today and saw them scrape the name of the hotel off the placard in front of the building.

Siam INTER-CONTINENTAL BANGKOK		Siam INTER-CONTINENTAL BANGKOK	
บริษัท โฮเทล.ซี.(ไทยแลนด์) จำกัด		บริษัท โฮเทล.ซี.(ไทยแลนด์) จำกัด	
ถนนพระราม 1 ปทุมวัน กรุงเทพฯ		ถนนพระราม 1 ปทุมวัน กรุงเทพฯ	
เลขประจำตัวผู้เสียภาษีอากร		เลขประจำตัวผู้เสียภาษีอากร	
TAX ID. NO. 3 101 06683 8		TAX ID. NO. 3 101 06683 8	
ส่วนในสอยจวันเงินในกักเก็บภาษีอากร		ไม่ได้รับเงินในกักเก็บภาษีอากร	
COPY CASH RECEIPT/TAX INVOICE (AMB.)		CASH RECEIPT/TAX INVOICE (AMB.)	
PLATE NO. 8800 Siam		PLATE NO. 8800 Siam	
ทะเบียนเลขที่ 2537		ทะเบียนเลขที่	
IN วันที่ 10 30		IN วันที่	
OUT วันที่		OUT วันที่	
AMOUNT BAHT		AMOUNT BAHT	
จำนวนเงิน บาท		จำนวนเงิน บาท	
รวมภาษีมูลค่าเพิ่ม		รวมภาษีมูลค่าเพิ่ม	
No 50958		No 50958	

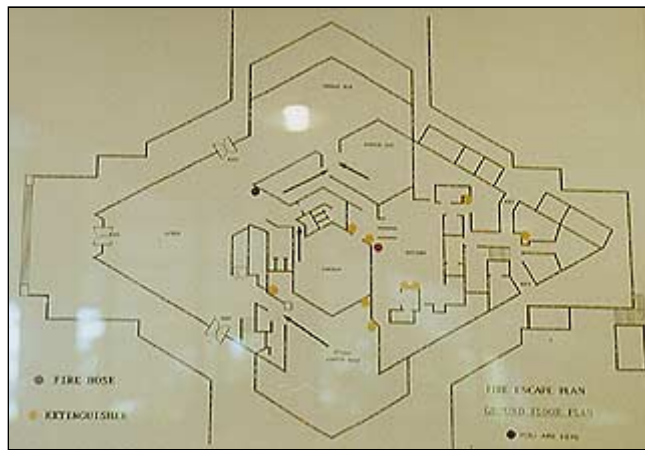
(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Parking ticket from the last day



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

View of the hotel from the parking lot



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Fire escape placard



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The front entrance – no events on the red message board



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Towards the front desk



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The cavernous lobby



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Outside the lobby



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

The pool with Baiyoke Towers I and II in the distance



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

One of the wings in the back of the hotel with the Discovery Center Tower in the background



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Another view of the front entrance



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Spirit House on the hotel grounds

Also: [Remembering the grounds of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel](#)

[Back to Siam Intercontinental Hotel/Paragon main page](#)

End of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel

June 30, 2002

Categories: Buildings

[Tearing down the Siam Intercontinental Hotel](#)

[Last Day at the Intercontinental Hotel](#) – June 30, 2002

[Remembering the grounds of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel](#) – June 30, 2002

[Early Paragon advertising and the *Bangkok Post*](#)

[What happened to the Insider column in the *Bangkok Post*?](#)

[Siam Intercontinental Hotel/Paragon news](#)

Graphic:

[Map of the grounds \(66.5k\)](#)



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

Built on 26 acres of Sra Paduma Palace gardens in the 1960's, the Siam Intercontinental Hotel was a well-know Thai landmark. It won an award from the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment for its environmental protection work in 1999. However, when the hotel's 30-year lease expired, it was torn down to make way for another shopping center. The 26-acre gardens will be reduced to a few acres.



[Siam Paragon](#), a mega luxury shopping center, is planned for the site of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel. The Paragon will create an [unbelievable chain](#) of shopping centers along Phloenchit Road starting with Mahboonkrong Center, Siam Square (across the street), the "Art Museum Shopping Center" (former site of a planned art museum which has been replaced with plans for another shopping center), Discovery Center, Siam Center, Paragon, Wat Padumavanaram (a temple), World Trade Center (a shopping center in financial trouble—a rusting, unfinished tower looms over the site and the adjacent wat), Gaysorn Plaza (another failed shopping center now under renovation), Erawan Sogo, etc, etc. There's also lots of new shopping center construction north on Ratchadamri Road as well. More on [Bangkok's Crucible of Construction](#).



(Undated postcard of the site)

The Siam Intercontinental Bangkok sent us some official info on the history of the hotel: *The Siam Intercontinental Bangkok stands on 26 acres of prime property in the heart of Bangkok, belonging to the Royal Family. During the fourth reign (1851-1868) of the present Dynasty, King Mongkut ordered the construction of a small palace for royal recreation which was built in this area and named by His Majesty as "Pathumwan palace" meaning lotus palace. The property was inherited by Prince Mahidol of Songkhla, father of the present King, who had Sra Pathum Palace (Lotus Pond Palace) built. Of the 43 acres of the Royal Estate, Sra Pathum Palace is located on 17 acres, with the remaining 26 acres leased to the Siam Intercontinental. One side of the Palace shares the same wall with the hotel and the hotel (shares a wall with) Wat Padum Vanaram, a temple built over 100 years ago. On December 11, 1964 at exactly 10:00am (the hour designated by the Royal Astrologer as being auspicious), Her Royal Highness the Late Princess Mother unveiled the foundation stone of the hotel. At that time, the Siam Intercontinental was one of the first international hotels in Bangkok.*

[Tearing down the Siam Intercontinental Hotel](#)

Two white elephants for Myanmar

July 5, 2002

Categories: Myanmar/Burma

[Two white elephants for Myanmar](#)

– July 5, 2002

New York Times (registration required) has the story: *"According to records, white elephants have emerged during times when kings and governments ruled the nation in accord with the 10 kingly virtues," the English-language daily New Light of Myanmar told its readers when the first elephant was found. "Emergence of the white elephant is a good omen at this time when the state is endeavoring to build a peaceful, modern and developed nation," it said.* BTW: Thailand has 11 and Laos' only one recently died. Also, believe it or not, these kind of "we have a white elephant" announcements are usually intended as a kind of insult to annoy the Thais—a kind of touting of Burmese pride and legitimacy.

Antique Phonograph and Gramophone Thai Society

July 7, 2002

Categories: History



Antique Phonograph and Gramophone Thai Society – July 7, 2002

[Antique Phonograph and Gramophone Thai Society \(APGTS\)](#)—if you have not seen it, you should take a look. Lots of unique material, including:

[Printable posters showing old Thai records](#)

[Rare photos of the Da-Da Record shop](#)

[The amazing Siamese Soo doll that "danced" on a gramophone](#)

There's also a red bar on the left side of the main page with more links.

Do Thais and Burmese really hate each other?

July 13, 2002

Categories: Myanmar/Burma

[Do Thais and Burmese really hate each other?](#) – *The Irrawaddy*, July 13, 2002

"It is not true that Thais and Burmese have been enemies for hundreds of years," says Dr Charnvit Kasetsiri, Chairperson of the Southeast Asian Studies Program at Thammasat University in Bangkok. "Those were wars between kingdoms and kings, not about a war between Burmese and Thais..."

[The Burmese historian who writes Thai-bashing articles](#) – *The Irrawaddy*, June 28, 2002

According to sources close to the controversial writer, her anti-Thai attacks in the state-run press last year provoked a slew of abusive phone calls from Burmese readers, forcing her to change her telephone number. Many writers said that Ma Tin Win's articles and opinions do not represent Burma and its people. "She has been shunned," one writer said.

Boat Houses

July 14, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Boat houses](#) – July 14, 2002

"Surveying the impact of boat houses on the environment in and around Ayutthaya province"—interesting report with photos.

The report is from 1999, but earlier this year:

Now most rice barges have been sold to hotels and restaurants to be transformed into floating dining rooms.... Since 1973, trucks have overtaken barges as the main way to get rice from the mills to Bangkok. Most barges sold to hotels and restaurants recently have brought between Bt250,000 and Bt300,000 to their owners.

(from "Mighty river, changing ways," *The Nation*, February 10, 2002)

Vandee Gems Gallery (AKA The Export Centre)

July 22, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Vandee Gems Gallery (AKA The Export Centre)

July 22, 2002

On the 14 June my wife and I arrived in Bangkok from Chiang Mai on the overnight coach. We had hardly slept, but we decided to go out and scout around before having lunch. We were accosted by Tuk-Tuk drivers offering cheap rides, but I had read in my guide to be wary of these so we did not take any of them up on their offers. However near the golden mount we were approached by a very helpful guy who saw us looking at our map and suggested various places to go. I was expecting him to tell us that the Palace was closed, but he did not – instead saying it was closed until 2.30pm. Luckily for us though it was a promote tourism day and we could get a tuk-tuk anywhere we liked for 10B each. Again I thought he would try and get one for us, but he walked off, so I thought the story must be true. We walked around the corner, discussed it and then approached a tuk-tuk driver who independently confirmed it.

So off we went to one temple, we had a look around, then at the second temple we fell into conversation with a nice young man who asked us if we were Buddhists. After a little chat he told us about this promotion whereby we could buy gems tax free and sell them for 100% profit back home. It was a scheme organised by the Thai Government to encourage tourists to spend money in Thailand and help the economy. He had a receipt from the Thai Export Centre. Then he left for the airport – not even trying to push us in the direction of a jewellery shop.

Once we got to The Export Centre (in fact the Vandee Gems Gallery), U-Dom, the salesperson explained the whole scheme. I must admit it sounded strange and in almost any other country I would not have believed it, but a lot of things in Thailand work differently, so I thought it might well be true. Also I could not in my tired state connect any of these separate people to the shop. I have been all over the world and I have never come across such an elaborate scam – what I did not realise was that this was not all laid on for us, but that these guys are doing this all day long. That is the full time job of the man at the temple to bring in tourists to the shop.

We bought 2 sets of jewellery, for 122,500B each. They even took us out for dinner that night and a driver drove us up to Ayutthaya the next day. I never felt entirely happy about it though and I realised we had been conned after talking to our guide at the Wat Po the next day. The Tourist Police were not particularly helpful, but they told us to negotiate a refund – 70-80% being the going rate. So we went back and after an hour of arguing this woman she agreed to buy the jewels back at 90%. It took us a week to get the jewels back (they had been sent to Sydney) and another week to get the full 90% (we got the money in 2 installments).

The point I want to make is that nowhere are you warned in enough detail about this scam. All it said in my guide (which I only saw later) was watch out for "jewellery con men and touts". This does not in any way prepare you for the complexity and subtlety of this con. I just expected people to be trying to entice me into their shops. I am going to write to the authors of The Rough Guide to tell them to put in more detail, but all the guides should have more in them warning people. So should the hotels in Bangkok – if every hotel had something up in their rooms the scam would almost end overnight, because almost everyone has to check into a hotel in Bangkok before going out.

Also for anyone trying to get their money back always remember that you have a good negotiating position. We realised when we were haggling that they really were very worried that we would sit outside the shop and stop anyone else coming in. They knew that they would lose far more from that than giving us our money back. When we went back to get our money my wife waited outside and they were trying to get her to go inside for 20 minutes before we agreed and we could see how stressed they were. Manat Soiploy was very

surprised that we got such a big refund, the only reason I can think of for that is that they thought we really would picket their shop.

Do not be frightened of them.

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Siam 849/59-61 Chula Soi 6, Bantadtong Road, Pratumwan

July 30, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)



The manager

Siam

849/59-61 Chula Soi 6, Bantadtong Road, Pratumwan

July 30, 2002

Dear sirs,

I got suckered into the gem scam on Saturday. Yesterday (Sunday) I went back to the store and negotiated for a refund. I managed to get 71% (of 144,000 Baht) back. The tourist police were helpful in advising me to go to the airport (particularly the mail centre) to stop the outgoing mail.

The name of the store is Siam. The address is 849/59-61 CHULA SOI 6 BANTADTONG RD, PHATUMWAN, BANGKOK.

I understand this store had previously been closed down. I hope it can be closed again very soon. It would be a pity if victims took revenge into their own hands, rather than the police fulfilling this function. Vigilante justice is something that Thailand does not need to have.

I took some digital photographs of a few of those involved. The scam involved the tuk-tuk driver (well, a sort-of tuk-tuk overlord/arranger/choreographer who hangs out on Khao San Rd). His is the first photo. He mentioned the 'government expo' and that it had been on TV. He told our driver to take us to a particular temple (Jade Buddha), and initiated the proceedings. The nice man at the temple claimed to be a tax lawyer. The next photo is of the manager called upon when I asked for a refund. He played 'bad-cop'. I didn't get a photo of the older guy who played 'good-cop'. They were good negotiators, using not just good cop-bad cop, but also the tactic of "resorting to higher authority". It was only when I credibly threatened to wait in their showroom that I got somewhere with the negotiations. They did give me a cash refund, and despite earlier denials, did have it all the cash on the premises.



The tuk-tuk driver

The Weird Claims of Dhammakaya

July 31, 2002

Categories: Buddhism, Dhammakaya Movement

We've had lots of email about the [Slate article](#) on the odd Thai cult of Dhammakaya. Terry alerts us to the [weird claims](#) the cult makes about the bombing of Bangkok during WWII: *At that time the inhabitants of the neighbourhood gazed up at the skies and were surprised to see large numbers of nuns from Wat Paknam floating in the air, intercepting the bombs dropped by the bombers and patting them with their bare hands to fall harmlessly in the water or uninhabited areas of forest.* It is also claimed that the Allies were going to test the first Atomic bomb by dropping it on Bangkok and that meditation by holy men prevented this.

[Making fun of Dhammakaya](#) – July 31, 2002

Another example of how things Thai are reported overseas: a slate.com writer visits the Dhammakaya temple: *What if today is ritual mass suicide day?*

The Rock From the Sky

August 4, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

The rock from the sky – August 4, 2002

Crutch's column makes mention of a [1993 incident](#) in which meteor fell in Phetchabun and was promptly confiscated by the government which claimed to own anything that fell from the sky. The official info on the meteorite is [here](#). Also: [tektites in Thailand](#) and here's a [Thai tektite photo](#)

1965: The constitution becomes violent

August 7, 2002

Categories: Editorial Cartoons, Old newspapers



Old editorial cartoon

The constitution becomes violent by Ngo Ngae, *Kieatisak Newspaper*, August 7, 1965

It reads: Article 17 of the constitution of Administrative Kingdom shows miraculous power. The announcement by the P.M. to return assets taken by cheating is in trouble. This made the council of drafting the constitution come to mentor the government immediately.

Scam at Vandee

August 9, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Vandee

August 9, 2002

Dear sir;

I was in your country for an holiday and became a victim of the gemscam, i've never heard of it before but when I got home I found out that the jewelry's I've bought were fake I searched on the internet en found out that a lot of people were victims as well

The shop were I bought the jewelry is called Vandee gems co.ltd in Bangkok I spend for \$1000 on some fake jewelry

I also have seen that more people were cheated by the same company so I don't understand why the thai government is doing nothing against those people

I don't think I will ever come to Thailand again and I've talked to my family and friends and they will think twice now before visiting your country as well because the gemscan is not the only bad thing what is happening in Thailand I think there are a lot of people who want to rip off tourists with all kind of tricks

I'm sorry to tell you that I will advise all my friends and family to avoid your country and go to neighbouring countries like Vietnam and laos were tourists will get better treatment (that's my experience)

I send you the receipts and business cards from the scam shop and hope that you can do something about it although I really doubt about it

Previous scam reports

[Vandee Gems Gallery](#)

[\(AKA The Export Centre\)](#) (July 22, 2002)

[Vandee Gems Gallery](#) (June 13, 2002)

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

The Nation debunks Post articles – Post stands by its story

August 18, 2002

Categories: Thai Newspapers and Magazines

Local English-language papers have had two stories of tourists joining the Karen National Union. It started with a *Bangkok Post* about a 19-year-old tourist from Sweden who joined the KNU: [Swedish tourist in KNU ranks](#) and the next day they ran this: [Scotsman runs clinic for Karen](#).

The Scotsman was David Fisher who claims in this article in *The Nation*, [KNU 'soldier' says news report was fabricated](#), that the *Post* faked the story and made up his quotes. *"I felt sick when I read the story," he said. "I don't know where they got their information from." He said he had planned to use his picture in uniform for "English Week" at his school, when teachers were asked to pin their photographs on an exhibition board... Fisher said he is now worried that the false report would affect his career as an English teacher in a Bangkok school.*

And the next day *The Nation* struck again with [this story](#) saying the 19-year-old Swedish tourist story was made-up as well. *"She gets her picture taken in the press like it's a souvenir that she can take home and hang on her wall," said a 15-year veteran relief*

worker in Thailand who declined to give his name. "The implications of her actions are not confined to Karen State," he said. The Burmese will put pressure on the Thais to inquire about how foreigners "illegally" exit Thai territory into rebel-controlled parts of Burma, he said.

Meanwhile (in [this article](#)): Bangkok Post reporter Supamart Kasem stood by his story. "I treated the information he gave me as something he wanted to tell the public," he said. Also present when Mr Supamart interviewed Mr Fisher were reporters from television channels 3, 5, and 9 and Mae Sot-based stringers for international news agencies.

History lessons for the Post

August 29, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

History

lessons for the *Post*

– August 29, 2002

The Bangkok Post

printed this correction

on August 27, 2002: *Correction:*

King Naresuan the Great

repelled Burmese invaders

from the ancient capital

of Ayutthaya in the year

1581, not in 1767 as inaccurately

reported on page 1 yesterday.

The Bangkok Post regrets

the error.

Don reports that

the correction is wrong

as well: What my books

tell me is that 1581 was

the year in which Bayinnaung,

the Burmese emperor, died.

Naresuan even went to

Burma at that time to

pay homage to the new

emperor, Nandanaung; Naresuan

was at this time acting

as a representative for

his aged father, King

Maha Tammaraja (60 years

old), who remained King

of Ayutthaya until his

death in June 1590. That

is when Naresuan became

King. The incident that

the so-called "Correction"

refers to actually took

place in January, 1593.

King Naresuan engaged

a Burmese force at Nong

Sa Rai, near Suphan Buri,

that had just come through

the Three Pagodas Pass.

That was the famous incident

in which King Naresuan

killed the Burmese Crown

Prince in an elephantback

duel. Now, while still

a Prince, Naresuan DID

proclaim Ayutthaya's independence

from Burma in May 1584,

at the Siamese town of

Kraeng, while actually on his way to help Burma suppress a rebellion there. The Burmese subsequently made some attempts to resubjugate Ayuthhaya, but their sieges were never successful. They were, though, by no means "repelled" until that 1593 battle. Incidentally, Thai Armed Forces Day is observed on January 25 each year because of the incident with the Burmese Crown Prince, and special ceremonies are held in Suphan Buri.

Anet says 'avoid international internet access' from 8am-8pm

September 7, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Anet says

'avoid international internet
access' from 8am-8pm

– September 7, 2002

Local ISP Anet has been
having a bandwidth problem.

There are many rumors
as to the real reason
this is occurring, but
whatever the real reason,
read this incredible popup
window from [Anet's
site](#):

*Dear Customer, Since
we are having a problem
with our international
links 45 Mbps to AT&T
due to APCN submarine
cable between Taiwan and
Korea was cut. For this
issue, ANET will use primary
solution by using IIG
which may slow down the
speed between 8:00 am-8:00
pm. There fore we would
like you to avoid international
Internet access during
the time but for domestic
access can be accessed
normally...*

The Perfect Thai Vacation: Sun, Sea and Surgery

September 10, 2002

Categories: Health

[The
Perfect Thai Vacation:
Sun, Sea and Surgery](#)

– *New York Times*,

September 10, 2002

The hospitals' efficiency and personal attention also come as a culture shock to many Western visitors. "Someone dressed in a beautiful Armani suit with little high-heeled shoes simply took me around from appointment to appointment and they immediately did all these tests, one after another," Mrs. Anderson said. "I went down and had lunch at the Starbucks in the lobby of the hospital, came back up and the doctor had on his desk the most beautiful file, all bound with tabs and everything, with all the results of the tests that they had done." "Something like that, as you know, is impossible in America," she added. "I mean, it's inconceivable."

Survey of Thai editorials after 911: Why can't we all just be neutral?

September 11, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

Survey of Thai editorials after 911 last year: [Why can't we all just be neutral?](#) –*The Nation*, September 11, 2002

The Nation has an excellent survey of the tone of editorials in the Thai press after 911 last year. This is what the English-language Thai press rarely does—give English readers an idea of what the vast majority of Thai readers are reading about.

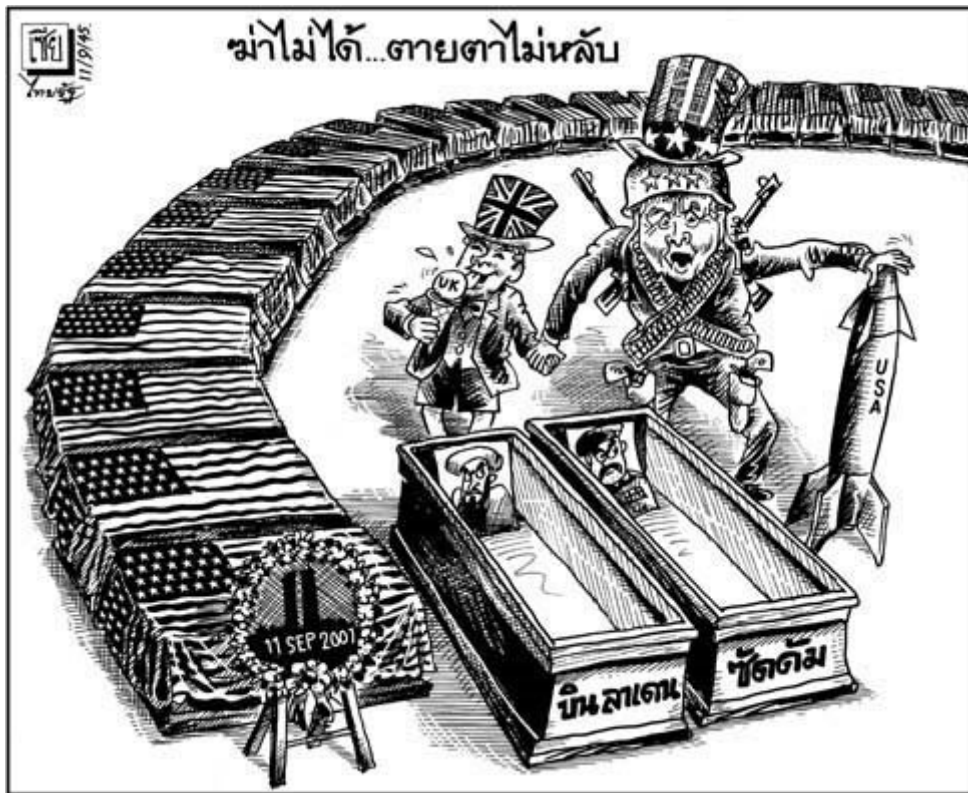
How about this from *Manager*:

"The lice that crawls in America's hair are its vileness, wickedness, cruelties, shamelessness, hypocrisy, exploitation and destruction of weaker people. Like millions of people in the Middle East and Latin America, Osama bin Laden knows well these lice. And when his time comes to pick at them, America becomes incensed and tries persuade others to sacrifice their lives in its lice's defence."

Without killing them... can't rest in peace

September 11, 2002

Categories: Editorial Cartoons - Thairath - Chai, The Thaksin Years



From Thairath, September 11, 2002

Title: Without killing them... can't rest in peace

On the coffins: Osama Bin Laden; Saddam Hussein

Star Wars Cereal Boxes in Thailand

September 29, 2002

Categories: Culture and Society

STAR WARS CEREAL BOXES IN THAILAND

Last updated September 29, 2002

Other things you might find interesting:

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[of the Rings in Thailand](#)

[The Simpsons in Thailand](#)

[Stay in](#)

[Bangkok for as little as \\$8.18 a night!](#)

[Our main page...](#)

[Back to the Star Wars
in Thailand main page](#)

Thai *Attack of the Clones* cereal boxes
– September, 2002



Tilting the image reveals young Anakin and Padme



Tilting the image reveals Yoda, young Anakin and Obi-Wan



Above: Reverse of the Koko Krunch box above
Right: Side of the box explaining the characters



Koko Krunch also has "pencil toppers"
held in a small compartment on the front of the box.



Reverse of the "pencil toppers" box

[Back to the Star Wars in Thailand main page](#)

Star Wars in Thailand

September 29, 2002

Categories: Culture and Society

STAR WARS IN THAILAND

Last updated September 29, 2002

Other things you might find interesting:

[The Lord of the Rings in Thailand](#)

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[Our main page...](#)



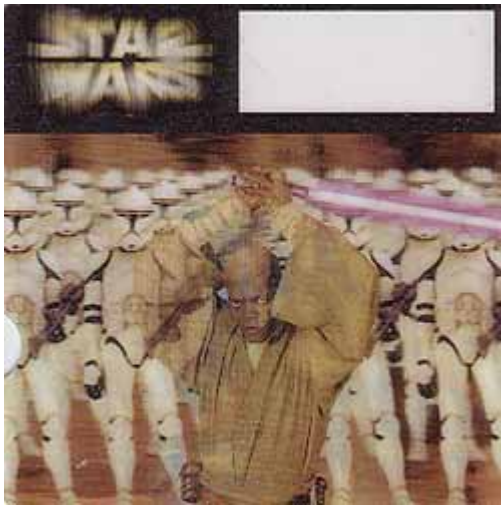
Some Star Wars fan art that substitutes Star Wars characters into popular Thai movie posters.

Thai *Attack of the Clones* cereal boxes – September, 2002

A series of cereal boxes in Thailand have interesting prizes. Below are four cards (almost life size) that when tilted, show alternate images. The white rectangles can be used to show hidden images of Star Wars characters on the side of the box. [Click here for large sized scans of the boxes themselves.](#)



Tilting reveals the same image with light sabers crossed Tilting reveals two Trade Federation battle droids



Tilting reveals the same background with Jango Fett



Titling reveals young and old Obi-Wan

Our digital theater! – May 16, 2002

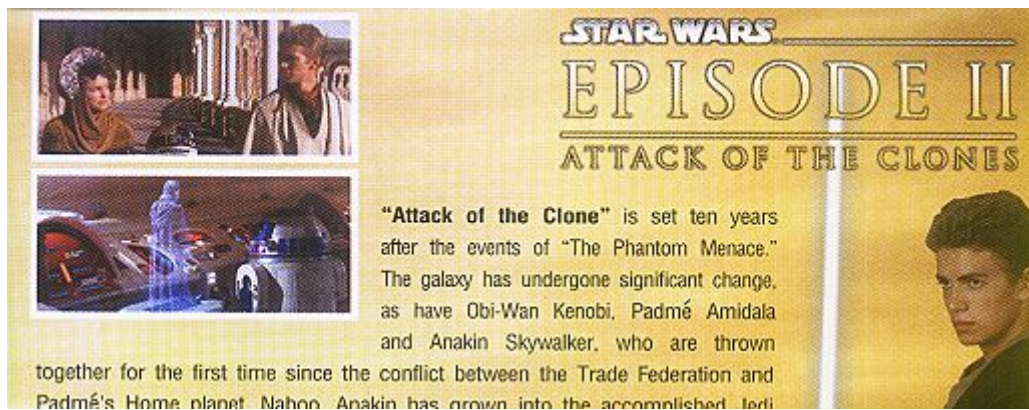
Don Entz points out: If the *Bangkok Post* is right, we should be able to see the new Star Wars film in digital. On the last page of the "Database" section, in a column called "Home Review," it says *Major Cineplex spent 100 million baht to install a digital projector to show "Star Wars: Episode II — Attack of the Clones," which opens on Friday; the all-digital version will be shown at Major Cineplex Rama III, and you will pay 150 baht for the pleasure.*

Yes, you can see *Attack of the Clones* in full digital glory in Bangkok.

1. It's theater 9 at Rama III.
2. It's a 300+ (?) seat theater.
3. Like most of the new Thai theaters, it can get extremely cold. Bring a jacket.
4. The seats have plenty of leg room in front, but they are bolted down in groups of three with the seat backs touching. This means that when someone in the group of three seat moves, your seat back moves like someone is kicking it—a weird design flaw.
5. It costs 150 baht per ticket. You can try to reserve tickets online [here](#) (select "Rama III" on the popup—sometimes this seems to work and sometimes you get a message that says there is no program info for Rama III). Also [here](#).
6. Be aware that the opening "A long time ago..." the words 'Star Wars,' and the 'crawl' are in Thai. The rest is subtitled in Thai with the original English. The only other consideration is in the few sections where aliens speak languages other than English. In these cases the English subtitling has been replaced with Thai. Still, if you're going to see *Clones*, see it the way it was meant to be seen. Since Roger Ebert says there's only 19 screens in the U.S. showing it digitally (out of about 3000), this is a good deal.

It doesn't matter if it's digital if the power goes off – May 19, 2002

On May 19, we went to the digital theater again for the 11:00am show. Unfortunately, the power went off twice near the end. Finally, they turned off the projector during the last scene when Anakin and Padme are standing on the terrace on Naboo and told everyone to go home. Many in the audience stood up and shouted to the projectionist to continue showing the film. After a long pause, they turned the projector on for a few seconds to prove to the audience the credits were the next scene. As with most films shown in Thailand, they never show the credits...



"Attack of the Clone" – May 26, 2002

In the theaters in Bangkok, collectible mini-posters (half-sheets) are handed out, each with a different character on it (stickers similar to these sheets have been scanned on theforce.net). On the back is a write-up about the character. However, the first line contains an amusing typo, referring to the film as "Attack of the Clone" (as opposed to "Clones").

MONKS SEEING DOUBLE: Echoes of dharma in 'Star Wars'
by Paisarn Likhitpreechakul, *The Ntton*, May 26, 2002

([the article online](#)—however, since the Nation's links change several times in the first week after an article is online, we are reprinting it here)

Director George Lucas is lucky Lord Buddha didn't copyright his teachings

"In whom there is neither fraud nor conceit. Who is without greed. Unselfish. Desireless. With anger quelled, his mind quenched. He is a – Jedi?"

Buzzzz! Wrong answer. Thank you for participating in "The Weakest Link". You may step down.

Although we have learned that the Jedi code says: "A Jedi shall not know anger. Nor hatred. Nor love", the correct answer to this question is a "bhikkhu" or monk, according to the Udana section of the Buddhist cannon. The verse is said to have been uttered by none other than the Lord Buddha himself.

Now try again. Who said, "Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering." If you think the answer is "Buddha", then you're wrong again. It's actually the top Jedi master Yoda. (Notice how similar the names sound).

Anyone familiar with Buddhism can spot its parallels with the Star Wars' Jedi order, particularly in George Lucas' latest instalment. This clone-like copying gives a new and quite literal meaning to the film title "Attack of the Clones." Incidentally this is also Episode II. Anyone seeing double?

Lucky Lucas can get away with it without paying royalty fees, because the Buddha didn't copyright his teachings or Dharma, describing them as the universal truth which he had only discovered, not created. And if that sounds familiar, perhaps you're thinking of The Force, described by Yoda in these words: "Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Feel the force around you . . . Here, between you and me, the tree, the rock."

This sci-fi franchise is long known for its religious overtones, which differentiate it from the next-in-line Star Trek with its secular techno-babble. Lucas himself admitted in a Time magazine interview before Episode I: "I see 'Star Wars' as taking all the issues that religion represents and trying to distil them down into a more modern and easily accessible construct, that there is a greater mystery out there." Nodding 'Star Wars' fans say this mystical side taken to mythical proportion gives the films their "soul".

Although Lucas borrowed freely from many myths and several religions – Anakin's virgin birth and the larger theme of the fall, wandering, return and redemption are unmistakably Biblical – there is a strong Buddhist flavour to it that has been called by one critic "the second coming of the Beatles and their Maharishi Yogi, a conspiracy to lead our youngsters away from Christianity into Zen Buddhism . . . or worse." Talk about paranoia!

Like any good myth, "Star Wars" can be interpreted in many ways and on more than one level. The theme of the battle between the forces of good and evil is as old as civilisation itself. It can be traced back 2,500 years ago to Iran, where the Zoroastrians believed that Earth was the field where the war between good and evil was played out. On this level, the movie "borrows" much from Japan. Lucas' Jedi are obviously modelled on samurai – watch how they hold their light sabres – whose Bushido philosophy combines Zen Buddhism and Taoism. Another give-away are many of Amidala's outfits and hair-dos, which are obviously Japanese rip-offs.

The movie also gives a veiled "Free Tibet" message. It suggests the planet Naboo as Tibet, threatened by the vaguely Chinese-looking Trade Federation bad guys to the point that its leader (read Dalai lama) had to flee. "Amidala" is a resemblance of Amitabha, a future Buddha, just like the Dalai Lama. And her other name "Padme", meaning lotus, is taken from the Tibetan chant, "Om mani padme hum" ("The jewel is in the lotus").

However, like the Indian epics "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana", "Star Wars" can also be read on another level. The common thread among these sagas is the notion, more in line with Theravada Buddhism as practised in Thailand, that the real battle is an internal one. The spiritual journey is often described in Buddhism as a war against Mara and his army, the personification of all defilement. (One of the Buddha's epithets says "one who has won the most difficult of wars".)

In Episode II, Anakin, now 19 years old, is shown to be gradually swerving away from the Jedi order and veering to the "dark side." In one scene he is told to practise compassion and turn away from attachments and possessions, for they lead to the fear of loss. But the request is to no avail. Anakin will fall in love with Amidala and slaughter those who killed his mother. Besides, he's seen to become arrogant with his abilities, swearing at his teacher Obi-wan. These are easily identifiable as the Buddhist concept of the three roots of evil: desire, anger and ego.

In Yothajivasutta, in the Buddhist cannon, Buddha compares a monk to a warrior. He says there are those warriors who give up a battle for three reasons: seeing the dust from the enemy camp, seeing the enemy flag, and hearing the thundering sound of the enemy army, while others engage with the enemy and fight all the way to victory.

Likewise, a monk's battle is against the temptation of sex. He says there are monks who give up celibacy at 1) hearing about a woman, 2) seeing a woman, 3) being talked to by a woman and 4) being touched by a woman. Then there are those monks who do not yield to such temptations. By this standard, it is obvious that Anakin's resistance fails at the very first round. (He was already a goner when he learned that he would see Amidala again).

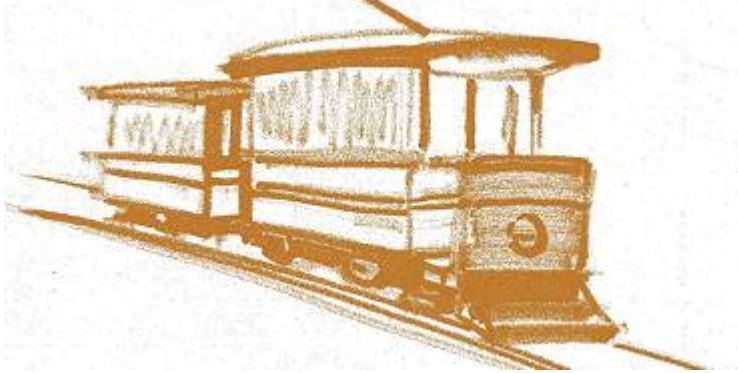
Seen in that sense, the real "Star Wars" are the ones in our minds, and each of us is, like Anakin, an apprentice Jedi who struggles against the temptations of the "dark side", not necessarily to the same end. Perhaps on the occasion of Visakha Bucha this year it may be appropriate to say to each other: "May the Force be with you."

Tram Map

October 3, 2002

Categories: Trams

Last updated October 20, 2002



See also [Tram Routes](#) including the 1996 proposal for tramlike buses

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



Tram map from 1958 – January 3, 2006

Wisarut found this [tramway map](#) (521kb) from the MEA Annual Report of BE 2501 (AD 1958), the first year of MEA. More details from the report:

Line details

The Tramway Division office is at Sam Yeak area where New Road intersects with Lamphunchai Road.

Distance:

- 1) Bangkholem line – 9.18 km
 - 2) Samsen line – 11.67 km
 - 3) Bang Sue line – 4.05 km
 - 4) Dusit line – 11.49 km
 - 5) Hua Lamphong line – 4.51 km
 - 6) Silom line – 4.54 km
 - 7) Prathumeasn line – 3.10 km
- Total 48.54 km

Arson attack

There was an arson attack at Saphan Lueng Car Shed on the night of September 2, 1958 causing the loss of 53 tram cars while the other three tram cars were damaged, but still reparable. This was a major loss since a quarter of tram cars were lost in fire from a total of 215 cars. Only 162 tram cars were left for service. This has caused the loss of tram cars for Bangkholem Line by a half.

Buses and taxis make inroads

The dwindling trams along with the increasing of bus service and taxi cabs have worsened the financial situation of tram services since buses have parked on tram tracks, causing longer waiting times and annoyed more and more passengers even though tram are cheaper than buses by a half (tram – 50 satang and bus – 1 baht) as well as safer.

Ticket revenue

The ticket revenue for Bangkok trams in BE2501 was 6,924,929.65 baht with the running distance of 2,435,123 km—100 km of running distance for each tram—and the additional revenue of 53,169.80 baht from advertising. However, the Bangkok tram expense in BE2501 was 7,077,039.28 baht. This caused a loss for Bangkok trams of 98,939.83 baht.

Lopburi

Even the Lopburi tram suffered from bus service along tram tracks, although to a lesser extent. The revenue for Lopburi trams was 289,839.25 baht. However, the Lopburi tram expense was already 302,077.54 baht. This has caused a loss for the Lopburi tram of 12,238.29 baht. A further loss in BE2502 was expected since more buses have come to compete with trams in both Bangkok and Lopburi. However the profit from the tram division printing service was 39,995.73 baht, so it cut the loss from 111,178.12 to 71,182.39 baht.

Trolleybus proposed

MEA proposed trolleybus service as a replacement for the Bangkok tram to fulfill the old proposal by the Siam Electricity Corporation Co. Ltd. and to better handle traffic than Bangkok trams. Only French and Japanese companies had strong interest in the project, but it requires an investment of 200 million baht [then US\$10 million – a very considerable amount in that day). MEA would take seriously consider the issue.

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

The Death of a Farang in 1965

October 11, 2002

Categories: History

We stumbled onto an academic paper with info on the unusual death of Darrell Berrigan, editor of the *Bangkok World*, and how local newspapers in 1965 reported the news: [An American Death in Bangkok: The Murder of Darrell Berrigan and the Hybrid Origins of Gay Identity in 1960s Thailand](#)

It's full of academic double-talk about gays, but there's lots of interesting tidbits like: *...a dated term, jikko denoted a smartly dressed, slick-haired urban hoodlum who imitated the nonconformist style of 1950s and 1960s Hollywood screen heroes such as James Dean, Marlon Brando, and Elvis Presley...*

Flooding

October 12, 2002
Categories: Floods

Floods
October 12, 2002

The Hat Yai Floods of 2000

In late 2000, Hat Yai residents were shocked by an completely unexpected flood that inundated the entire city. Within a month of the flooding, budding entrapoenuers started producing posters and calendars to commemorate the event. Collecting the posters became a short time local fad.



A calendar sold on the streets of Hat Yai with photos of the flood

At the bottom of [this page](#) is another Hat Yai flood pic.

Flooding in October, 2002

A combination of heavy rains, a swollen Chao Phraya River, and high tides has caused flooding in Bangkok. Here's an [AP article](#) on the situation.



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

October 3, 2002 – 7-11 at Saphan Khwai



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

October 3, 2002 – Skytrain station



(Photo: 2Bangkok.com)

October 4, 2002 – Phahonyothin Road from the Ari Skytrain station

Big tunnel

October 12, 2002

[Big
tunnel](#)

– *Bangkok Post*,
October 12, 2002
*The Metropolitan Electricity
Authority has opened the
country's first large-scale
tunnel for power cables,
which stretches for 8km
underground between Lat
Phrao and Vibhavadi.*

One day in Bangkok: Nine tourists/1,204,320 baht scammed/police refuse to help

October 17, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

One day in Bangkok: Nine tourists/1,204,320 baht scammed/police refuse to help – October 17, 2002

Myself and a friend, like a great number of other tourists every day, were involved in a Gem Scam in Bangkok. And even though the story starts of very similar as many others I would still like to point out a few things I have found out along the way – both two other victims as well as to some official institution. I will go quite into detail to disclose this very well organized crime.

Coming from southern Thailand we arrived in Bangkok on the 17.10.2002. On our second day in Bangkok we left the hotel in Banglamphu at about 10.30. After about ten minutes we were approached by a 'Thai student' who tried to get us involved into a conversation: Where we were from, how long already in Bangkok, have we not seen on the news last night it is a Buddhist holiday. She disappeared very quickly. Five minutes later a second 'Thai student' approached us: where we were from, since when in Bangkok, staying until when, which sights we have already seen in Bangkok, have we not heard it is a Buddhist holiday. today and the Tuk Tuk drivers will take us for three hours to any Temple we wish to see. She marked on the map where we would have to go, called a Tuk Tuk (only white license plate ones where part of this government promotion during which, as it was supposedly a government holiday, the gasoline was subsidized by the government – hence making the ride extremely cheap – a right bargain!) At the second Wat the.... we were approached by an American (tall, dark blond hair, clean cut student appearance, supposedly from California) and a Thai (medium size, excellent English). They also involved us into a conversation. Where from, what we have seen so far, where we will go next. We mentioned we were from Germany so the Thai explains some of his friend have studied in Darmstadt financed by selling jewelry in Germany – surprise in Frankfurt supposedly at Wempe and Christ (some of the biggest jewelry chains in Germany). The American confirms, pulls out a receipt from Charlermthai – the so called export center, supposedly a government enterprise. Supposedly he himself has financed his travels by selling jewelry for the last three years, having sold of his purchases in the States always for a 100 -120 % – easily done as according to him the government usually charges 195 % export charge on all jewelry and the 'Export Center' would even mail it insured to Germany so one would not have to carry the valuable purchase around. But according to the two, there was a one week promotion (and of course it was the last day – at it is always the last day – any day of the week) today which allowed students and poor back packers to purchase a limited number of stones (five) and be exempted from the export tax. The American gave us the name, explained the Tuk Tuk driver would know where to find this – after all it was supposedly a government institution and very famous – as every export center. We saw no harm in checking out the place – and we were taken there immediately by our driver (even though it was in a very small side street and the three times I went back there every taxi driver had great problems in finding the place).

We arrived at Charlermthai, were taken into a dark room, told by the manager (who was called Peter by the staff): it was a promotion week, we could buy a set of five stones, Blue Saffire standard triple A – export quality, we would be exempted by the export tax of 195%, therefore resell them at a minimum of 100% (guaranteed!), we would receive 20% discount if we pay cash, we would get a list of all the main jewelry shops in Germany and in the impossible circumstance, we would not be able to resell them we could take them back to the Thai export center of which the government has established one in every country. The jewelry would also be send of by post insured by the Thai export center.

Further we were explained the shop would not have a credit card machine and we would therefore have to go to a bank. By car we were taken to a exchange place where on could draw out money by credit card,

accompanied by a Thai girl and her driver. Along the way she did not rest one minute from talking to us – repeating the entire story which has been told to us during the previous 2 hours, and even adding more details to it (different stories about Thai friends who studied in Germany financing their studies with the selling of gems) We reached the cash machine, my friend withdrew 40.000 bath (about \$ 1000) and myself I withdrew 42.000 – the limits of our cards. The Thai girl encouraged us to take out more money and for that reason we were driven over to a Goldsmith called Hang Thong Thong Bai. On the way she explained that she has been working with this shop a long time, we would pay by credit card there and the money would be transferred over to the account of Charlermthai. In the meantime we would given the equivalent of the value of our payment in gold which would then be taken back to the Goldsmith. We arrived at the shop, the Thai girl greeted the known staff (the owner, his wife, and two further female staff assistance), moved around the entire shop, called for us the bank with the telephone from the shop, and prepared the transaction and then told the owner of the Goldsmith, Mr Suvit, how much money we would be withdrawing from our accounts. The transaction was done, we were told where to sight the paper. A photo copy of our passport was taken, we were given a copy and shown two other documents of other tourist who have done the same transaction in the morning of the same day as proof and reassurance of the legitimacy of the whole business. We were then taken back to Chalermthai, the jewelry shop. At the shop we were kept busy signing numerous papers, the assistants moved around a lot, the ‘manager’ did some quick calculations to tell us the value of our purchase, the stones were placed in an envelope, we had to sign across the envelope in order to seal it. We were told the entire story again, ensured that we were really lucky as the shop had already officially closed and the promotion was over for this year but we would become members of the government owned shop and therefore allowed to participate in next years promotion.


By then it was about 3.30pm. We were explained as we were so lucky we would now be invited to a meal and a tour to the market and late at night to a Thai massage accompanied by another Thai girl called Jennifer. We were kept busy all afternoon, told the whole story again and finally left at the Thai massage which we left at about 8.30 – 10 hours after the scam began. We did have doubts. Many things seemed a bit odd but the great number of people involved and the outstanding friendliness along with the fact that an American approached us as well (who surely would not lie to young backpackers) we somehow bought the story. My friend had to leave Bangkok the next day. I took her to the airport and decided to go back to Chalermthai the next day to clarify some questions which have come up over night. I arrived then at the shop, Jennifer, the girl who accompanied us in the afternoon was standing outside the shop, saw me and disappeared. The whole shop was quite dark, I was straight taken upstairs into a separate room and told by somebody I had not seen before, the manager was not in today and I would have to come back the next day, or much better phone.

I had bought a bus ticket to north of Thailand for the night and still went thinking I would come back in a few days and clarify the uncertain things. Before getting on the bus started some research in the internet. By mid day on Monday – I had worked out we had been victims of a very organized crime:

- there was no Buddhist holiday
- there was no government promotion subsidizing the Tuk Tuk drivers gasoline
- there was no government promotion for Thai students (in fact there is no government promotion what so ever)
- there is not export tax (in fact it is the opposite – jewelry is explicitly exempted by the government in order to promote the export and paid VAT can be reclaimed)
- there is no government Export Center (in fact almost every jewelry shop involved in scams calls itself Export Center)
- no jewelry chain will buy back the purchase (my friend phoned up several stores in Germany) – let alone at a 200% of the price we had paid
- a triple A standard does not exist internationally for Sapphires

Both my friend and I phoned up Visa straight away explaining we have been victims of severe fraud in Asia and tried to cancel the transaction. We were explained this would not be possible as the transaction was authorized already but as fraud was so common in Asia we would be able to have the case investigated and very likely be able to recover at least the amount of money we had paid at the gold shop.

I was on the next plane back to Bangkok arriving at the police station at 11.00 am. After explaining my case, very low interest was the response. I was told not much could be done. I was still allowed to file a report which was handwritten by me in English, translated into Thai and then handwritten into a police report which I was explained later, would just be filed away with no further action. I tried to insist to be given a police officer to accompany me to the shop and try to recover my money. I was refused! No support whatsoever was given by the police. The situation was very frustrating. I began talking to other people at the Tourist Police. Quickly I met an American girl who had been a victim of the same type of fraud but with a different Jewelry Shop (Christie's Lapidary – previously called Universal – along the next four days I met about 12 more people who had been scammed by this shop also, several other victims had lost their money with Oscar and Orchid). The American girl and two Canadians offered to come along with me and support me at the shop. When we reached the address I realized the shop had closed in the meantime – three days after our purchase.

<p style="text-align: center;">บิลเงินสด CHALERMTHAI</p> <p style="text-align: center;">27-29 ซอยเฉลิมเขต 2 ถนนยุคทอง 1 แขวงเทพศิรินทร์ เขตป้อมปราบศัตรูพ่าย กรุงเทพฯ 10100 27-29 Soi Chalemket 2, U-Kol 1 Street, Thepsirin, Pomprabsatrupai, Bangkok 10100 Tel : 0-2223-1126-7 Fax : 0-2223-1128</p>			
Date: 14 / 10 / 2004			
NAME.....		PASSPORT NO.....	
NATIONALITY.....			
จำนวน QUANTITY	รายละเอียด Description	จำนวนเงิน Amount	
5 Pcs.	Cut Blue Sapphire Unset Loose Stone (AAA STD.)	บาท/Eaht	บาท/Str.
		฿ 22,000	-
<p>MAILED/MERCHANDISE TO: Germany</p> <p>BY INSURANCE/INVOICE OF MISSING OR DAMAGE</p> <p>DURING TRANSPORTATION * * * EXPORT CENTER</p> <p>WILL ACCEPT ALL RESPONSIBILITY</p> <p>AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: _____</p>		PAID	
Permanent Address		รวมเงิน Total Amount	฿ 22,000 -
Signature.....		 Manager.....	

As I had taken out another 10,000 bath at a cash machine next to the Goldsmith Hang Thong Thong Bai I was able to reconstruct the address. We went over there and the American girl immediately realized that it was the same shop her credit card was misused despite the fact that on her credit card receipt the shop was called Ranghang Thong Thong Bai. Completely taken by surprise we marched in with four people, took pictures of the whole place including the staff. The situation got little out of hand and we demanded the police to come in. Four officers filled the gold shop, luckily one of the Canadians spoke a little bit Thai. We voiced our accusations, explained we believe serious fraud was being done and the gold shop was used as a way to launder money working with the two Jewelry Shops Chalermthai and Christie's Lapidary. We demanded an explanation as of why on our credit card receipts two different names appeared. Mr Suvit presented us with two credit card machines with different names (we were not shown if any more credit card machines were in use).

The police took us and Mr Suvit to the local police. We were followed by his wife and one of the shop assistant (in a new blue VW) to the police station and after about half an hour due to difficult communication, transferred to the Tourist Police in Banglamphu. Mr Suvit, the American girl and myself were presented to the police officer Mr Sakkarin. We voiced our serious concern of fraud and demanded the contact details of the jewelry shops. First Mr Suvit denied his connection but his lies were so evident that Officer Sakkarin explained he did not believe what he was saying and demanded Mr Suvit's ID card. After about an hour of argument we came to the agreement that Mr Suvit would help negotiate in the case of the American girl (her shop was still open at that time) and in my case Mr Suvit would contact the shop owner over night to make

an arrangement (by than he had admitted his connection to the shop Chalermthai) and we would meet up without the police at the Goldsmith the next day at noon to settle an agreement.

ATTENTION CUSTOMER			
We do not comply or take any responsibility about person or tourleader who bring the customer to this shop. For Customer using creditcard, It is not our responsibility for any agreement between customer with person or tourleader			
Thank you for understanding			
RECORD		Date: 15/10/01	
Necklace :	2	piece(S)	(สร้อยคอ)
Bracelet :	-	piece(s)	(สร้อยข้อมือ)
Ring :	3	piece(s)	(แหวน)
Bangle :	-	piece(s)	(กำไล)
Total Weight		330	gram (s)
(น้ำหนักรวม)			
Total		THB 6,600	
(รวมเป็นเงิน)			
Pay by : VISA		I card number	
(จ่ายโดย)			
Received by		Customer Name :	

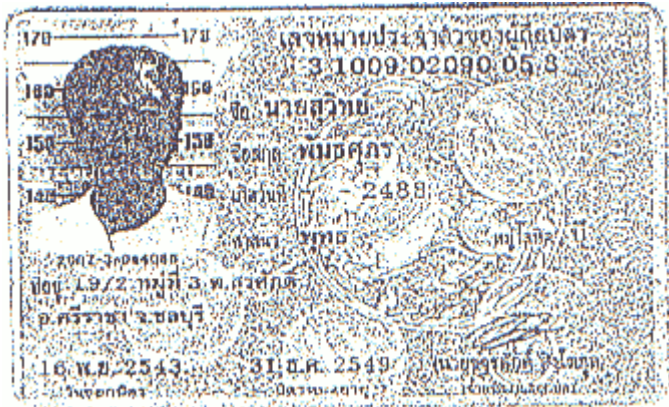
Shops trying to protect themselves — this document appears to be an attempt by the stores to blame "tour operators" for cheating the tourists brought to the shop.

When we arrived the next day Mr Suvits wife had called in a friend who spoke English and would act as a translator. Mr Suvit refused every cooperation and only when we pressured him by explaining we would publish the photos we had, he spoke to a contact at Chalermthai but refused to show the details but instead gave me a false mobile number which did not work. (the Thai friend translated the whole conversation – he did not know about the entire and crime and in the following days proved to be much support and assistance). I phoned up the police again, explained the situation. Mr Sakkarin now insisted we should return to the Wat were I had met the American and try to obtain the new jewelry address details from the American (I was explained to by the police they would always re-open at a different location, and that the American would work there every day). I asked Mr Sakkarin to send an officer along but he refused.

So I ended up going with Mr Suvit and the Thai friend who translated for us to the Wat (the American girl was ordered to meet up with the manager from Christ Lapidary for negotiations at the police office). The American was there, tried to hide behind a bus as soon as he saw me. I grabbed him, tried to take a picture but was violently pushed aside and he ran of. (he was much stronger and taller than me and no support was given by the other two men).

I asked to go back to the Tourist Police but Mr Suvit refused and instead sent the Thai translator. with me. After arriving at the police I explained what had happened. Mr Sakkarin explained he had his day of an would maybe note down my details the next day. I was not happy and voiced this to the Thai translator. He seemingly was quite upset about this situation and phoned up a friend who was Secretary somewhere in the internal affairs ministry. This person got in contact with Mr Pol.LT.COL. Ekkarach Limsungkas Head of the police department at Banglamphu. All of a sudden Officer Sakkarin did have time for me. I pressed charges against Mr Suvit, the manager of the jewelry shop, the two Thai girls who worked at the jewelry shop (the one who took us to the gold shop in the morning and the other one who took us around in the afternoon), the American and the Thai who we had met at the Wat. I had to give full descriptions of every person and what had happened. After several hours I was done and I was explained the report would go to the court and only if the court allowed the police to arrest Mr Suvit they were able to do so. Further investigation would be taken the next day. I met up with Mr Sakkarin the following day (now Thursday the 21.10.2022) at

11.00 am. We went to the Wat in order to find the American. I voiced concerns as I was convinced he would not be there as we showing up the day before must have been a clear warning to him. We went anyway – he was not there.



The ID card of [Mr Suvit, "manager" of Hang Thong Thong Bai gold shop](#), one of the best protected shops in the gem scam racket

I went back to the Tourist Police and sat all day in there waiting and pressuring to have something happen. Most of that day I spent with Mr Pol.LT. Col. Ekkarach Limsunggkas. I went into his office several times asking about the progress in my case, every time interrupting him reading the newspaper. I asked if Charlermthai did not have previous problems. He admitted several cases had been filled with this shop at least about ten (not bad considering the shop only operated under this name for about a month – it was previously called Mahachai – all this information is displayed in the Internet). I demanded them to look through the files and find out who had been the representative filing the negotiations in the last cases. They only looked at the first file and identified the representative. I then suggested to look up the address and pay that person a visit. Looking up the address took the rest of the day; I was never given the details and the police refused to go there with me.

The American girl had in the meantime discovered an Internet page <http://www.angkor.com/2bangkok/Scams/Sapphire.shtml> and we soon learned that this crime was incredibly well organized and claims several thousand victims every year. This fraud had been around Thailand for now well over a decade and despite the devastating impact on Thailand's most important revenue – the tourist industry, and persistent pressure of international embassies, little effort has been made to crack down this crime. Many scammed tourist had voiced in their reports the suspicion that the police would be deeply involved in all of this and that corruption seemed to be dominating the scene. During the course of my the last week in Thailand this became obvious to me and many other tourists I had meet also and even one of the translators working at the Tourist Police declared this to be the true.

Realizing that little help could be expected from the police the American girl and myself went to the Internal Trade Department which was supposedly set up the Government to help scammed tourists with their negotiation with the jewelry shops. We meet up with Mr Suchat Sinrat, told our story and were explained that only something could be done if we had the jewels in our hand which was not the case as the jewelry shops sent them off by post straight after the purchase. Disillusioned we went to ITV (one of the main television stations in Thailand) to meet up with a reporter who had done a report with undercover cameras, which was shown on television disclosing the whole depth of this crime a couple of month before. He told that us unfortunately even this had little impact as the government was not much interested to change the situation.

In the evening the American girl once again phoned up Visa Card to explain our investigation and to see if anything else could be done regarding the transaction. She was told the request was actually taken of her account when the Goldshop tried to claim the money as this account had been flagged and corruption seemed obvious at the investigations department. This was confirmed on Saturday morning when she phoned again to make sure this had really been the case.

We went back to the police station, accompanied by some more victims we had met in the course of the previous days, the video tape which had been given to us by the reporter showing his previous investigation, a copy of Mr Suvist ID card which I had photo copied along with my entire file the previous day at the police

station, a number of pictures we had taken of the accused people. We had little impact. In the morning we met about another 8 people at the police station and by then were about 12 to 15 victims. I advised several people to try to press charges not only against the jewelry shops but also against the Goldsmith involved. Despite the fact that filing a report was possible and that the police did let the tourist accuse the jewelry shops of having committed a criminal offense we did encounter incredible resistance to press charges against the goldsmiths. They simply refused to take our statement. Officer Sakkarin explained that first my case would have to go to court and only afterwards somebody else could press charges against Mr Suvit. As this was completely independent cases we refused to accept this explanation as it seemed by no possible law a reasonable explanation. The argument was quite severe and involved a number of tourists and about half of the force at the police station. Only when I called a Thai friend who discussed the issue with Officer Sakkarin for several minutes the American girl was finally allowed to press charges – by then we had been at the police station for about 5 hours. The other people were not allowed to press charges or even include this concern about the gold shops in their statement.

In the evening we gathered all tourists of that day together. Between nine people we had lost 1.204.320 bath (about \$ 30.000). In five of the cases the Goldsmith Hang Thong Thong Bai/ Ranghang Thong Thong Bai was involved. We exchanged all our details and receipts in order to file our reports.

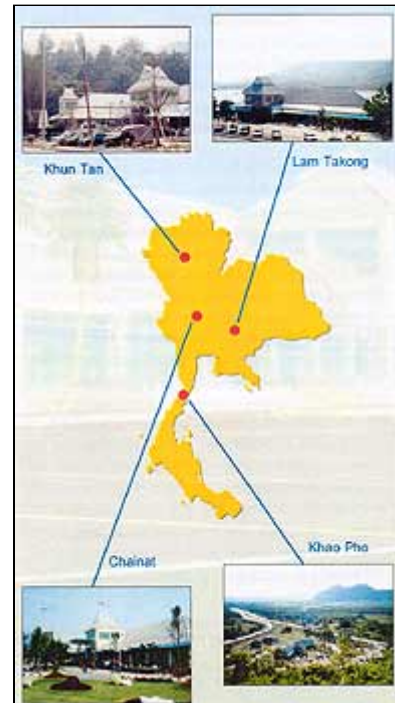
[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

“Safe Good Foods and Clean”

October 18, 2002

"Safe
Good Foods and Clean"
– October 18, 2002

Brochure from the
highway department
describing a program
to create rest stops
across the country.



Mahachai Gem Scam Shop

October 19, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)



Mahachai Gem Scam Shop – October 19, 2002

Remember this address: 27-29 Soi Chalemket 2, U-kol 1 Street, Thepsirim, Pomprabsatrupai.

From an email: *I've recently returned to the US from Bangkok, and I was involved in a scam involving Mahachai, the jewelry shop, and Hang Thong Thong Bai, the gold shop. I was taken by a Tuk Tuk driver and was persuaded to buy some sapphire jewelry by an American tourist at a temple called Wat Suthat. The same process that always happens occurred. Once the set of jewelry was chosen, I was taken to Hang Thong Thong Bai to purchase gold with my credit card that supposedly was worth what the jewelry was worth. I was pressured and coerced during the entire process. The purchase went through, and the jewelry was sent home like most incidences. While in Thailand, I filed criminal cases through the tourist police and the Department of Commerce. At this point, I'm still waiting for something to happen. The jewelry scam took place on August 13th, 2002 in Bangkok. I spent 3 extra weeks filling out paper work and going to court to try and put these crooks in prison. I hope my time and effort pays off. You have my permission to post everything that I have said above. I've scanned the receipt from the gold shop and the business card of the jewelry shop.... Thanks a lot.*

This scam shop previously operated under the names **Benjarong, U-Thong, and Chalermkeht.**

Bangkok in National Geographic

October 19, 2002

Categories: Uncategorized

Bangkok in *National Geographic* – October 19, 2002

Recently, in article after article, *National Geographic* has been pushing the idea that the Earth is overpopulated, we've trashed the environment, and we're doomed. The latest in this cavalcade is an article called "Cities" in the November 2002 issue. It profiles four third-world mega-cities: Sao Paulo, Bangkok, Lagos, and Hyderabad. None of the pieces is too flattering. The first-person narrative about Bangkok touches on our "famous... AIDS epidemic," the terrible pollution and traffic, an interview with a tuk-tuk driver, and a long profile of a bar girl's depressing life—*The girls are waiting for them, ready to haul in their drift nets.*

Also: In the same issue is a funny ad from HSBC. It shows three identical photos of a locust. Under the first one it says "Australia – Pest", under the next "China – Pet" and under the third, "Northern Thailand – Appetizer."

Thai signs in Christina's video

October 19, 2002

Categories: Uncategorized

Thai signs in Christina's video – October 19, 2002

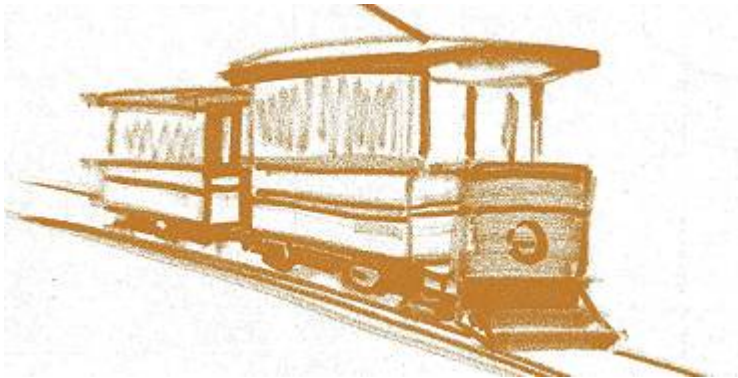


This has nothing to do with anything, but in case you are interested: Here's an [article](#) on the Thai-language signs in the new Christina Aguilera video. Since they refer to the local sex industry, BMG says it will not show the video in Thailand (to keep people from complaining?), but the video will still be played elsewhere around the world. The video is already being distributed on bootleg CDs at Pantip Plaza and other places.

Bangkok Tram Routes

October 20, 2002

Categories: Trams



[Return to the Bangkok Tram main page](#) Vintage

[The Lopburi Lines](#)

[The Bangkok Lines](#)

[Tram route maps](#)

Modern

[1996 proposal for tramlike buses](#)

All about the tram routes – December 27, 2005

From *Tramways in Bangkok* from *Geography of Bangkok Circle* by Mr. Thad Phrammanop, 1931 (2000 copies sold at 1 baht each)

Trams in Bangkok are a part of the Siam Electricity Corporation with registered capital of about 22 million baht. The company has the biggest capital in Siam.

There are two tramway offices at

- 1) Sam Yaek Office where Lamphunchai Road and New Road Intersects .
- 2) Maen Sri Office on Bamrung Mueng Road, opposite to Bangkok Waterworks Office

There are four tram depots at

- 1) Bang Kholaem
- 2) Saphan Lueng
- 3) Maen Sri
- 4) Bang Krabue

There were seven important tram lines

1) Bang Kho Laem line

This line follows New Road to See Kak Phraya Sri Intersection and then turns right to Fueang Nakhon Road to See Kak Sao Chingcha intersection before turning left to Bumrung Muang, turns right to Asadaeng Road to go across Saphan Hok (Klong Lord – old city moat) and then to Lak Muang Road before terminating at City Pillar, next to the Ministry of Defense.

There was a bus service to Ratchawongse pier, at Sua Pa Road. This bus service is a replacement to the branch line after removing the track from Sua Pa to Ratchawongse in 1926-1927 to make the way for cars that park along Ratchawongse Road to enjoy Chinese cuisine in the restaurants nearby.

2) Samsen line

This line starts from Kiaw Khai Ka pier and then turns right to follow Saphan Kaew Road . The line follows Saphan Kaew Road to Samsen Road all the way to Bang Lamphoo to interchange with Dusit line at Prato Mai and then go across Chakkraphoinse Road to Phan Phiphob Leela and then goes across the old city moat at Saphan Siaw. The line will go along Rachinee Road to interchange with Bang Kholaem line at Saphan Hok and turns left at Saphan Ubonrat to Phra Phithak Road. After that, the line goes along Phahurat Road to Saphan Han area before turning to Mahachai Road and passes B Grimm and Co. and turning left to Yowaraj to Sam Yaek. This will interchange with Ban Kholaem line before going along Lamphunchai Road and go to

Rama 4 Road, passing Bangkok station before terminating the line at Wireless Road, the head of Sathon Road.

This line has a branch line to Samsen flea market behind Sukhothai palace constructed in 1910-1911 and another branch line from Saphan Ubonrat to Rachinee Pier for the motor boats along Bangkok Yai canal.

3) Bangsue line

This line started in front of Rachinee Bon School and then goes along Saphan Kaew Road before turning right to Chang Saeng Road to Saphan Daengh and then turns left to follow Techawanit Road to end up at Bangsue Station.

4) Dusit line

This has started at Siam Electricity Corporation in front of the Ministry of Education near Wat Liab and then follows Chak Phet Road to interchange with Samsen line at Saphan Han and then follows Phra Sumen Road, following the City Wall (or city moat) to Prato Mai and then passes Phra Athit Road, Rachinee Road, passing WWI monument (near the Ministry of Justice) and then follows Nah Prathat Road before turning right to Tha Prachan via Phrachan Road. After that the line turned left to Maharaj Road passing Tha Raj Woradit Royal Pier, Tha Tian,

Pakklong Talad, Chak Phet Road, the Ministry of Education, before going across Ong Ang canal (the City moat). After that, the line would pass Bophit Phimuk temple (the place for executing rebellious royalty by sandalwood clubs) and follows Chakkawat Road to Wat Tuek to interchange with Samsen line. After that the line would interchange with Bang Kholaem line at SAB intersection before following Worachak Road to Maen Sri Bridge (AKA Saphan Dam) to interchange with Hua Lamphong line. After that the line passes Chakkraphatdiphongse Road to Nangloeng (Nakhonsawan Road) before turning to Pitsanuloke Road at Royal Tuft Club and passes Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue to end up with Samsen line in front of Wat Thewaraj Kunchorn. This route is due to the merging of the city circle and Dusit line along with route modification by removing the track that passed Suan Kularb Road as well as the track from Wat Thewaraj Kunchorn to Sisao Thewet Intersection in 1926.

5) Hua Lamphong line

This line started at Charoen Sawat Bridge (in front of Hua lamphong Railway Station) and then goes along Krung Kasem Road to Krasat Suek Bridge before turning left to Bumrung Muang and then heads to Maen Sri Intersection to interchange with Dusit line. This line goes all the way to Saphan Sommati Amoramart to intersect with the Dusit line again and then head to the Giant Swing to See Kak Sao Chingcha and then turn right to follow Ban Tanao Road and pass Chao Pho Suea Chinese Shrine and Khok Wua Intersection to Wat Boworn Niwet Wiharn, and follow Sip Sam Hang Road to meet Dusit Line at Bang Lamphu and then follows Dusit line track to end up at Prato Mai (Bang Lamphoo Intersection).

6) Silom line

The lines starts from Bang Rak Intersection and then follows Windmill Road to interchange with Samsen line at Saladaeng. After that, the line follows Rajdamri Road all the way to Chaloem Lok Bridge (Prato Nam Pier). This line was constructed in 1925 for the defunct Siam Exhibition of BE2468.

7) Pathumwan line

This line went from Chaloem Loke Bridge before turning right to Rama 1 Road to go across Krasat Suek Bridge before heading up at Yotse to meet with the Hua Lamphong line. This line was constructed in 1925 for the defunct Siam Exhibition of BE 2468.

Notes for tram passengers:

- 1) The tram will stop at the red pedant with white stars and the stop sign with stop name along with previous stop and next stop. Dusit line would have special pedant on the single car tram. Red pedant with white star would terminate at Saphan Dam while the ones with red pedant without star would go all the way to Bang Lamphoo. There will also be a pedant for each tram to distinguish tram for Silom line from the Pathumwan line
- 2) There was a distinguishing sign to separate the Silom line from the Pathumwan line.
- 3) The tram service went from 6am to midnight.
- 4) Never look outside the car because you could hit other cars or power poles when the tram come close. Wait until the tram stops before boarding or going down from the cars or the trams can run you over.
- 5) Keep your ticket ready for intersection or you may have to pay twice. Better ask ticket conductors if you don't know how much to pay.

The Bangkok Lines

See also [Sornsarn Phaengsapha's recounting of the tramway lines of the 1920's and the 1930's](#)

Line 1

City Pillar – Thanon Tok – 9 km

From City Pillar going along Lak Muang Road and the back of Ministry of Defense, crossing the Khoo Muang Derm canal (the old canal dug around 1771 at the eastern end of Thonburi) at Saphan Chang Rongsee (Elephant Bridge near the old Royal Rice Mill). After that, the line went along Bamrung Muang Road, passed the Ministry of Interior and turned right to Fuang Nakhon Road to See Kak Phaya Sri (Phrya Sri Cross Intersection). After that, the line went along Charoen Krung Road (New Road) to Thanon Tok.

It was opened for service as a horse drawn tram on September 22, 1888 by a Danish company. However, the line ran at a loss so it was sold to a British company. However, the British company did no better than the old enterprise, so it was sold to Siam Electricity Company Co. Ltd. (an electric utility company founded by the Danes) around 1890. Siam Electricity Company decided to electrify the line and buy street cars from Belgian and Prussian companies. The electrified tramways were opened for service around 1894. During the first months, it was free of charge to attract customers and reduce fear of electrocution.

After that period, the fees were:

First Class (seats with pillows with covers in khaki and stuffed with hard coconut fiber) 24 Att = 16.74 US cents = 4.091 GB pence

Second Class (wooden seats) 12 Att = 8.37 US cents = 8.182 GB pence

Exchange Rate (until the Decimalization in 1908 and before WWII)

1 baht (Tical) = 64 Atts, US\$ 1 = 2.24 baht, 1 Sovereign (1 Pound Sterling) = 11 baht

After the Decimalization and before WWII

1 baht (Tical) = 100 Satang, US\$ 1 = 2.24 baht, 1 Sovereign (1 Pound Sterling) = 11 baht

After WWII

1 baht (Tical) = 100 Satang, US\$ 1 = 20 baht, 1 Sovereign (1 Pound Sterling) = 60 baht

Line 2

Samsen – Hua Lamphong

From Samsen Soi 23 (Tram Depot near Kiaw Khai Ka Pier and Rachinee Bon Girls School) going along Samsen Road (via Suan Dusit Palace and Thewet) and Chakkraphongse Road (via Bang Lamphoo). After that, turn left at Bademan Store (famous store at that time, now the corner near the Government Lottery Bureau) to Rachinee Road to Phra Phiphit intersection. After that, it turned left to Pahurat Road (Bangkok Little India) and turned left again to Jak Phet Road and then turned right to Yaowarat Road (Bangkok Chinatown). After that, it turned onto Traimit Road (Golden Buddha Temple) at Tian Fah Foundation Hospital (Chinese Hospital). The line ended up at Hua Lamphong next to Pak Nam Railway. This line was constructed by Bangkok Tramways Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of Siam Electricity Co. Ltd., the owner of City Pillar – Thanon Tok line. This line intersected with the Lak Muang line at Samyaek (then Sam Yaek Ton Pradoo – Y intersection with angkana trees)

Line 3

Atsadang Line – 500 m

From Phra Phiphit Intersection to Pak Klong Talad flea market via Atsadang Road

Line 4

Ratchawongse Line – 800 m

From Sua Pa intersection to Ratchawongse pier via Ratchawongse Road. Ratchawongse pier was one of the most important piers in Bangkok since it was not far from Yaowarat. Both Atsadang and Ratchawongse lines belonged to Bangkok Tramways Co. Ltd.

Line 5

Bang Lamphoo – Hua Lamphong Line

The line began at Pradoo Khat (the half opened gate) near Simsam Hang Road and Wat Boworn Niwet Wiharn (the temple where King Mongkut became a Buddhist monk before becoming a king), Bang Lamphoo

Area. After that, the line went along Fuang Nakhon Road and then turned left to Bamrung Muang Road. The line passed through Chao Pho Suea shrine, the Giant Swing, Brahmin Shrine, Samran Rat (Pratoo Phee-Ghost Gate), Suan Mali or so. After that, the line turned left to Krung Kasem Road (a road parallels to Phadung Krung Kasem canal) at Yot Se area and passes through Wat Debsirin, Debsirin Boys School, Sai Panya Girls School. The line ended up at Hua Lamphong.

This line was founded by Prince Narathip Praphanphongse around 1905 as Siamese Tramways Co.Ltd. However, Bangkok Tramways Co.Ltd. became the majority shareholder and then merged the company into Bangkok Tramways Co. Ltd. around 1908. The streetcars of this line were painted red until it was merged to Bangkok Tramways Co. Ltd. After that, the street cars were painted yellow and red.

Bang Rambue-Hua Lamphong line was extended at the same period to Sathon (AKA Wireless Road) around 1926-30 after getting royal approval in 1925. It eventually reached Klong Toei. At the same time another extension from Yotse (the starting point of Rama I Road) to Bang Rak via Pratoo Nam, Ratchadamri, and Silom was started as well as one from Phisanulok Road (near Government House) to Bangsue Railway Station (via Rama V Road).

Line 6

Thewet – Wat Liab

The line started at Wat Thewerat Kunchorn, Seesao Thewet, and then went up to Wat Rachathiwat (another temple where King Mongkut was ordained as a Buddhist monk after moved from Wat Boworn Niwet Wiharn) and then turned left to Uthong Nok Road. After that, the line turned left to Ratchaseema Road at Suan Kularb Palace (Rose Garden Palace) and then turned left to Phitsanulok Road at Wang Daeng (Red Palace which is now the Royal Crown Properties Bureau – a financial arm of the Royal Family). After that, the line turned right to Rama V Road at Government House. The line crossed Phadung Krung Kasem canal to Nakhon Sawan Road and then turned left to Jakkaraphatdiphongse Road and passed through the Golden Mountain, Metropolitan Water Authority at Maen Sri Intersection, Worajak Intersection, Wat Sam Pluem (Wat Chakkrawat Rachathiwat – a temple with a statue of Chaophraya Bodin Decha). The line ended up at Metropolitan Electricity Authority (the old Siamese Electricity Co. Ltd. – with Wat Liab Power Plant nearby. Wat Liab Power Plant was closed in 1965 after the Northern and Southern Bangkok Power Plant were opened for service).

Line 7

City Circle

This circle line started at Saphan Siaw (the foot of Pra Pinklao Bridge) and went along Phra Athit Road and Phra Sumen Road (the road along Sumen Fortress) via Tha Chang House and Wat Sangwet. After that it passes Phan Fah Bridge, Mahakan Fort, Wat Rastchanatdaram, Wat Thepthidaram, Samranrat Gate (Ghost Gate), Bangkok Special Prison (AKA Khuk Mai – New Prison -> now Suan Rommaneeenart -> Rommaneeenat Park) via Mahachai Road. After that, the line went to Wat Liab Power Plant via Chak Phet Road. After that, the line went along Maharat Road to Tha Chang Wang Luang Pier (AKA Tha Phra) via Wat Po, Tha Tian, Tha Ratchaworradit (Royal Pier), Royal Navy Club, and the Grand Palace. After that, the line went along Nah Phra Lan Road via Silpakorn University (originally the University of Fine Arts) and then turned left to go along Nah Phrathat Road via Wat Mahathart. After that, the line turned left to Tha Phrajan via Phrajan Road. After that, it went through Wang Nah (now Thammasart University) to Saphan Siaw. This is the last line to stay alive until it was closed in October 1, 1968.

Line 8

Pak Nam Railway 10 stations – 21 km

This line went along Rama IV Road from Hua Lamphong to Klong Toei (the end of Bangkok Province area at that time) via Saladaeng area. After that, it went along Thang Rotfai Sai Kao Road via Kruay Nam Thai (Sukhumvit 42), Bangjak Refinery, Naval Ordinance, Bang Na, Samrong Nuea, Samrong Tai. After Samrong Tai, it went along Sukhumvit Road to Samut Prakarn Provincial Hall via Bang Nang Kreng (now Royal Naval Academy).

The names of stations for Paknam Railway were as follows:

1) Hua Lamphong

- 2) Saladaeng
- 3) Klong Toei
- 4) Kluay Nam Thai
- 5) Bang Chak
- 6) Bang Na
- 7) Samrong
- 8) Sisa Jorakhe
- 9) Bang Nang Kreng
- 10) Pak Nam

Opened for service as a Danish-Belgian railway company on April 11, 1893. Nationalized to Royal State Railways (the predecessor of State Railways of Thailand) after the concession ended in 1936 and turned into the electrified railway after that. The line went out of service on January 1, 1960 due to the traffic problems.

If you notice the routes of BMTA bus No.1 – No.7 (the ones without air con), you'll see that they closely (even though not exactly) follow the old Bangkok Tramway routes:

BMTA Bus: No.1

From: Tha Tian (near Wat Pho)

To: Thanon Tok (end of new Road)

Corresponding to

Tram Line : Charoenkrung Line (City Pillar – Thanon Tok)

BMTA Bus: No.2

From: Tha Chang (near Ratchaworadit Royal Pier)

To: Samrong (Samrong Tai)

Corresponding to

Tram Line : Pak Nam Line (Hua Lamphong – Samut Prakarn via Rama IV Rd. and Thang Rotfai Sai Kao Rd. -> the oldest railway in Thailand – opened for service in 1887, converted into an electric tram during the 1930's – stopped service on the New Years Day 1960)

BMTA Bus: No.3

From: Km11. (SRT Community near Bangsue)

To: Klong San (the pier used to be the starting point of Mahachai Railway)

Corresponding to

Tram Line : Saphan Phut line – the line that went to King Rama I Memorial Bridge (the First Bridge across Chao Phraya)

Modern

There was a proposal to run a tram service (shuttle buses decorated like vintage trams) within Rattanakosin Island in 1996. A [tramlike tour bus](#) was eventually implemented that passes major tourist attractions.

Two lines

A. Grand Palace line 3.6 km – 8 stops

1. Giant Swing (BMA City Hall)
2. Mahardthai (Ministry of Interior on Bumrung Muang Road) and going along Rachinee Road
3. Wang Saranrom (Saranrom Public Park near Saphan Mon)
4. Wat Poh – terminal of Bus No. 1, 32, and 44.
5. Thai Tian – a pier to Wat Arun
6. Tha Chang – a pier to go to Nonthaburi, Paknam, Bangkoknoy Canal, etc.
7. Grand Palace – near Wisetchaisri gate and Silpakorn Bookstore
8. City Pillar and then across the city moat to Atsadang Road and turn left to Bumrung Muang Road to the Ministry of Interior and end up at City Hall -> Interchange at every station except Grand Palace

B. Thammasart line – 9 stops – 4.1 km

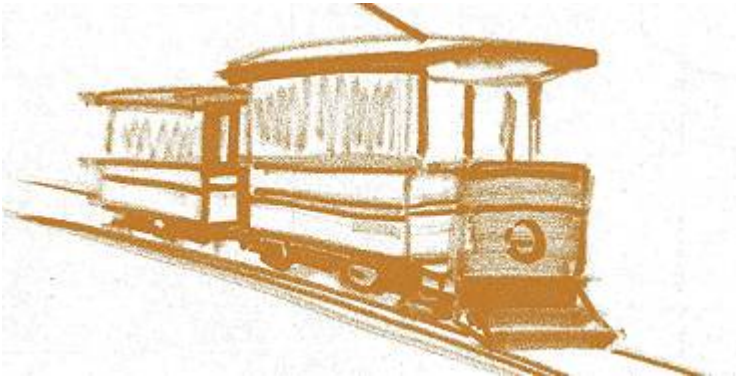
1. Giant Swing (BMA City Hall) – Maintenance center and terminal
2. Mahardthai (Ministry of Interior on Bumrung Muang Road) and going along Rachinee Road
3. Wang Saranrom (Saranrom Public Park near Saphan Mon)
4. Wat Poh – terminal of Bus No. 1, 32, and 44.

5. Thai Tian – a pier to go to Wat Arun
6. Tha Chang – a pier to go to Nonthaburi, Paknam, Bangkoknoy Canal, etc.
7. Thammasart – near Tha Phrachan Pier
8. Sanamluang – near Wat Mahathat and the corner of Thammsart University.
9. City Pillar and then across the city moat to Atsadang Road and turn left to Bumrung Muang Road to the Ministry of Interior and end up at City Hall -> Interchange at every station except Thammasart University and Sanam Luang

Tram Route Maps

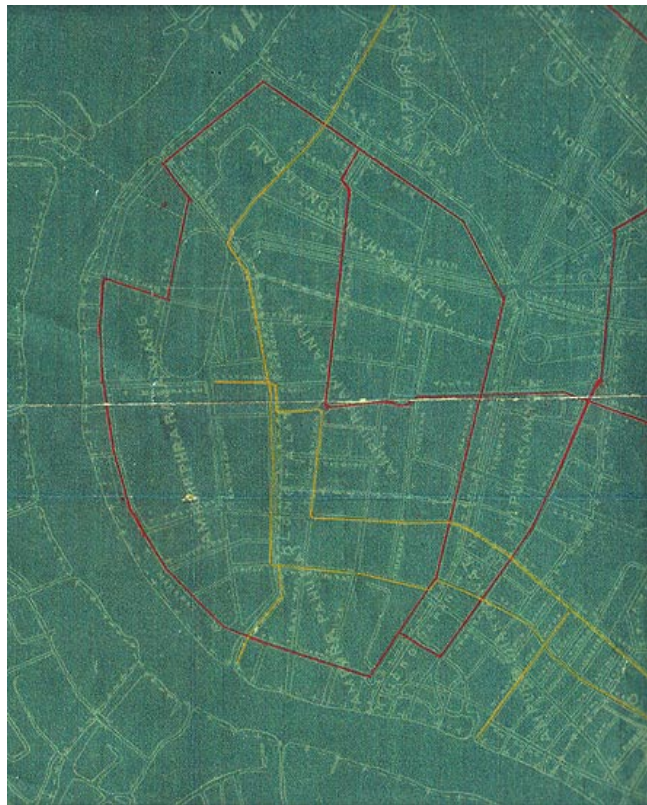
October 20, 2002

Categories: Trams



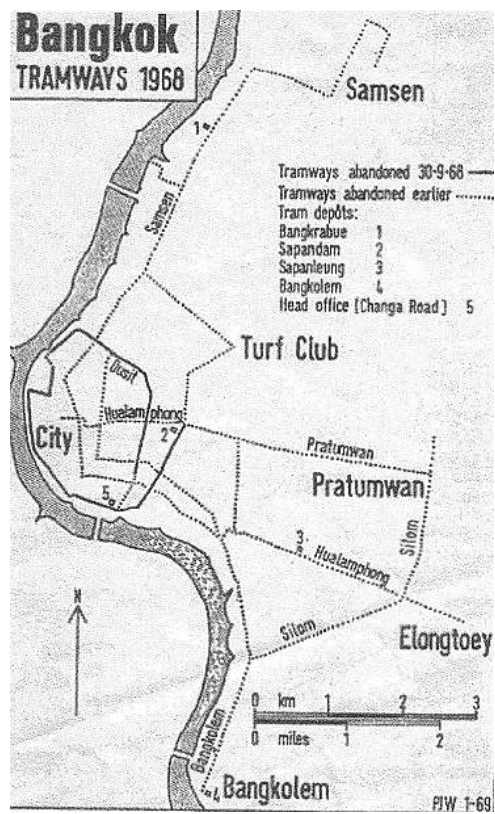
See also [Tram Routes](#) including the 1996 proposal for tramlike buses

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



Detail of a map made by the Royal Military Survey Department, Royal Siamese Army (now the Supreme Command Headquarters) showing the tram routes downtown.

Here's the [full map](#) (1.63MB).



Tram route map circa 1968 – courtesy of Ric Francis [Return to the Bangkok Tramways main page](#)

Atlantic Hotel

October 20, 2002

[Atlantic
Hotel](#)

– CNN, October 20, 2002

The story of the first
hotel in Thailand with
a swimming pool...

About the Suan Dusit Poll

October 23, 2002

Categories: Polls

[About the Suan Dusit Poll](#) – Bangkok Post,

October 23, 2002

...One of Rajabhat Institute Dusit's academic/commercial enterprises has won widespread public acceptance...

Sometimes, the Thai media will not pay attention at all. At the same time, Reuters will telephone to request the data and the Bangkok Post or the Nation will report the results — an interesting point for us to consider."...

...Out of bounds as well are polls on the monarchy, religion, the judicial system, and for a very different reason, social issues like gambling on the upcoming World Cup. "There are huge profits to be made, so the local mafia is very involved. Stirring up public awareness on this issue can be dangerous for those collecting data," says Archarn Sukhum.

Attempted scam at Christie's Lapidary – October 30, 2002

October 30, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Attempted scam at Christie's Lapidary – October 30, 2002

If there was any doubt that the authorities are doing nothing about the gem scam, we are once again getting a scam report a day (this happens each year during the tourist season).

While walking near Siam Center, a tuk-tuk driver approached, and offered to take me on a "two-hour sightseeing tour of Bangkok for the remarkable price of 10 baht. I had all day – why not. Within 15 minutes, I realized that it was going to be a scam: my sight-seeing tour was going to be of over-priced stores. Let's see: a tailor shop (where my store guide offered me, among another things, silk ties for "600 baht for one, 900B for two" which looked exactly like those sold along Sukhumvit for 100B), a jewelry store, another jewelry store and, finally, the Lucky Buddha. Inside, I was met by a personable young man telling me about a fantastic sale at Christie's Lapidary! Jewelry was so cheap, I could resell it at Tiffany's (!) for twice the price! Wow! According to this gent, he had done it 3 times, paying for his college and vacations. The promotion: for today only, a necklace / ear ring / bracelet set for \$4000 US. He actually had a receipt "1 set, sapphire/gold ear ring, necklace, and bracelet, \$4000 US". Incredible, this idiot had a receipt in US dollars. Gee, and I thought the currency in Thailand was in Baht. Of course, I realized it was a scam, he realized that I knew it was a scam, and it was time for us to leave the temple ("the monks are going to have a meeting"). The "tour" was worth the 10B – I loved it.

While walking to the boxing stadium (Ratch...something or the other), a gent strode aside me, asked where I was going, and offered to take me to a "secret TAT office to buy cheap boxing seats" – I guess that I looked like a real sucker. While at the stadium, a tout mentioned that all seats were terrible, except for the 1500B ringside seats. If you've been there, you know that the ringside seats are unremarkable, and the cheapest seats are great.

What else...I emailed a realtor (I'm interested in moving to Bangkok) who took me to 4 condos, and told me that they were the only ones available and, if I was smart, I'd have money transferred from the US right away!

I can't stop! I stayed at the Ambassador hotel which has 3 tailor shops. One enterprising guy offered a custom made suit for \$40 US. If I die and go to hell, I'll be forced to attend business meetings every day in a \$40 suit! I loved my visit, and I can't wait to return.

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Attempted scam at Yindee Lapidary

November 2, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Attempted scam at Yindee Lapidary – November 2, 2002

Remember this address: Yindee Lapidary Co. Ltd, Petchburi Rd. Soi 33, Makasan, Bangkok.

From an email we received: *We arrived in October 2002 in Bangkok (tired after a long haul flight) and were strolling around Sukkothee. A tuk-tuk driver approached us and offered a sight-seeing tour for 80 Bath. (one hour). We agreed. First, we visited the temple of the lucky budda. Standing in the temple, a elegant looking thai entered and prayed. Afterwards, he commenced the conversation asking where we come from. He said that he is an attorney and works for the Government and that he will travel tomorrow to London. Out of his elegant briefcase he produced a receipt for jewellery, bought in the Yindee Lapidary Export center. He further argued that today is the last day of the annual sales week, where Yindee grants generous discounts. A client is entitled to buy one piece of jewellery only. Furthermore, he said that he will sell the jewellery in London for the double prize and that he regularly takes jewellery to Europe selling it with huge profits. We decided to have a short look and the tuk-tuk driver dropped us off at Yindee Lapidary Co. Ltd, Petchburi Rd. Soi 33, Makasan, Bangkok.*

In the shop, my wife looked at a bracelet for 100.000 Bath. The sales person offered a discount of 43%, putting our attention to the fact that we would have to pay the double price in Europe. We asked for some time to discuss. The sales person said that the sales will stop in one hour and that we will have to pay a much higher price later. We walked away. During the visit of the next temple, an other person spoke to us producing also a receipt from Yindee. He said that he is also travelling frequently to Europe in order to sell the pieces with profit.

After arrival at home, we looked at these pages, especially the article in Bangkok Post of 22 July 2002. We were really lucky not having bought something at Yindee. In the past, we travelled really a lot and have a great experience with touters of all kind. But the honest approach of the Thai touters in a temple was a new experience. We stayed for two days in Bangkok, this was our first visit in Thailand (not the first one in South East Asia). Due to this experience it is very unlikely that we will ever come back to Thailand.

Another scam report from this company:

[Yindee Lapidary](#) (November 30, 2002)

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Suan Oi: Open Affection Between Thai Students

November 2, 2002

Categories: Local Beliefs

[Suan Oi](#) is an area downtown where many students from Rajabhat Institute live. It's both a case study of how youth culture can quickly transform an area as well as an example of how Thais often view the activities of young people. Interesting is the part about some "good girls" [shocked by open displays of affection](#):

In the area, young couples were often seen openly caressing and kissing. Pui and Orn said this was totally unacceptable.

The red light area is also known as a place where female students who want to earn extra money through prostitution can pick up customers. Those who are ready for business will turn their institute brooches on their shirt upside down and smoke cigarettes to signal their availability. Some put their cigarette pack on the table with one or two cigarettes sticking out to signify the rate of their sexual services. One cigarette means Bt1,000; two, Bt2,000. Pui said she was shocked and frightened by the new environment as she became aware of it.

Hong Kong's changing skyline

November 4, 2002

Hong Kong's changing skyline – November 4, 2002
A couple snaps of Two International Finance Centre (or 'Two IFC') under construction. At 420 meters and 88 stories, it will eclipse the Empire State Building and be the new tallest building in Hong Kong. It's part of a massive development that includes a subway station. The official site is [here](#).



Modernnine

November 6, 2002

Categories: Uncategorized

Modernnine – November 6, 2002

In case you hadn't heard—Channel 9 [has had a makeover](#): *Channel 9, featuring the lively "9" figure looking like a sparking eye on the modern digital world, which was underlined by the bright MCOT word, representing the strong potential of the state-run media....* The website in [Thai](#).



Before



After

Bad math

November 6, 2002

Bad
math

– November 6, 2002

We didn't mention this yesterday and tons of people wrote in for us to post it. *The Bangkok*

Post [reports](#):

When they changed from the seven-digit to eight-digit system in July last year, executives of the former Telephone Organisation of Thailand claimed it would be able to meet demand for the next 50 years, with 800 million new numbers available. The 800 million figure took into account the zero prefix that every user must dial. In reality, only 90 million numbers are available, based on eight-digit numbers starting with 1 to 9. At the

bottom of [this page](#) is a letter to the editor that explains that the scheme actually added no new numbers combinations at all... And [TOT Corporation is being questioned about inefficient number allocation](#)

Orchid says it is a government shop

November 11, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Orchid says it is a government shop – November 11, 2002

Another vacation ruined. Since the authorities have never done anything to stop the gem scam and the local police are suspiciously unhelpful, in a way it is like tourists are being scammed by the Thai government itself. This scam shop was formerly called **Phanfa** (last report July 2002) and before that, **Thai Mining**, all in the same location.

From an email we received:

I have spent wonderful 10 days in Thailand, enjoying great Thailand history monuments, meeting very friendly and deeply religious Thai people. I really felt great respect for Thailand and its people preserving their history, way of live and Buddhist traditions. Unfortunately one episode in Bangkok, involving Orchid jewelry store (318 Krungkasem Road, Bangkhunprom Sub-District Pranakom Bangkok 10200, tel. 0-2282-4381), spoiled my impression of Thailand and left a bitter taste of visiting your wonderful country. On October 28, the last day of my trip to Thailand, when I was visiting the King's Palace, at a site a local man approached me. He said the Palace was closed till 1:30 due to the Buddhist holiday and recommended some other sites, emphasizing on visiting the government exhibition of jewelry near by. He told me that it was the last day of the exhibition and sale of blue sapphires and other stones that the government excavates and sales at the exhibition at deep discount price at least half of that in Europe and the USA. The name of the place was something like "Exposition Center". When I visited the place my first question was is it a government store. The answer was positive. It was extremely important since I would never even attempt to buy jewelry at any private organization. As a matter of fact I have bought a few small jewelry gifts for my relatives at the government jewelry factory in Chiang Mai of very good quality at a very reasonable price. That's why when I was told that it was the government owned minds and store I trusted the quality and the price of the products there.

At the store I was offered a set of blue sapphires – 5 stones about 11.6 carats all together at the price about \$4800. When I asked about the quality and the price I was assured that the stones are of exceptional quality that are available only at two mines in the world that are located in Thailand and owned and operated by the Thailand government. The other 4 mines in Thailand were depleted and the prices for these Thailand blue sapphires were sky rocketed. The current sales price at the expo, they said, was deep discounted government promotional prices with additional 20% discount on the cash purchases. I have offered my credit card for purchase, but was told that they cannot charge the credit card. I was quite surprised that the government organization cannot use credit cards, but was told that they need at least two days to verify the credit card and I was leaving Thailand the same day. When I told that I do not have cash, the people at the expo told me that I can get cash from an ATM machine and the rest of it by paying by credit card to a local bank. Again, under these circumstances I would never ever get involved in such transaction if I did not believe that it was a government organization. Anyway, I was taken to an ATM machine and asked to get as much cash as possible. I withdrew about \$1000 (the withdraw limit).

After that I was taken to a near by local bank where the accompanied me person negotiated cash transfer from my credit card to the bank with somebody from the bank staff. This transfer did not worked out, though, since the signature in my passport and on my credit card did not match and the bank refused to use my credit card. At this point I thought that it was the end of the deal and was even glad it happened because I got more and more concerned about the way this business was conducted. I was taken back to the store where I was going to retrieve back my \$1000 deposit. Instead I was told to go to their associate jewelry store who could 'charge and validate' my credit card on their behalf. Accompanied by the same employee who previously took me to the bank I was taken to some jewelry store where I expected my credit card be charged. It was charged indeed, but to my amazement I was offered a bag of golden goods, supposedly corresponding to the amount the credit card was charged, to carry back the first store.

At this point I had no other choice as to bring this gold to the first store where they accepted it without even opening the bag or weighing it. The whole thing looked so strange and suspicious, that, again, haven't I was sure that I am dealing with the Thailand government directly I would hold it right away and called the police. But since I was assured it was the Thailand government organization, I thought it might be some common way to do business in Thailand. Anyway, 5 stones were put in the envelope and promised to be shipped to my address. I have got a receipt and a business card with the company name and address. The company name on my receipt was Orchid, and address was 318 Krungkasem Road, Bangkhunprom Sub-District, Pranakom Bangkok 10200, tel. 0-2282-4381.



At the same store I was offered a car to get to other associated stores with big discounts but declined it. The more I thought about the transaction the more suspicious it looked to me. When I asked the company car driver about the company he said that the company was not a government company, but 'government controlled' company owned by a private person. At that time I had to leave the country for home and had no time for any action. But as soon as I have arrived in New York I went to a jewelry store to find out about Thailand blue sapphires. I was told that this is a known Thailand scam and was given the WEB site address that describes it. The scam description on the WEB site fitted my situation up to a word.

As soon as the stones arrived on November 2, I evaluated them at the jewelry store. The certified jewelry appraisal evaluated the stones as low quality stones, too dark with massive inclusions. The real market selling price in New York today is about \$500 for all of them. I am not sure whether they switched the stone at Orchid before shipping or were cheating me from the beginning, but with such impurities and inclusions these stones according to the evaluator worth virtually nothing. I have tried to contact the store to request a return and refund by dialing the phone number on my receipt and the business card (66-2282-4381) from 9PM to 12 PM and at 7AM Eastern Time (it is 12 hours difference between New York and Bangkok) for several days, but nobody picks up the phone. It is absolutely clear to me now that I have got involved in the classical Thailand tourist scam. This is a shame that a corrupted company like Orchid impersonate Thailand government and ruins Thailand reputation among American tourists and business people. I do not understand how such Orchid behavior, that frames Thailand government at the international level, in particular in the United States, could be tolerated. I have tried to contact Thailand police by email, but I do not quite understand their answer. It sounds like they are not going to do anything because I am out of Thailand.



I would appreciate your help in disclosing this fraud to the public. I have enclosed the copy of my receipt and their business card as attachments.

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

How to market Bangkok

November 11, 2002

[How
to market Bangkok](#)

– *The Bangkok Post*,

November 11, 2002

A classic headline: *Bangkok
likened to 'insecure woman'*

TV and radio advertising stats

November 11, 2002

[TV
and radio advertising
stats](#)

– *The Bangkok Post*,
November 11, 2002
*Television broadcasters
plan to ask the newly
formed National Broadcasting
Commission to extend the
airtime for commercials,
which is now limited to
12.5 minutes per hour.*
It seems like a lot more
than that...

Dusit doing business in Myanmar

November 12, 2002

[Dusit
doing business in Myanmar](#)

– November 12, 2002

Dusit Hotels & Resorts
is taking over Inya Lake
Hotel. More Myanmar news
at Rebound88.org

A day later, *The Nation*
[has](#)

[the story](#): *The
Russian-built hotel, which
opened in 1962, is regarded
as one of the most luxurious
in the Burmese capital.*

To warn or not to warn...

November 13, 2002

Categories: The Thai Deep South, Tourism

The Travel Warnings

[A Terrorist Target? A Frantic Thailand Protests](#) – *New York Times*, November 13, 2002

The nations involved have responded in characteristic ways. Where Thailand prefers to avert its eyes from unpleasant things, Singapore prides itself being straightforward. "Terrorism is not a faraway problem," said Singapore's prime minister, Goh Chok Tong. "The bomb blasts in Bali confirm what we have warned all along, that terrorists are shifting their theater of operations to Southeast Asia."

[Shawn Crispin in trouble again](#) – *Bangkok Post*, November 13, 2002

Far Eastern Economic Review's bureau chief in Bangkok, Shawn Crispin, already placed on probation by Thai authorities, apparently contributed to (if not wrote) the article claiming that the Bali bomb attacks were planned in southern Thailand: "If so, the Special Branch will take action against him as he has always made damaging reports about Thailand. He should no longer stay here...." Gen Thammarak last week blasted the AWSJ, saying it was behaving like a 'tailless dog' for making up the report of the meetings in southern Thailand to plan the Bali bombings.

[To warn or not to warn...](#) – *New York Times*, November 12, 2002

Far from warning people to stay away after the Sept. 11 attacks, America's leaders encouraged Americans to travel to New York, to support tourism, in a show of patriotic solidarity, and many world leaders did just that. The approach toward Bali, and now other tourist spots throughout Southeast Asia, has been the opposite...The resulting fear also does tremendous economic damage. In Thailand, about 6 percent of the economy comes from tourism, one of the highest levels in the world. "You cannot overestimate the importance of tourism here," one ambassador said....If there are no terrorist attacks, few people will criticize a government for issuing a warning, diplomats say. But if there is an attack, and the government has not protected itself by issuing a warning, there will be a high price to pay, they say.

[Bomb squads kept busy](#) – *Pattaya Mail*, November 10, 2002

Paranoid residents have police running around "diffusing" everything from suitcases to cardboard boxes. And Trink featured [safepuket.com](#) in last week's column—it is by some local guys touting the safety of Phuket.

Chula ready to help revive megaproject

November 13, 2002

[Chula](#)

[ready to help revive megaproject](#)

– *Bangkok Post*,

November 13, 2002

Chulalongkorn University

plans to invest around

300 million baht to help

complete the abandoned

Chula Hi-Tech Square project

near the Samyan intersection

on Rama IV Road. The

university will delay

construction of new educational

buildings inside the university

compound in the Samyan

area in order to concentrate

on the Chula Hi-Tech Square.

Forbidden island, Chinese radar, massacres—all off the Thai coast

November 16, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[Forbidden
island, Chinese radar,
massacres—all off the
Thai coast](#)

– November 16, 2002

Zadatgyi Island in Myanmar...

More

Myanmar news at Rebound88.org

A guy who collects old maps of Thailand

November 20, 2002

[A
guy who collects old maps
of Thailand](#)

– *The Nation*, November
20, 2002 Also: [Download
these old Thai maps](#)

The day a quark flew through the earth and came out in the Bay of Bengal

November 22, 2002

Categories: Nothing to do with Thailand, but Interesting

[The
day a quark flew through
the earth and came out
in the Bay of Bengal](#)

– November 22, 2002

New York Times and The Nation write about the Post's Trink

November 22, 2002

Categories: 2Bangkok News

[The Nation has an article on the Post's Trink](#) – The Nation, November 22, 2002

The Nation's article was spurred by the NYT article last week: ...I've heard he's past his prime. I've even heard a respectable newspaper like the Bangkok Post has no business publishing his weekly grab-bag of bad jokes, misleading musings and the Kingdom's fair "lasses", advice to lonely expat men and recommendations of bars in boozing districts certain sober elements in the community would prefer didn't exist...

[NYT article on Trink](#) – New York Times, November 17, 2002

...But the truth is that Mr. Trink has been tamed by changing times. The paper has told him to back off his crusade to prove that AIDS is nothing but a money-making fabrication of pharmaceutical companies. No longer allowed to recommend his favorite prostitutes, he sometimes touts grocery items, with a strange, Nixonian seriousness. "For years Tang (orange powder to mix with water) was my favorite beverage, until, at 200 baht a bottle, the taste was no longer worth the price," he told readers recently.... For a long time he tracked the fluctuating price of Dinty Moore's beef stew, until "I kind of felt I'd said all there is to say about it..."

In praise of the Thai upper house

November 22, 2002

[In
praise of the Thai upper
house](#)

– *The Irrawaddy*,
November 22, 2002
*Before 1997, the Senate,
entirely appointed by
the Prime minister and
composed of retired military
and police officers, former
high ranking civil servants
and politically linked—and
sometimes shady—businessmen,
had always been a rubber
stamp house....*

*It has now come to
a point where the government
can no longer restrain
its irritation. Government
ministers have criticized
the senate for being too
active. Prime Minister
Thaksin Shinawatra himself
said that the senate was
improperly behaving "like
the opposition"...*

*For all its energy, the
Thai Senate has more than
once given ground to powerful
political interests. Out
of a total of 200 senators,
a group of around 50 can
be classified as "progressive"
senators keen on defending
the common peoples interests.*

*A large group of 80 to
90 senators are former
provincial governors,
retired civil servants,
teachers and lawyers,
whose vote will switch
according to the issue
and who can be fairly
independent at times.*

*The rest is made up of
senators who are indirectly
linked to political parties,
either by prior membership
or family ties to MPs.*

Stratfor reports U.S. soldiers will look for Al-Qaeda in the south of Thailand

November 23, 2002

Categories: The Thai Deep South

[Stratfor reports U.S. soldiers will look for Al-Qaeda in the south of Thailand](#)

– Strategic Intelligence,
November 23, 2002

U.S. forces may serve a dual purpose in the area — training Thai soldiers in anti-terrorism operations and monitoring the local situation to seek out possible al Qaeda supporters.

Sanam Luang 3, new zoo, Bangkok Tower

November 25, 2002

Categories: Uncategorized

[Sanam Luang 3, new zoo, Bangkok Tower](#) – *The Nation*, November 25, 2002

Deputy Governor Mustapha Man-nga said the Bangkok Tower would be about 90 metres high.

[City to build world's fifth tallest tower costing B4bn](#) – *The Bangkok Post*, November 23, 2002

Deputy governor Mustafa Mun-nga said the tower would be about 90 metres tall, with three floors housing gift shops, scenic points and restaurants. The top floor would be used for television transmission... "Once the tower is completed, it will be the city's new landmark," said Mr Mustafa

What Would Jesus Drive?

November 25, 2002

What Would Jesus Drive?

– WSJ, November 25, 2002

Peter Leonard writes: There's a [funny article on the WSJ website](#) discussing a campaign against SUV's in the US. The writer uses Bangkok as an example of a polluted city, and I think he's trying to say it would be better if everyone drove SUV's here.

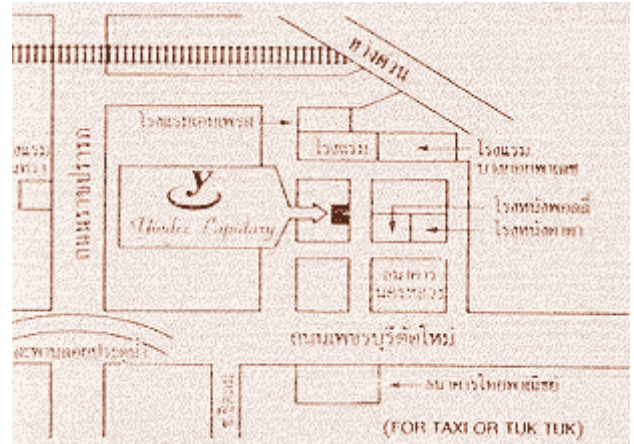
...It's no coincidence that the environment in the United States—home to millions of SUVs—is getting better all the time, while in Bangkok, where motorbikes are the norm, the air is so polluted that many people wear masks while outside. And although the world's poor would rather endure dirty factories than starve, those of us in wealthy nations needn't make that choice...

Yindee Lapidary Co. Ltd – November 30, 2002

November 30, 2002

Categories: Gem Scam

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)



Yindee Lapidary Co. Ltd – November 30, 2002

To: Person-in-charge

I am writing this email with regards to a gem scam that I am personally involved. On November 30 2002, I flew to Bangkok for my honeymoon.

On 1st Dec morning, we took a walk from Bangkok Palace Hotel to World Trade Center. Upon reaching World Trade Center, we were approached by a Thai claiming that he was a lawyer based in World Trade Center and told us that the day was the lucky Buddha day and that we should go to the temple. He even asked a tuk tuk driver to drive us there.

Once we reached the temple and went inside, we were approached by another Thai saying that he is a pilot and told us that he has just brought gems from a wholesale gem store that was having a special promotion where they sold gems at wholesale prices to public. he provided us with the address of the place. He then offered to bring us to get some blessings from a monk. At the place where we obtained blessings from the monk, we were again approached by another man who claimed the same thing. Just before we left, this man told the tuk tuk driver to bring us to this gem store.

Upon reaching the gem store (Yindee Lapidary Co. LTD, 1091/75-77 Petchburi Rd. Soi 33, Makasan Bangkok 10400 Thailand. Tel: 253-1540-1 Fax: 651-6784), we were told the same story about them being a wholesaler and that they were having a special promotion where they sold to the public at wholesale prices. So my husband and I brought about S\$6000 of gems.

When we reached Singapore, we found that the gems did not worth the S\$6000. Upon knowing this and from research done on the Internet, we concluded that we were cheated. In fact that was a posting at: <http://www.2bangkok.com/2bangkok/Scams/sapp27.shtml> that is similar to our experience.

We are a newly wed couple and we do not have a lot of cash. So upon hearing this, we were very upset. We went to Thailand in the hopes of having a wonderful honeymoon and now the whole experience has been overshadowed by this incident. We were very disappointed that such things happened to us and the local authorities did not inform us of such scams. We really love visiting Thailand very much but this experience had made us to think differently now and it also affected our relationship.

Therefore we sincerely hope that the 2Bangkok.com will be able to help to investigate this matter by getting a refund from the shop if not advise us on the steps that we take to settle this problem. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

An earlier scam report from this same company:

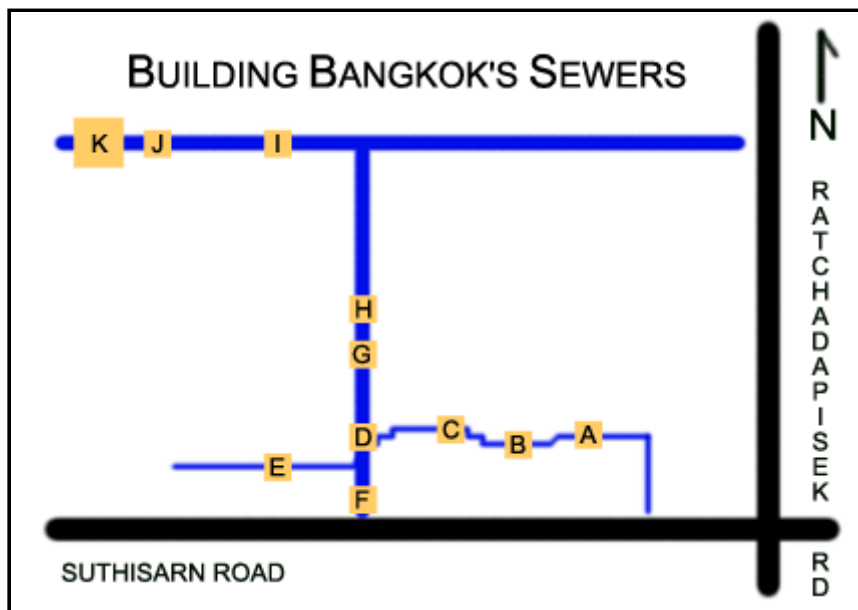
[**Yindee Lapidary**](#) (November 30, 2002)

[Return to Gem Scam main page](#)

Building Bangkok's Sewers

December 14, 2002

Categories: Infrastructure



The letters on the photos below correspond to the letters on the map above.

Last updated December 14, 2002

Deep shafts are being sunk into the klongs to connect to sewer lines being installed deep below the klongs. This is a major project that has been going on throughout the city since the early 1990's.

This page shows construction along a section of klong that starts 20 meters north of Suthisarn Road. Here the klong is little more than a drainage ditch and is dry most of the time.



(J): Looking toward a main sewer junction near Weepahwahdee Rangsit Road



Translated from a sign at the project:
Wastewater treatment construction project – Period 4

Waste water treatment construction project has 26.5 kilometers of pipe for wastewater. Diameter: 300 millimeters/2300 millimeters. Available for wastewater treatment: 150,000 cubic meter / days.

Contract hire no.: 17/ 2545 (17/ 2002)

Budget: 3,482,027,000 baht

Project period: Dec. 28, 2001-Dec. 27, 2002 – Total 1,095 days

Subcontractor: Cooperate trading group Naowarat Company Limited, Italian Thai Company Limited, Christian Company Limited, A .S Company Limited and Atkin and Makro

Supervisor control: Corporation group Mots Macdonalt, G. K.W. and team

Project supervised by: Water Bureau, Bangkok Tel : 0-2246-0274



Left **(B)**: Crane over one of the many shafts sunk into the klongs.

Below **(C)**: During the 1990's, most of the smaller drainage klongs were shored up concrete. Some have walkways along them.



Left **(A)**: Looking down into one of the many large shafts sunk a small klong.

Above **(A)**: Workers in their underwear working on the sewage pipes that run deep beneath and parallel to the klongs.



Above **(D)**: Juncture where a smaller klong runs into a larger one.



Above **(E)**: One of the smaller branches that runs behind the RCA II building. Most of the smallest klongs are little more than drainage ditches/sewers.



(G): Typical flood gate that includes grates for pulling debris out of the water (right) and a mini-crane (above) for dumping the material into trucks.





(H): Beyond the floodgate the klong is full.



(I): Klong life: A beautiful place, but the stench is overpowering (this photo was taken right after Loy Kratong, so the water is filled with kratongs).



(J): Before the klong reaches Weepahwahdee Rangs Road, a major juncture is being constructed that connects the local sewers to a city-wide system.



(K): One of the massive circular shafts at the juncture that routes the smaller lines into the city system.



(F): A worker takes a smoking break in a deep shaft off of Suthisarn Road.



Master Plan News 2002

December 15, 2002

Categories: Master Plans

This section contains news of the Master Plan, overall Bangkok development, the Bangkok Governor's development plans, and articles about interconnecting mass transit projects.

[Mass Transit News main page](#)

Cutting Subway & Skytrain 20-year plans to 10-year plans – translated and summarized from *Thansetthakij* – December 1-4, 2002

After MOTC Minister Suriya and NESDB commented about the slow implementation of 20-years plan for [Subway](#) and [Skytrain](#) extensions which should be started in 2002, Traffic-Transportation Plan and Policy Office (the successor of OCMLT) agreed to shorten the implementation period from 20-years (4 sections, 5-years each) to a 10-year period. To shorten the period, MRTA and BTSC are ordered to design the 2nd phase of extensions while working on the 1st phase. This will enable construction of the 2nd phase soon after opening the 1st.

The 1st phase of Skytrain extension will be (1) Onnut-Samrong extension, (2) Taksin-Phetkasem extension, and (3) Mochit-Ratchayothin extension.

The 1st phase of Subway extension will be Hua Lamphong – Bang Wah.

The [SRT elevated commuter \(former Hopewell\)](#) would be

- (1) Rangsit – Bangsue – Phyathai
- (2) Phyathai – Makkasan – Klongtan – NBIA

The 2nd phase of Skytrain extensions would be

- (1) Udomsuk – NBIA (2nd terminal)
- (2) Ratchayothin – Lam Lookka

The 2nd phase of Subway would be

- (1) Orange line
- (2) the blue line to become a ring subway system
- (3) Yellow line

The 2nd phase of the SRT elevated commuter would be

- (1) Talingchan – Bangsue – Donmuang
- (2) Hualamphong – Klongsarn – Talard Ploo
- (3) Talard Ploo – Mahachai

The cabinet has specified that at least 80% of materials for the implementation of extension would be local content. This would spur the local economic and cut import bills. A new detailed design for the Hopewell revival will be done by early 2003. The cost for Hopewell must be decreased from 30 billion baht to 12 billion baht.

Since three companies have different ticket prices, joint tickets are a must. Otherwise, it will force passengers to use automobiles – the same thing that is happening to Manila mass transit systems.

Commentary by Wisarut: The sections that go to [NBIA](#) must be either meter-gauge electrified train or standard-gauge Skytrain since the diesel locomotives are prohibited from entering the underground station at NBIA.

The story of Thai rail gauges: During the early day of the Royal State Railway Dept. (RSR), it was two separate departments: the Northern Railway Department and the Southern Railway Department. The Northern Railway (HQ at Hua Lamphong) received loans, equipment, and engineers from Prussia, so the railway from that department was Standard Gauge (1.435m). The Southern Railway Dept. (HQ at Bangkok Noy) received loans, equipment and engineers from Britain which used meter-gauge to construct railways in Malaya. Thus the Southern railway was (and still is) meter gauge.

After merging both railway departments to become the Royal State Railway Dept. in 1917, it was thought not wise to have two types of railway gauge, so meter gauge was selected and the process to convert the rails continued from 1920 to 1930. In 1922, the Rama VI Bridge was started and then completed in 1926. It

connected the northern and southern railway together.

Many westerners criticized RSR for using meter-gauge in the first place instead of standard gauge (to save 3 million ticals—about 250,000 sovereigns). On the other hand, many Thais lambasted SRT for keeping some standard gauge rails alive to the present so to accommodate high-speed railways. This is one example of different viewpoints between Thais and the westerners.

The mood: Since the 1997 economic meltdown, most local newspapers have carried venomous editorials against westerners and the Democrat Party. The Democrats are labeled traitors and lackeys of foreign imperialists who enacted laws allowing foreigners to own land as well as other assets. There is also the airing of the alleged miseries of local people after the invasion of hypermarkets and convenience stores. Local newspapers that support the liberalization of trade, financial institutions and the liquidation of asset at fire-sell prices are branded as "the supporters of traitors" and it is suggested that they should have their free speech as well as their human rights stripped and their legal immunity suspended.

Preliminary expressway routes linking the [new](#) and old airports – summarized and translated from *Dailynews*, August 16, 2002

1) Donmuang Airport – Vibhavadee Rangsit Highway (or Donmuang Tollway) – National Memorial – Phaholyothin Road – LamLookka Road – Eastern Kanchanaphisek Ring Road (Toll Motorway) – Thap Chang Interchange – BKK – Chonburi Motorway – Northern Terminal of NBIA

Notes:

- * This requires a 6-lane elevated road linking Donmuang Tollway with Eastern Kanchanaphisek Ring Road via Lam Lookka Road.

- * Eastern Kanchanaphisek Ring Road from Ram Indra Interchange (near Fashion Island) to Bang Plee Interchange will be expanded from a 4-lane motorway to an 8-lane motorway to accommodate more cars to and from NBIA

- * BKK – Chonburi Motorway from Sri Nakharin Interchange to NBIA would be expanded to a 8-lane motorway.

- * The main gate of NBIA will have an 8-lane elevated road to the main terminal.

2) Donmuang Airport – Laksi Intersection – Chaeng Watthana Road – Ram Indra Road – Fashion Island – Eastern Kanchanaphisek Ring Road (Toll Motorway) – Thap Chang Interchange – BKK – Chonburi Motorway – Northern Terminal of NBIA

- * Needs a 6-lane elevated way linking Donmuang Tollway with Eastern Kanchanaphisek Ring Road via Chaeng Watthana Road and Ram Indra Road – may be inappropriate since it must pass through many communities.

3) Donmuang Airport – Laksi Intersection – Chaeng Watthana Road – Ram Indra Road – Nuan Chan Intersection – Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway – New Rama IX Road – 2nd Stage Expressway – Sri Nakharin Interchange – BKK – Chonburi Motorway – Northern Terminal of NBIA

- * Need 6-lane elevated way linking Donmuang Tollway with Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway via Chaeng Watthana Road and Ram Indra Road

- * 2nd State Expressway (Victory Monument – Sri Nakharin) must be expanded to accommodate the huge volume of traffic

4) Donmuang Airport – Bang Khen Intersection – Ngam Wongwan Road – Kaset-Nawamin Road – Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway – Nawamin Road Kannayao Intersection – Fashion Island – Eastern Kanchanaphisek Ring Road (Toll Motorway) – Thap Chang Interchange – BKK – Chonburi Motorway – Northern Terminal of NBIA

- * Need 6-lane elevated way linking Donmuang Tollway with Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway and Eastern Kanchanaphisek Ring Road – may be inappropriate since it must pass through the Kaset Area and Km. 8

5) Donmuang Airport – Bang Khen Intersection – Ngam Wongwan Road – Kaset-Nawamin Road – Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway – New Rama IX Road – 2nd Stage Expressway – Sri Nakharin Interchange – BKK – Chonburi Motorway – Northern Terminal of NBIA

* Need 6-lane elevated way linking Donmuang Tollway with Ram Indra – at Narong Expressway – may be inappropriate since it must pass through Kaset Area

6) Donmuang Airport – 1st Stage Expressway – Makkasan Interchange -2nd Stage Expressway – Sri Nakharin Interchange – BKK- Chonburi Motorway – Northern Terminal of NBIA

* This route may be the most appropriate route since it requires only major expansion on expressways and interchanges.

Another option: S1 Expressway (at Narong – Bang Na) linking BKK – Chonburi Expressway with the 1st and 3rd expressway together to feed the Southern Terminal of NBIA. However, the budget for the S1 expressway must be trimmed down before realizing the route.

Planning to move the Southern and Eastern Bus Terminal (Ekkamai Terminal) to Makkasan Talingchan Terminal in Limbo

Dailynews, July 2, 2002

Minister Nikorn Jamnong (Deputy Minister of MOTC) told the correspondents that MOTC and Transportation Co.Ltd. are planning to move the Eastern Bus Terminal from Ekkamai to SRT land at Makkasan since Ekkamai Terminal cannot be expanded further. The Transportation Co.Ltd. wants to introduce their bus service from Makkasan to [NBIA](#) and NBIA to Chonburi and Pattaya after NBIA becomes a reality in 2005 as a substitute to SRT elevated Railway which cannot be started and done on time. However, he needs to discuss with the SRT Board of Directors as well as Minister Wan Nor for the new Eastern bus terminal at Makkasan which has to be done within 2 years to feed NBIA.

Nevertheless, MOTC will keep the Ekkamai Bus terminal alive and well even after the New Eastern bus terminal becomes a reality due to the fact that there is a [Skytrain station](#) right in front of the bus terminal. Even though the Southern bus terminal at Talingchan also cannot be expanded any further, MOTC and Transportation Co.Ltd. still are look for the right place for a new Southern bus terminal.

Commentary by Wisarut: MOTC may not consider the new Southern terminal at Bang Wah at the right place for the new Southern bus terminal due to the congestion at Phetkasem Road.

Commentary by Ron: It has always been my dream that SRT use the Makkasan land in the heart of the city to create Central Park (just like in New York). I have been told that deep in the use documents that govern the land is a provision that if SRT were ever to abandon the land, it would revert to a public park "for the people."

Railway tunnel to new airport – summarized and translated from *Thurakij*, June 27-29, 2002 and *Thaipost Daily*, June 29, 2002

If you need help with the acronyms, check out [Thai alphabet soup](#).

The State Railway of Thailand (SRT) is pushing very hard for the Eastern Elevated Railway to [NBIA](#). SRT is asking NBIA to pay 1.85 billion baht for the construction of a railway tunnel first and SRT will pay them back later. Italian-Thai Development (ITD) is getting a big boost since SRT is going to ask ITD to handle the tunnel construction. Nevertheless, NBIA has told SRT to wait a while for the NBIA Board decision.

Thoedsak Setthamanop (Deputy Permanent Secretary of MOTC and the Director of SRT Board) told journalists the elevated Eastern Railway from Hua Mark to NBIA had a distance of 26 km and a price tag of 23 billion baht. He said NBIA should construct a 1.2-km tunnel at NBIA station which is a railway station under the main passenger terminal (14 meters under ground level) with a price tag of 1.85 billion baht. MOTC will ask ITD to handle the project while ITD is handling the terminal construction.

The reasons NBIA Board has made such a decision are that SRT has not started the project yet even though NBIA is starting the construction of the passenger terminal. Therefore, it would be more economical to construct the NBIA station and the underground tunnel at the same time NBIA constructs the terminal. It would be more difficult and expensive to construct the underground tunnel and station after finishing the main terminal since NBIA and SRT would have to pay at least 3 times the current 1.85 billion baht budget for tunnel construction. So far NBIA is going to finish the laying of foundation pillars and fill the surface by the end of October 2002 so as to construct the passenger terminal even though SRT has not started the tunnel project yet.

The most critical part of the tunnel is the section under the main passenger terminal that goes under the

elevated road in front of the main passenger terminal with a distance of 150 meters and a price tag of 500 million baht. The other section from the parking lot building and the new Airport Hotel with a distance of about 1000 meters can be done later on, but SRT is running out of cash to handle the project. Therefore NBIA will have to handle this tunnel project and SRT will pay them back later since the construction of the tunnel must go hand in hand with the terminal construction. Otherwise NBIA and SRT will have to pay at least 5.55 billion baht for the construction of the tunnel after finishing the passenger terminal.

Italian-Thai Development PCL (ITD) headed by Premchai Kannasoot will be the main contractor since ITD is handling the construction of the main terminal. If more companies were to handle the project, it would cause lots of headaches since NBIA, JBIC and ITD have to sign a new contract with the new contractor so as to handle the terminal and tunnel construction without problems. So far, ITD is negotiating with the NBIA board about this matter.

SRT hired PCI (a consulting company) to study the tunnel construction and the study has been completed. So far, SRT has reported about the problems on the project. It will start the route construction, but for awhile so as to see whether the government approves the full elevated Eastern Railway project. If the government approves the project, SRT will resume the construction as soon as possible. So far, the Budget Bureau has approved 315 million baht for the design of the full elevated Eastern Railway project—140 million baht for budget year 2003 and the rest for budget year 2004. SRT is speeding up the draft of the TOR to call bids by the end of 2002.

NBIA will pay for the tunnel project first by assigning the new job to ITD and SRT will pay them back later. SRT also proposes the setup of a new company to handle the concession and SRT and NBIA will become shareholders of this new company.

NBIA and SRT were talking about the tunnel project three months ago but NBIA will have to submit the plan to NBIA Development Committee to be approved by the board first. Other contractors will get angry with the NBIA Board if NBIA approves only ITD to handle the tunnel construction. Therefore NBIA will invite the major contractors to discuss the plan for the construction of the tunnel— whether to call a new bid or allowing ITD to handle the tunnel construction without calling a new bid.

Master plan update – translated and summarized from *Matichon*, May 20, 2002

OCMLT is speeding up the new [master plan](#) for the railed mass transit system in Bangkok which will be done by the end of May 2002. There will be a route expansion of 3.75 km (over the previous master plan) so as to support the future traffic volume in the next 20 years. OCMLT expects the cabinet to approve the new master plan as soon as possible.

Reports on Megaprojects – February 21, 2002

The cabinet has approved 10 infrastructure megaprojects which were suspended due to the economic downturn. All 10 projects have the total price tag of 106 billion baht. Here are seven of them:

- 1) Routes connecting Suvannabhum Airport – 1.8 billion baht
- 2) Motorway connection to Suvannabhum Airport – 0.75 billion baht
- 3) Northern Elevated Rail System (Bangsue – Donmuang) – 12 billion baht
- 4) Eastern Elevated Rail System (Asok – Suvannabhum Airport) – 50 billion baht
- 5) Bridge across Chaopraya River (at Pakkret) – 3 billion baht
- 6) East – West link of Bangkok Outer ring Road (from Ram Indra) – 6 billion baht
- 7) Elevated Road along Prapa Canal – 12 billion baht

Most of them will be funded by domestic loans and private concession. (From *Bangkok Post*, February 21, 2002)

Dailynews (February 21, 2002) said that Deputy PM Phithak Intharawiriyand is pushing 10 megaprojects to the cabinet with a total price tag of 106.550 billion baht.

On the other hand, *Prachachart Thurakij* (February 21-23, 2002) also said that Highway Dept. will receive a 11.87 billion baht budget approved by the cabinet for the road connecting Suvannabhum Airport:

1. 11-km Roads to Suvannabhum Airport – 0.57 billion baht and
2. Connecting roads from Kingkaeo Road to Suvannabhum Airport (Romklao Intersection and Bangplee Intersection, and Onnut Road) – 1.8 billion baht

The Elevated Northern and Eastern Rail System have to wait for the next year's budget since the Highway Department has come to see the cabinet first.

Governor Samak flying to Japan at the end of Feb to negotiate with JBIC for a loan to construct the Ring Skytrain

Summarized:

Amorn Kijchawengkul (Director of Krunthep Thanakhom Co.Ltd.) said that the company has found that 2 of 4 the proposed ring skytrain are feasible to be implemented even though they have finished only about 50% of the study:

1) The 80-km ring from Poochaosamingphrai Pier (a pier opposite to Phrapadaeng Pier) to Thepharak Road and turn left to Sri Nakharin Road at Namdaeng Intersection. After that, the line goes along Sri Nakharin Road and Nawamin Road until the intersection of Kaset-Nawamin Road. After that, the ring goes along Kaset-Nawamin road to Kaset Intersection and then goes along Ngamwongwan road and Rattanathibet road to Bang Yai via Phranagkla Bridge. After that, the ring goes along Kanchanaphisek outer ring road, Rama II Highway, Suksawat Road, Nakhon Khuenkhan road before ending up at Phra Pradaeng pier.

2) 120-km ring -> very similar to the first ring. However, this line will pass through Industrial Ring Road, Bang Krajae Park and then go to Bangna via Sanphawut Road and Bangna – Trat Highway until it reaches Central City Bangna and then turns left along Srinakharin Road.

Amorn said the study will be done by the end of February, 2002 before Governor Samak flies to Japan to submit project details as well as the study results and negotiate with JBIC about the loan. After that, BMA will summarize the negotiation details to be submitted to OCMLT and discussed in the Traffic Committee headed by OPM Minister Phithak Intharawiriyananada. If the committee agree with BMA, OCMLT would submit the plan to the cabinet. The JBIC loan is considered a government debt so cabinet approval is required. The government must allocate part of the budget to support the project as well. If everything goes as BMA plans, the project could be started by the end of 2002. Furthermore, BMA plans to submit the Samrong extension and Taksin extension along with the Ring Skytrain.

So far, Krunthep Thanakhom Co. Ltd. has not concluded the budget for the Ring Skytrain yet since this ring Skytrain will run at grade level, elevated levels and even underground levels (for the underwater tunnel at Phra Padaeng of course!). The government will have to expropriate, buy or even lease the public and private land plots to implement the project. The company will have to cut the budget for this ring skytrain as much as possible to minimize public debts.

Commentary by Wisarut: Such a ring skytrain will have to be separated into several contracts so that the ring skytrain can be opened as soon as possible even though the ring is not completed. The government used separate contracts to construct the Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road, so they will definitely do the same thing for the Ring skytrain.

Commentary by Wisarut: Too bad that the link to Suvarnabhumi Airport is not included in the Ring since SRT would take responsibility on Suvarnabhumi Rail link. Probably, the line with the most urgent priorities (such as Suvarnabhumi Airport link) will have to be executed first. BTSC could run the feeder buses from Phayathai Station or Chitlom Station to Makkasan Station if the feeder Skytrain line (Phayathai – Hua Mark) costs them too much. Bangsue-Donmuang will be executed later...

Meeting of the Large-scale mass transit subcommittee

Matichon Daily, January 15, 2002

Summarized:

There was a meeting of the Large-scale Mass Transit Subcommittee at 15:30 on January 14 about the Mass Transit Project so as to follow the guidelines from 20-year City Development Plan (2001-2021) which stated that there should be 241.23 km of railed mass transit systems. The results from the meeting were:

- 1) The radius lines will come up first and then the circle line.
- 2) SRT should start the elevated railway project from Rangsit to Bangsue (Hopewell Revival) to pick up passengers from northern Bangkok suburbs and feed into MRTA Blue line subway.
- 3) SRT should start the development of Bangsue Junction to become a terminal for railway traffic, except for commuter who want to go to Hua Lamphong.
- 4) BMA and BTSC should start the construction of a 20-km skytrain extensions (Mochit – Ratchayothin, Sathon – Phetkasem, and Onnut – Samrong).

5) OCMLT, SRT, ETA, BMA, Civil Works Dept. and MOTC should join together to start expressway projects on the Thoburi side of Bangkok along the railway tracks (Southern Railway or even Mae Klong). The expressway from the beginning of Rama II Highway to Bangkok via Rama IX Bridge is inadequate to handle the traffic from Thonburi. So far, they are drafting the routes and selecting the best routes to follow through.

Governor Samak told Deputy Prime minister Phithak Inthara-wiriyand that BMA and the Central government should help BTSC by investing 7 Billion baht on civil works while BTSC runs the rail installation and services in which Central Government handles 65% while BMA handles 35% of 7-billion-baht investment.

Deputy Prime Minister Phithak said even though the cabinet approval states that the Skytrain extensions must be 100% private investment, the government will help the company out of trouble and ensure the continuity of mass transit system development. However, BMA should submit detailed studies on investment plans to be completed within a 3-month period before submitting to the subcommittee.

Governor Samak said if there is no problem in the detailed study, BMA will definitely allocate the budget for Skytrain extension within the 2003 BMA Annual Budget (October 1, 2002 – September 30, 2003) instead of asking Krungthep Thanakhom to finance the extension projects. The ticket fares for the Skytrain extensions will initially be the same as the current Skytrain fare (10-40 baht) to attract as many passengers as possible. Later on, BMA will apply the provision to increase the fare rate for those who travel from one end to the other end.

[Mass Transit News main page](#)

Thais Impose Wide Ban on Smoking and, Surprise, It Works

December 18, 2002

Categories: Health

[Thais Impose Wide Ban on Smoking and, Surprise, It Works](#)

– *New York Times*,

December 18, 2002

In this anything-goes nation, where the unofficial motto is "never mind," the government seems to have found one evil it will not tolerate.

Saving the giant catfish in Cambodia

December 19, 2002

Categories: Cambodia

[Saving the giant catfish in Cambodia](#) – *New York Times*, December 19, 2002

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Master Plan News 2001

December 24, 2002

Categories: Master Plans

MASTER PLAN NEWS 2001

This section contains news of the Master Plan, overall Bangkok development, the Bangkok Governor's development plans, and articles about interconnecting mass transit projects.

[Mass Transit News main page](#)

Four Ring Railway routes

Must be approved by the end of March 2002

Dailynews, December 24, 2001

JBIC has unveiled four surveyed ring routes and is waiting for the decision from Governor Samak to make the best choice. JBIC has imposed the condition to BMA that the Thaksin cabinet must approve the project by the end of March 2002. Otherwise, BMA will need to wait for another year to get the loan.

Amorn Kitchawengkul (Director of Krunthepthanakhom Co.Ltd.) said that JBIC has finished the preliminary survey of the track. There will be another study on the construction engineer in detail. There are four proposed ring routes which can be shown as follows:

1) 80-km ring from Poochao Samingphrai Road (at the pier opposite to the downtown Phrapradaeng) to Thepharak Road up to Narm Daeng (red thorn) intersection. After that, turn left to go along Srinakharin Road to Bang Kapi and then turn right at Happyland Intersection and then turn left at Bangkok intersection to go along Nawamin Road up to Kaset-Nawamin intersection. After that, turn left to go along Kaset Nawamin road, Ngamwongwan Road, and Rattanathibet road to Phranangkla Bridge. After that, the line goes along Rattanathibet Road to Bang Yai intersection and then goes along Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road and then turns left at Rama II Highway and then turns right to Phrapadaeng Road and then go along Nakhon Khueankhan Road to end up at Phrapadaeng pier. The bridge across Chao Phraya at Phrapadaeng will be very costly if not prohibitively so.

2) 100-km ring is almost the same at the first ring, except that it goes along Industrial Ring Road via Bang Krajae (a green island surrounded by Chaophraya) and another shortcut canal in addition to the Lad Luang shortcut canal. The industrial ring road is a project handled by the Public Works Dept. (will become a separate ministry in October 2002) which have a Y-shape bridge linking Rama III Road, Suksawat road and Rotfai Sai Kao road. The line will end up at Bang Na Intersection.

3) 120-km Ring: There are two versions of this 120-km ring:

3.1) It will be look like JR Yamanote Ring Railroad of Inner Tokyo – from Poochao Samingphrai road to Samrong Tai via Suhumvit Road, and then go to Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road to Suvannabhumi Airport (near the terminal for VIP guests and the Royal Family) and then turn left at Kingkaeo Road to Rom Klao Road to Minburi and then go along Serithai Road to Bangkok intersection and then go into the same way as 80-km ring.

3.2) It will go into very similar to the first version. However, it would go further North from Minburi to Lam Lookka and then goes along the road to Khookhot before going to Rangsit and then go further to Pathumthane and then Bangbuathong. After that, it would go along the western section of Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road, Rama II Highway, and follow the same track as the 80-km ring to Phra Padaeng.

Governor Samak has the right to select the line he considers as the best ring to be constructed. JBIC has imposed the condition that the Governor has to deliver the project proposal wrapped within the Economic

and Urban Development plan to NESDB and Ministry of Finance so that the project will be approved without delay. After the study of the commuter ring project is done, the project must be approved by the cabinet and delivered to JBIC by the end of March 2002. If the project study is not done on time, BMA must find the new financial source to back up the project or BMA will (likely) need to extend the project study for another year and wait for new loan from JBIC.

Commentary by Wisarut: There must be some serious discussions between OCMLT and BMA about whether which ring would be the best for Bangkokians before getting approval from NESDB, the Ministry of Finance, and the cabinet.

For the road to go along Kaset-Nawamin road, BMA should talk with the Expressway Authority to see if ETA would be allowed to construct a skytrain parallel to the proposed expressway. If ETA is really desperate for money, ETA should allow the land lease paid by BMA to construct a skytrain along the way.

Kaset can become an interchange station if Lamlookka line and the ring that goes along Kaset-Nawamin road becomes a reality. However, Lamlookka Extension should be done first... at least to make life easier for those who live in Northern Bangkok along Phaholyothin Road.

For the case of Rattanathibet, MRTA should let BMA handle this section if MRTA is no longer interested in making a northern extension of the Blue line from Wong Sawang to Phranangkla Bridge (MRTA would prefer the inner ring line instead).

For the section from Bangkhunthian to Phrapadaeng intersection, it may require expropriation of orchards in the Bangmod area to construct the line unless BMA decides to go along Rama II Highway and Suksawat Road.

For the case of going along the Industrial Ring Road, BMA should wait until the Industrial Ring Bridge becomes a reality so as to construct a skytrain along the line.

SRT Planning to Construct Rail Link to Suvannabhum Airport

Thaipost, December 11, 2001

SRT is talking with the consultant company about the plan to construct a 20-km rail link from Phayathai Station to [Suvannabhum Airport](#) by using the abandoned structure of Hopewell and planning to transform Makkasan Railway Station into a luxurious City Terminal. SRT is bating for the estimated budget calculated by the company. So far, SRT are asking for 5.8 billion baht for a double track project from Chachoengsao to Sri Racha so as to handle the cargo from Laem Chabang.

SRT Director (Mr. Sarawut Thammasiri) said that SRT has discussed with Pacific Consultant about studies on the rail link project to Suvannabhum Airport -> the construction details, the investment plans, and the creditors before submitting to SRT Board of Directors. SRT gives the principle that the elevated rail link must be done and ready to open and feed Suvannabhum Airport in December 2004.

The elevated railway track will go from Phayathai Station (Skytrain), Makkasan, Hua Mark, and end up at Suvannabhum Airport. Everything must be done by the end of the 1st quarter of 2002 (before April 1, 2002). If the cabinet approves the project, the construction will be started in early 2003.

SRT Director also said that SRT will have to upgrade Makkasan Railway Station into an interchange station with Skytrain (from Phayathai Station) and Subway (from Phetburi Station). Financial resource may come from a loan or a private joint venture.

Commentary by Wisarut: For the case of Northern section (Domuang – Bangsue), it is in the stage of selecting the consultant company to draft TOR for those who want to invest. The government has a policy to construct this section as soon as possible to ease traffic woes.

SRT also asked the government to approve the 60-km double tracking project from Chachoengsao to Sri Rachawith the an investment of 5.8 billion baht. The reason for such a huge investment is that SRT needs to plant support pillars all the way from Chachoengsao to Sri Racha due to the fact that the land is a soft clay and may not provide a strong foundation.

The double tracking project also has some benefit that it will carry cargo to/from Laem Chabgang and support the expansion of Laem Chabang Deep Sea Port.

For the case of Suvannabhum Airport, the Highway Dept. is dealing with five connecting roads to the airport, CAT is handling the Airmail building, the Meteorology Department is handling the weather section, MEA is dealing with high power lines to the airport substation, Bangkok Aeroradio Co. Ltd. is handling the air traffic controller tower and so on.

Samak's Commuter Ring Project Delayed

Japanese Government Said Approvals from NESDB and OCMLT Needed

Dailynews, December 13, 2001

Governor Samak's Commuter Ring Project is to be delayed at least for a few years since the Japanese Government said such a project must be approved by NESDB and OCMLT first.

Governor Samak Sunthoravej said that initially he asked CREC (China Railway Co.Ltd. – Headquarters at Shanghai) to study the Bangkok Commuter Ring Railway. However, Chinese government refused to fund the project study. Nevertheless, the Japanese government came to fill the vacuum with a soft loan. Now, it is under study and BMA is negotiating with the Japanese government over details of the investment conditions. So far the Japanese government said such a project must be approved by OCMLT and NESDB first before making further studies.

Governor Samak said such a restriction has slowed the project at least for a few years to ensure that OCMLT and NESDB would approve it. Nevertheless, he will push this project anyway by speeding up negotiation with the Japanese government. Such a project is necessary for accommodating Bangkok Mass Transit System. There would be 3 concentric ring railways with distances of 80 km, 120 km and 140 km. The innermost ring is for convenience in urban transportation. The other two outer rings are for city expansion. The major routes within the commuter ring are:

- 1) Wongwian Yai – Samutsakorn
- 2) Samrong – Samutprakarn
- 3) Rangsit – Lamlookka.

Commentary by Wisarut: OCMLT has already had the ring railway project in their plans (to be handled by MRTA). MRTA would readjust the blue line subway into the ring subway. For the time being, one ring mass transit system would be enough...

SRT Plans to decommission Hualamphong by developing Bangsue to handle all north-northeastern lines

Dailynews, Thaipost Daily, Matichon Daily, Manager Daily, September 28, 2001

Premier Thaksin told the press after the SRT Workshop on Sept. 27, 2001 that he ordered SRT officers to review SRT projects within a week. Thaksin ordered SRT to develop Bangsue Junction into a new railway center to handle the railway traffic from the Northern and the Southern lines. The government has no money for SRT to burn for the Hopewell revival or other SRT projects. Therefore, Thaksin ordered SRT to demolish the pillars on the Northern route so as to lay a new double tracks from Bangsue to Donmuang since it will cost the government only 7-8 billion baht. The Eastern route will not be spared either since the Premier said expanding the Eastern railway from a double track to two double tracks from Bangsue to Hua Mark will cost the government no more than 1 billion baht while reviving the Hopewell project for the Eastern section would cost the government 38 billion baht.

The Premier also ordered SRT to cut the railway link to Suvannabhum Airport from 28 billion baht to 15 billion baht and said SRT should construct or expand only profit-making lines while dealing with other projects (e.g. nationwide double tracking) at the bare minimum.

For SRT's accumulated loss of 43 billion baht, it is a public debt and the government has to bail SRT out of trouble. However, Thaksin asked SRT to reveal more details about how much SRT is going to ask from the government, and how much fares will be hiked. If the fare rate hike for covering the operation loss is acceptable for the people, there will be no need for government subsidy. Otherwise, the government will

need to subsidize the fair rate. For the SRT privatization, SRT will be either a company or a state enterprise with the aim to become a business unit that makes profit. Thaksin said if the operating cost for 3rd class rail is 40 satang/km/passenger, people will accept the maximum rate hike at 35 satang/km/passenger, and the government will cover the rest.

Premier Thaksin told Mr. Weera Muskaphongse (Director of SRT Board) that it is unsuitable to invest in the Hopewell revival during the economic downturn. Mr. Weera responded to the Premier's decision that SRT could accept the plan to develop Bangsue Junction to become a new SRT center to handle Northern and Southern lines since SRT has already had a masterplan on Bangsue development. Bangsue development will take the load off Hualamphong by handling 105 trains a day while Hualamphong will handle only 40 trains a day. Furthermore, the Bangsue Development along with the new construction of railway tracks from 3 tracks to 21 tracks at Bangsue Junction will cost SRT about 1.5 billion baht. On the other hand, the Hopewell revival from Bangsue to Donmuang would require 6.8 billion baht. Therefore, the demolition of Hopewell pillars and two sets of double tracks will become substitutes.

Concerning the rail link from Makkasan to [Suvannabhum Airport](#), the project will be temporarily suspended since the Bangna-Chonburi Expressway and Motorway are going to link with the Airport Motorway in the North, and the expressway to the South. There are already two roads linking Suvannabhum Airport with the major road—at the 15th km of Bangna-Bang Pakong Highway and a lane of Lad Krabang Road near KMITL. SRT will discuss with the SRT Board about the project suspension so as to reach a conclusion within 15 days. After that, SRT will submit the conclusion to Minister Wan Nor (Wan Muhammad Nor matha) before proposing it to the Premier. So far, SRT is going to revise the Eastern route to fit into 15 billion baht budget as follows:

- 1) Elevated tracks from Phyathai to Makkasan
- 2) Ground tracks from Asok to Hua Mark and Hua Mark to Lad Krabang
- 3) Underground tracks from Lad Krabang to Suvannabhum Airport

SRT is going to submit the details of SRT operating costs to the Premier so that he will approve SRT to raise the fair rates to cover real operating costs. So far, SRT has an operating cost of 82 satang/Km/passenger (for 3rd class railway) while SRT collects an average fare rate of 24 satang/km/passenger. Therefore, SRT will ask the government to shoulder the cost of the basic infrastructure so as to cut the operating cost to 50 satang/Km/passenger. SRT will need to spend three months before coming up with a conclusion for the SRT plan for subsidies. The preliminary discussion within the SRT Board will be finished within two weeks.

Samak's First Year

August 1, 2001- The *Bangkok Post* has an online summation of [Bangkok Governor Samak's first year in office](#). It shows the status of many local projects including the defunct art museum.

Governor Samak feels confident that the Suburb Ring Railroad will be approved

Matichon Daily – July 18, 2001

Governor Samak Sunthoravej comments on the progress of the 60-km Bangkok Suburb Ring Railway and says that China Railway from Mainland China has made feasible study on the project and insists that BMA could start the project immediately if they only had the means to do so. There would be no environmental effects. The price tag of the project is US\$ 2.4 billion (108 billion baht at the current 45 baht/US\$). It would take 4-6 years to complete the ring and 17 years to break even.

BMA will not spend the annual budget on the Bangkok Ring Railway Project, but they will ask the private sector to handle the project. So far, Japanese financial institutes (e.g. JBIC) said that they would grant a loan for this project with 0.75% annual interest rate for 30 years, and a grace period for the first 10-years. However, JBIC said BMA must let Japanese contractors win the bid to obtain such a good deal.

Governor Samak said such conditions are legal and cause no detrimental effects on the BMA. BMA will definitely handle this project and he would deliver the proposal to Premier Thaksin and the relating offices (e.g. OCMLT, SRT, BTSC, MRTA, BMTA, EPA and so on).

However, Mr. Raphee Lappratthana (Bangkok City Assembly member from Bangrak district and the head of BMA Civil Works and Utility Committee) said BMA should make an open and competing bid, not just allow

the Japanese contractors alone to handle the project since it violates the principles of free competition. Furthermore, no part of the private sector would invest such an enormous amount on such a project during these economic hard times. Even though BMA will not spend its budget on the project, Governor Samak must consult with Bangkok City Assembly first before making any further progress.

Samak's Broke and Needs the Private Sector to Help Him with Bangkok Development Japanese Keen on the Bangkok Ring Railroad

Krungthep Thurakij – July, 14, 2001

Governor Samak said he will emphasize continuing projects which can get the money back such as the BTSC Skytrain. Even though he initially did not like the Skytrain, he has a full commitment to support the project to go forward since the private sector has to carry the heavy financial loss. Without the continuing support, the project will collapse. Therefore, the three Skytrain extensions are the "boosters" – Taksin-Ekkachai, Onnut-Bang Plee, Chong Nonsee-Rama III. However, BTSC must implement the Taksin and Samrong extensions first – with a total distance of 11 km.

Furthermore, Governor Samak would like to realize the Bangkok Ring Railway project with a distance of 60 km (3 extensions not included). The China Railway Co. Ltd. has finished the feasibility study and told the Governor that it is feasible to construct Bangkok Ring Railway which will take 4-6 years to finish. If BMA decides to get the loan and equipment from European source, US\$3 billion budget is a must and it will take 7 years to break even. However, Japanese companies have strong interest in handling projects.

Governor Samak also has strong interest to develop another Chatuchak Weekend market, with full-circuit trading, such as the products from 76 provinces (possible from 7,000 Tambons), food land, and parking lots with trees around the markets. Even though MRTA has declined to let BMA lease 153 rai of MRTA land, BMA has to receive substitute land of 137 rai at Kaset-Nawamin Road.

For the corn cob apartments, the mock-up room is done and ready to open for public inspection on July 28, 2001. So far, some people have suggested leasing land behind the Agricultural Marketing Organization (Or Tor Kor – near Chatuchak Weekend market) to construct the twin 21-floor corn-cob apartments. After finishing the twin corncob apartments, the Community Development Bureau of BMA will handle gardening, garbage collecting, and managing the apartments. The corncob apartments will be supported by private investment, with the rent money from the tenants.

Samak: "I'll apply this style of BMA Administration by allowing the private sector to handle the project since BMA is running out of budget to handle new projects. The BMA budgets could cover only the projects from previous governors. The new funds for his projects will be realized in 2007. BMA services go pretty well. However, I need the approval from the BMA legislative and the BMA executive sections first. I hope that BMA council will approves the budget for new roads and shortcuts and road signs."

Mr. Mustafa Man-nga (Deputy Governor) said the central government has not delivered 4 billion baht from the 2001 VAT collection, causing lots of troubles in BMA budget management. Nevertheless, he will do his best to handle budget management to ensure that every officer in BMA offices will receive full salary without hurting continuing projects.

A tale of two newspapers: Mass transit details

The same story in a Thai-language newspaper (left) and English-language newspaper (right) showing how many details of the routes, perhaps not understandable to English-language readers, are summarized in the English-language newspaper.

New mass transit system masterplan delivered 400 billion baht over 20 years needed

Dailynews, June 22, 2001

The final draft of the new masterplan for Bangkok Mass Transit Systems is ready to be sent to Traffic Committee and the Cabinet. It need the a 20-year investment of 400 billion baht. The first phase

Big bill for new transit routes

City's needs plotted for the next 20 years

Bangkok Post, by Supoj Wancharoen, June 24, 2001

Bangkok will need to spend 400 billion baht in the next two decades to build nearly 300

consists of the Southern Extension of MRTA Blue Line (Hua Lamphong – Bang Wah), Southern Extension and Western Extension of BTSC Skytrain (Onnut – Samrong, Taksin – Phetkasem) and the Hopewell Revival as an elevated commuter line.

Pol. Yongyut Sarasombut (OCMLT Secretariat) said that OCMLT has finished the final draft for the plan, after working since March 2000. The plan will be delivered to the traffic committee and the cabinet soon. The revised plan comes from the 1994 Bangkok Mass Transit masterplan, but is revised to fit the current economic situation.

The 1994 masterplan said that Bangkok would have five major mass transit lines with a total distance of 378.7 km. However, the revised plan decreases the distance to 287.5 km. with a budget of 400 billion baht.

The OCMLT Secretariat said there will be three phases of the plan according to the recommendations from the consultants:

1) The 1st Phase from 2002-2011 with an annual investment from the government of 15 billion baht a year with a Total Distance in 2011 of 135.18 km.

1.1) SRT Red Line (Hopewell Revival from SRT) -> 4 sections

1.1.1) Phyathai – Suvannabhum Airport

1.1.2) Hua Lamphong – Bangsue via Samsen

1.1.3) Bangsue – Phyathai

1.1.4) Bangsue – Rangsit

1.2) MRTA Southern Extension of Blue Line

1.2.1) Hua Lamphong – Tha Phra – Bang Wah, and

1.3) BTSC Green Line Skytrain

1.3.1) Southern Extension (Onnut – Samrong)

1.3.2) Western Extension (Taksin – Phetkasem)

2) The 1st Phase from 2011-2021 and with the annual investment from the government of 25 billion baht a year with a total distance in 2022 of 287.5 km.

2.1) SRT Red Line (Hopewell Revival) -> 4 sections

2.1.1) Hua Lamphong – Si Phraya – Wongwian Yai – Taksin Center

2.1.2) Taksin – Mahachai (Eastern part of Mae Klong Line)

2.1.3) Bang Sue – Bang Son – Talingchan

2.1.4) Bang Sue – Donmuang (as MRT Line)

kilometres of mass transit routes, according to a recent study.

The Office of the Commission for Management of Land Traffic commissioned a consultant group, led by Pacific Consultants International Co, to come up with the Urban Rail Transportation Master Plan from March 2000.

The study, costing 50 million baht, would be forwarded to cabinet soon for approval.

Although the traffic office drew up a mass transit master plan in 1994, the new research was necessary to meet changes in transportation demand affected by the economic crisis in 1997.

Pol Maj Yongyut Sarasombut, secretary-general of the traffic office, said the study called for the following mass transit routes in the next decade:

-The Red Line commuter railway from Phya Thai to Nong Ngu Hao airport. This would be a shuttle mass transit system between the new airport and the inner city. The commuter route would be elevated on existing eastern railway tracks and join the skytrain (Green Line) and the Bangkok subway in Phya Thai and Phetchaburi areas respectively.

– The Red Line commuter railway from Hua Lamphong to Bang Sue. The route would also be elevated above existing railway tracks.

– The Red Line commuter railway from Bang Sue to Phya Thai. This would be constructed above existing railway tracks and link the eastern commuter train line with the Bang Sue station where a new railway terminus would be developed.

– The Red Line from Bang Sue to Rangsit. This extension, also above existing railway tracks, would use the abandoned structure of the Hopewell mass transit project.

– The western extension of the Bangkok subway (Blue Line) from Hua Lamphong to Tha Phra. The route would stretch from Hua Lamphong through congested communities near Charoen Krung road across the Chao Phraya river to the south of Kalayanamit temple and be elevated through Tha Phra junction to reach Phetkasem road.

– The southeastern extension of the skytrain (Green Line) from Onnuj to Samrong.

– The southwestern extension of skytrain from the Taksin station to Mae Klong. The route would

- 2.2) MRTA Blue Line from MRTA
- 2.2.1) Northern Extension (Bangsue – Phra Nangklao)
- 2.2.2) Northern Part of MRTA Ring Subway (Bangsue – Tha Phra)
- 2.2.3) Southern part of MRTA Ring Subway (Tha Phra – Klong Toei)

- 2.3) BTSC Green Line Skytrain
- 2.3.1) Southern Extension (Samrong – Naval Academy – Paknam)
- 2.3.2) Northern Extension (Mochit – Saphan Mai)
- 2.3.3) Western Extension (Pin Klao – National Stadium)

- 2.4) MRTA Orange Line
- 2.4.1) Minburi – MRTA Depot – Tiam Ruam Mit

The 3rd phase after 2022 -> the development of 5 lines with a total distance of 378.7 km -> probably finished in 2030-40.

- 3.1) 2 MRTA Blue Line extensions
- 3.1.1) Pha Nanklao Bridge – Bang Bua Thong and
- 3.1.2) Bang Wah – Bang Khae

- 3.2) 2 MRTA Orange Line extension.
- 3.2.1) Tiam Ruam MIT – Rat Boorana and
- 3.2.2) Rat Boorana – Samrong via Underwater Tunnel

- 3.3) Yellow Line (a replacement of Purple Line which will be scrapped after the Hopewell Revival and MRTA Northern extension become a reality) -> MRTA will be the owner
- 3.3.1) Lad Phrao – Bang Kapi – Sri Nakharin – Samrong, and
- 3.4) BTSC Skytrain Northern Extension from Donmuang (Saphan Mai) to Lum Lookka

stretch from Sathorn road, then run across the Chao Phraya river, and further above Taksin and Phetkasem roads to Mae Klong.

Rail routes under the master plan were altogether 287.5km long. Implementation of the first phase in the next decade would cost about 150 billion baht and would cost a further 250 billion more in the following 10 years.

Commentary by Wisarut: *Dailynews* states that it would cost about 20 billion baht to construct the Northern Section of Red Line (Rangsit – Hua Lamphong) suitable for diesel locomotives and it would take about 11-12 billion baht more to put the electric lines and electric trains into use. IMHO, 12 billion baht more in addition to the 20 billion baht budget for the first section of the Hopewell revival is definitely worth it since we will not have to worry about fumes from diesel locomotives if we run the electric locomotives instead. However, the SRT should design a ramp with the third (or forth) rail (from Donmuang to Lak Hok) to minimize the burden for the locomotives climbing up. Electric motors may not have enough power to push the locomotives up, compared to the diesel locomotives.

Another 200 billion baht to revitalize seven megaprojects

Siam Turakij, Vol. 7 No. 338, June 15-21 2001

Main points in this article:

- * The Cabinet is preparing to inject 200 billion baht to invest in seven megaprojects that will also stimulate the local economy
- * Subway-Hopewell heading forward
- * Wannor calling New Bids for the Suvannabhum Airport and Southern part of Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road – with a total price of nearly 100 billion baht
- * Samak pushing the Skytrain extensions while MOI is proposing new expressways and Prapa Canal Road

Thailand has been struck by economic crisis for a long time. The financial stimulation for economic recovery is not enough, so the budget injection is another important measure to boost the employment. Therefore, the Committee for Royal Projects for Traffic Solutions headed by Premier Thaksin Shinnawata has ordered OCMLT to push the Hopewell Project and the 38-km road on Prapa canal to become a reality. Also, the current government has decided to push seven megaprojects with price tags of 200 billion baht. These megaprojects consist of Skytrain, subway, expressway, motorway, and airport.

First megaproject to proceed-the subway extension

The first megaproject to be undertaken is the Southern extension of the Blue line (Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae). The first section of the Southern extension (Hua Lamphong – Bang Wah -> 8.7 km) will cost the government 39.033 billion baht. The second section (Bang Wah – Bang Khae – 5.1 km) will be constructed later. There will be four conditions for the Southern extension from MRTA to be approved by the cabinet:

1. Approving the construction principles of design and build for the extension – the government will pay 80% on civil works while 20% is handled by the private sector for subway systems and services.
2. Approving investment funds of 30.771 billion baht – MOF finds the loan with relaxed conditions and the Budget Bureau allocates budget to support the project.
3. Approving the budget for the consultants to administrate and control the construction valued at 1.471 billion baht, land exappropriation budget of 3.357 billion baht and emergency funds of 3.260 billion baht (total budget of 8.088 billion baht).
4. Land exappropriation in the district of Pathumwan, Bang Rak, Pom Prabsattruphai, Sumphanthawongse, Phra Nakhon, Thonburi, Bangkok Yai, Phasaecharoen, and Bang Khae

Mr. Somsak said the Southern extension (8.7-km Hua Lamphong – Bang Wah) is necessary to be pushed since it is worthy to invest in (EIRR is 12.2%). The private investment will be from BMCL (a subsidiary of Ch. Karnchang PCL) to run the service since BMCL already runs the service for the first section of subway. It is impossible to have several companies running the services on the same rails. If other companies run the extensions, it will cost more to connect the new and existing section (Bang Sue-Hua Lamphong), delay the completion of the Southern extension by several years, require construction of a new depot, and increase construction costs to a level unworthy to invest in.

Asking Khiree and Woo to Exorcise the Hopewell Ghost

For the revival of the 120 billion baht Hopewell Project, Premier Thaksin has ordered OCMLT to speed up the Hopewell revival with the cheapest budget possible. The idea being to connect Hopewell with BTSC Skytrain at Mochit (should be at Mochit 2) and run it to Rangsit Station. However, OCMLT need to discuss such a proposal with Mr. Khiree Kanchanaphak (BTSC CEO) and Mr. Gordon Woo (Hopewell (Thailand) CEO) and see if they would like to invest in such a project. Seem Consulting Co.Ltd. (a Consulting Company) will submit the detailed and comprehensive plan for Hopewell revival to the SRT Board by the end of June 2001.

So far, the government has invested 50-60 billion baht on the civil work and basic structure while the private sector would invest 40 billion baht on the system, rolling stocks and services. There will be 5 railway tracks – 3 for regular trains and the other 2 for skytrain. There will be 2 lines – Northern line (Rangsit – Hua Lamphong – 29 km) and the Eastern line (Yommaraj – Hua Mark – 16 km). The Southern section will not be constructed at this time being due to the lack of demand. MOTC Minister Wan Muhammad Nor Matha said the MOTC and SRT are studying the investment plan.

A possible way to kickstart the project is a joint venture or private concession. SRT has estimated the preliminary construction cost (60 billion baht) and submitted it to Minister Wannort. Minister Wannor said 60 billion baht is too much since the government can allocate only 20 billion baht for the revival plan. Therefore, Minister Wannor ordered SRT to downsize the project. The downsized revival project will leave only the Northern section due to the high demand and the Skytrain could cover the Eastern section with only a few problems.

The Three Skytrain Extensions

BMA is making a move on the megaprojects since it is Governor Samak's policy to push three skytrain extensions into reality. The 3 skytrain extensions with a price tag of 30 billion baht are as follows:

- 1) Northern Extension (Mochit – Donmuang – Lum Lookka)
- 2) Southwestern Extension (Saphan Taksin – Ko Boh – Phekasem)

3) Southeastern Extension (Onnuj – Bang Na – Samrong Tai).

The most recent news about the Skytrain is in early June. At that time, the Committee for the Investment Plan on Public Projects headed by the City Clerk asked Mr. Khiree Kanchanaphak (BTSC CEO) to submit the TOR to BMA within 30 days. Previously, BTSC asks BMA to handle the civil works and structure while BTSC was going to handle the service in the same way as BMCL does with the MRTA Subway. Such a proposal will need the cabinet approval before calling a new bid while inviting 11 groups to join the bidding.

Commentary by Wisarut: Even though the cabinet has already approved the Samrong and Taksin extensions, BTSC said it is impossible to handle the project by itself, so BMA has to bail BTSC out of trouble by proposing 80% public investment and 20% private investment to the cabinet. Furthermore, people around Rama III area do not like Dr. Bhijit's idea of running the Rama III tram.

More commentary by Wisarut: I feel afraid that no companies besides BTSC will bid on the new lines. There is no need since BTSC will not need a new depot and they are already running the rest of the system.

Elevated Road on Prapa Canal

The elevated road on Prapa Canal from Samsen Water Utility Section to Pathumthanee with a distance of 38 km may start by the end of the year with a budget of 12 billion baht. The project was initially started in 1997, but the economic meltdown put the starting date indefinitely on hold.

Budgeting the New Airport

MOTC has become the recipient of a billion-baht treasure trove through two new megaprojects with a price tag of nearly 100 billion baht. The first megaproject is the main terminal of Suvarnabhumi International Airport (AKA NBIA or Nong Ngoo Hao Airport) with a price tag of 45 billion baht. Minister Wannor would like to see the nine local and international contractors which have passed the preliminary qualification (PQ) for submitting a new bid after negotiating with JBIC. So far, NBIA Co.Ltd. has called a bid for the terminal – the heart of Suvarnabhumi International Airport. However the winners' bid was still 8 billion baht higher than the 45 billion baht. Therefore, NBIA is asking MJTA to revise the terminal design to cut the budget to fit into the 45 billion baht budget. The construction cost should be 35 billion baht.

Commentary by Wisarut: I am afraid that JBIC will not allow NBIA to call a new bid unless the Japanese contractors or local contractors with Japanese contractors as strategic partners win the bid. JBIC does not want to see their money flowing into Korean, European, Chinese and American contractors' wallets! Therefore, it is not a surprise at all to see JBIC supporting four Japanese contractors even though it requires a higher budget than Hyundai Construction Co.Ltd. or the Chinese Contractor.

The Southern Section of the Outer Ring Road

The second megaproject is Southern Section of Outer Ring Road. The Highway Dept. will spend 17-billion baht for the turnkey motorway (AKA Southern Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road from Suksawat to Bang Plee), after trying to find the ways to cut down the budget without success. So far, a Thai-German Group led by Prayoon Watsawa Co.Ltd. won the turnkey motorway project with a price tag of 16.5 billion baht. However, the 10 year payment period has ballooned to 30 billion baht. Therefore, Minister Wannor is asking the Highway Dept. to find a new way to invest to cut down the debt. However, the Highway Dept. could not find the way to cut down the project. Therefore, a new bid is necessary.

Related Articles on the Skytrain site

On the Unofficial Bangkok Skytrain Site are two informative articles about the new Bangkok Southern City Terminal:

[Revealing Three Thonburi Districts for the new Southern Bangkok City](#)

and

[Hunting for the area around Thonburi to build the Southern Bangkok Terminal](#)

Bangkok the Modern City

In the April, 2001 issue of *Sawasdee* (the Thai Airways in-flight magazine) there is an article entitled "Building a Boomtown" that examines the state of Bangkok as a modern city. The article itself isn't much, but at least there seems to be no errors. (*Sawasdee* reminded readers a couple of months ago that Bangkok has the largest restaurant in the world, *Tam Nak Thai*. The problem is that the restaurant was bulldozed five years ago.)

The real treat is the fantastic black and white photos which includes a neat shot of a construction worker hanging over the freeway and some great photos of the Skytrain. Unfortunately, the only way to get the issue is to take one if you fly on Thai this month or pick up an issue from the Thai headquarters on Weepahwadeerangsit Road.

Commuters from Nong Ngoo hao, Rangsit, Talingchan and Taksin to feed Skytrain

Thairath Daily, April 18, 2001

Mr. Chaloeamsak Rabilwongse (Director of Mass Transit System Management Section, OCMLT) said after the 1/2544 Traffic Committee Meeting (the First Traffic Committee Meeting of 2001), that they are going to review the priority for investment in large traffic projects due to budget constraints and limited funds. For the master plan to deliver to the new cabinet, there are three lines to be done – SRT Red line (AKA Hopewell), MRTA Blue line (Subway), and BTSC Green line (Skytrain).

For the SRT Red line, it will save about 20-30 billion baht (US\$ 500-750 million) if SRT stops the plan for the SRT Skytrain and revives the SRT suburb commuter plan instead. The savings would be used for making extensions stretching in four directions–Nong Ngoo Hao Airport in the East, Rangsit in the North, Talingchan Junction at the Northwest and Taksin Transportation Center at the Southwest which will relieve traffic congestion and give more transportation choices for citizens on the Thonburi side (other than BMTA buses and Chaophraya boat and ferry services).

Furthermore, the suburb commuter plan would feed the Skytrain and subway while connecting to the long distance railway since it would use a meter gauge to enable the locomotives to use SRT depots at Makkasan and Phaholyothin. After all the 3 lines are done in 2011 (hopefully), it will create a complete mass transit network. Therefore, it is necessary to have all three owners of the mass transit project to help each other to realize the mass transit network and ensure a common interests on the project instead of dealing with their line alone which will not work at all.

Commentary by Wisarut: Electric rolling stocks may require major readjustment of the railway tracks (especially at Makkasan, Hua Lamphong, Bangsue and Talingchan) to enable the electric suburb commuters (with a meter gauge) to run on the tracks SRT locomotives use. Diesel rolling stock will force the construction of the track to be either elevated tracks or the ground level tracks since the underground tracks have prohibitive construction cost. Ground-level tracks (from Bangsue to Talingchan, Hua Mark-Nong Ngoo Hao Airport or so) will require overpass bridges or tunnels to enable automobiles to cross railway tracks without waiting. For the case of Nong Ngoo Hao Airport, it will be 2006 before it opens. We will see which one will be done first–the airport or the Hopewell revival extension to the airport.

More Commentary by Wisarut: I have seen that southern palm oil farmers mixing coconut oil with kerosene to substitute for the imported or smuggled diesel fuel since the fuel prices for diesel cost the farmers and fishermen while palm oil has become (at a ratio of 20 gallons of coconut oil to a gallon of kerosene. Palm oil farmer claim that fuel mixture causes the engines to emit less smoke than the conventional diesel (low sulfur diesel). Probably, SRT could look into this if they still need to run their diesel locomotives. The National Energy Policy Organization (NEPO) are trying to improve the quality of the coconut oil fuel so that it will be possible to market it commercially. Coconut farmers at Chumporn say they will market their biodiesel to crematoria. If they are successful in marketing to crematoria, they won't have to worry about the falling price of coconut oil. For the case of palm oil, there is a test van that uses pure palm oil as a fuel. Even though it works, they still need more research on the engine and the improvement of palm oil to lower the production costs to an acceptable level for commercial use.

Samak Preparing for the 80-km Bangkok Ring Mass Transit System

Manager Daily, April 4, 2001

Mr. Samak Suthoravet (BMA Governor) said he has plans to construct a ring mass transit system of 80 km long which was mentioned during the election campaign. Such a ring mass transit system is very similar to

the one used in Tokyo.

The Bangkok Mass Transit Ring will use grounded double tracks connecting three planned extensions (Bangplee, Mahachai and Lam Lookka) and other communities around Bangkok. Most sections are at the ground level. Only some sections such as along Rama III Inner Ring Road will be elevated (such as the Rama III and Klong Toei section). There is no need for land expropriation since the construction will go along the highways.

The possible route will start from Bang Plee and then go to Lum Lookka, Rangsit Pathum Thani, Bang Bua Thong, western Kanchanaphisek outer ring road, Bang Bon, Bookkhalo, Rama III Bridge, Rama III inner ring road, Chong Nonsee, Klong Toei, Bangkok University, Sanphawut Intersection (Bang Na), Samrong, and end up at Bang Plee.

For the preliminary plan, Governor Samak said the railways and mass transit companies from China have strong interest to invest on this project and offer BMA a free detailed study on the projects. Since about 20% of the route is outside the BMA area, BMA has to discuss and negotiate with the governors and city halls of neighbor provinces (Nonthaburi, Samut Prakarn and Pathum Thani) to cooperate with the plan since the ring route extends to their provinces. BMA also needs to call the Highway Department to join in the meeting since most sections of the ring are the responsibility of the Highway Department, so BMA will ask Highway Department to transfer the parts of land along the highways to construct the routes. After the feasibility studies are done, BMA will deliver the project to OCMLT to assess the plan and draft the TOR to allow the bidding competition for this mass transit ring system.

Starting the Bangkok Ring Mass Transit to Bail BTSC out of trouble

Dailynews, April 5, 2001

Governor Samak is pushing forward the Bangkok Mass Transit Ring to feed the Skytrain with not less than a million suburb passengers a day through private investment with government support. Governor Samak Sunthoravet (BMA Governor) said after the BMA meeting session that BMA agreed to initialize the Bangkok Mass Transit Ring System which he had mentioned during the election campaign through the following procedures:

- 1) Discussion with the Director of Highway Department and the provincial governors which are Bangkok neighbors to get cooperation, suitable routes, and land in the middle of highways from them.
- 2) If the first step is successful, the second stage is to ask a Chinese consultant company to make a preliminary detail and feasibility studies on the project which will take 3 months.

Governor Samak said that the mass transit ring system will be constructed as double tracks of a 10 meter width with most of distances at ground level. Only at intersections, the stations and some parts in Bangkok will be elevated like a skytrain. The total distance will be 80 km. The rough sketch for the routes will be as follows:

- 1) Going from Bang Plee Intersection near Bang Plee District Hall along Bang Plee-Lad Krabang Road (National Highway No. 3256) to King Kaeo-Bangplee Intersection

Commentary by Wisarut: This section will pass Bang Plee Industrial Center as well as the factory around the Bang Plee area

- 2) Going From Kingkaeo-Bang Plee intersection to King Kaeo intersection via King Kaeo Road (National Highway No. 3256 or Lad Krabang Soi 18)

Commentary by Wisarut: This section will need to have a station near the road to the western gate of Suvarnabhumi Airport, the gate to the Royal and VIP Terminal to facilitate the movement of the airport passengers if the Airport becomes a reality by the end of 2004. The airport can be delayed, but never canceled or delayed forever since HM The King has granted a name for the airport.

- 3) Turn right to Lad Krabang Road (AKA Soi Onnut – Sukhumvit Soi 77) and then turn left to Romklao Road and go along Romklao Road to Ram Kham Haeng Road (Sukhaphiban 3 Road) in Minburi

Commentary by Wisarut: This section will need to have a station and park and ride facility near Lad Krabang Railway Station to pick up those students of KMITL, Rajamangala Institute (Lad Krabang Campus), and people living around Hua Takhae, Rom Klao, and Lad Krabang areas.

4) Going to Surinthewongse Road (National Highway No. 304) via a shortcut road and then turning right to Surinthewongse Road at Minburi Young Men Correction Station and then turn left to Nimitmai Road (National Highway No. 3261) at Minburi Post Office After that, going along Nimit Mai Road to Lum Lookka.

Commentary by Wisarut: The shortcut will be very close to Minburi District Office and Minburi. The stations in this section should be close to the gate of suburb villages so the people will simply ride motorcycle cabs or small compact buses to the skytrain.

5) After reaching Lum Lookka District Office, going along Lum Lookka Road (National Highway No. 3312) to Thoopatamee Stadium (AKA Royal Thai Airforce Stadium). After that, going along Phaholyothin Road (National Highway No. 1) to Rangsit Flea Market and Future Park Rangsit.

Commentary by Wisarut: The stations in this section should be close to the gate of suburb villages or bus stops so the suburb people will simply ride motorcycle cabs, small compact buses, and BMTA buses to the skytrain. Even better, there should be several via ducts connecting the skytrain with the department stores, shopping malls, and flea markets around the Rangsit-Khookhot area.

6) Going along National Highway No. 346 to Bang Phoon and the gate to Wat Sadet (the beginning of National Highway No. 3309) to Phoon Sub Flea market and then turn right along National Highway No. 346 and go across Pathum Thanee Bridge to Pathum Thanee Intersection and then turn left to go along Bangkok-Pathumthane Road (AKA National Highway No. 307) which is very close to Pathum Thanee Provincial Hall to Saphan Nuan Chawee Intersection (AKA Nonthaburi Bridge Intersection)

Commentary by Wisarut: There should be some stations at the following places: near Rangsit Railway Station, Bang Phoon Overpass and foot of Pathum Thanee Bridge as well as the gate of suburb villages

7) Turn right at Saphan Nuan Chawee Intersection to National Highway No. 345 to Bang Bua Thong Intersection. After that, turn left to go along Kanchanaphisek Outer Ring Road (National Highway No. 9) to Bang Bon.

Commentary by Wisarut: There should be some stations at the following places: the Bang Bua Thong Intersection, the Southern Railway, Mae Klong Railway, the community along Kanchanaphisek outer ring road as well as the gate of suburb villages

8) Turn Right to go along Rama II Highway (National Highway No. 35) to Bang Mod Intersection and then going along Bang Pa Kaeo canal (or Suk Sawat Soi 13) to Charoen Nakhon Road and then turn left to Bookkhalo Intersection. After Reaching Bokkhalo Intersection, going across Chao Phraya via Rama III Bridge and along Rama III inner ring road to Klong Toei (Port Authority of Thailand)

Commentary by Wisarut: There should be a station near bang Khun Thian intersection to facilitate the traveler who wants to see the Bangkok Sea with mangrove forest. The pillars for this section should be high enough so that container boats can go under the skytrain bridge. The route along Rama III Inner Ring Road is a part of Rama III extension. For the route from the mouth of Chong Nonsee canal to Klongtoei, this route will need to pass along the petroleum and gas storage depots (Shell, Exxon , and Texaco). I could not imagine what would happen if those tanks blew up during the construction or afterward. Just think about the Thai Oil Refinery blowing up a few years ago and you will see why I say so! For the section across Chao Phraya river, I would prefer an underground tunnel so as to avoid the construction of the bridge as high as Rama III Bridge.

9) Going along Rama IV and Thang Rotfai Kao Sai Paknam Road (a road that will go along the Pak Nam railway route – AKA National Highway No. 3109) to Wat Saphan Klong Toei Flea Market, Klong Toei Neighborhood (Bangkok Harlem), Phoon Sub Flea Market Bangkok University, Tanning Organization, Klong Toei District Office and Phra Khanong Canal. After that, it goes along Thang Rotfai Sai Kao (Sai Paknam) Road (AKA National Highway No. 3109) to Poo Chao Saming Phrai Road (National highway No.

3113) via Wat Saphan, Sukhumvit Soi 50 (Soi Kasem Suwan), petroleum storage depots (MOD Fuel Organization, PTT, and Bangchak), Bangchak and SCHQ Refinery, Plywood factory of Thai Plywood Co.Ltd., Glass and Battery factory of RTN, Sanphawut Intersection, RTN Naval Ordinance Dept., Samrong Canal New Samrong flea Market, and Poochao Saming Plai Intersection (a road to the pier across Chao Phraya to the downtown Phra Pradaeng). And then turning left to Sukhumvit Road (National Highway No. 3).

Commentary by Wisarut: It may necessary to make a stringent security in the station around Klong Toei to nab hoodlums and drug dealers around Klong Toei neighborhood. The construction from Phra Khanong canal to the End of Naval Ordnance (the Southern city limit of Bangkok) requires stringent safety checks due to potential hazards from the naval ammunition, petroleum, and plywood.

10) Turn left to go along Sukhumvit Road (National Highway No. 3) up to Thepharak Intersection. After that, going along Thepharak Road (National Highway No. 3268) up to Bang Plee – the end of the ring road.

Commentary by Wisarut: It would be much nicer to design the Lum Lookka, Mahachai and Bang Plee extension so that those extensions will eventually become a part of Bangkok Mass Transit Ring which will reduce much of the budget waste.

Governor Samak said this mass transit ring project is to connect Bang Plee extension and Mahachai extension to ensure daily passengers of more than 1 million. He will consider 100% private investment (with BMA subsidies and support). The ticket fee should be around 20 baht so the company will have a daily income of 20 million baht.

Commentary by Wisarut: With such a long routes, the ticket fees of 20 baht is DEFINITELY a big bargain. However, the ticket price for the whole ring route may reach 100 baht if they go around the circle and to the City Center. The maximum ticket price of 40-50 baht will be much reasonable price if they travel along the circle route and to the route outside the circle. The provincial halls and other relating companies and offices should be shareholders to ensure that the concession holders will do the best to maximize the profits.

More commentary by Wisarut: Since the Southern section of the proposed mass transit ring will have to go along Rama III Inner ring road, I expect conflicts between BMA and MRTA+OCMLT. However, I can see some solutions to prevent serious conflicts which can sink both BTSC and MRTA altogether. The resolutions could be the following steps:

- 1) Let BTSC construct Rama III extension as a part of Bangkok Ring Loop.
- 2) Reroute the proposed MRTA Blue line which will become a Ring Loop from Rama III road (Klong Toei-Rama III Bridge) to go along the 1st Stage Expressway up to the foot of Rama IX Bridge before turning right to go along Rama III inner ring road. After all, MRTA was conceived by Expressways Authority of Thailand and the Expressway Authority is now in financial trouble due to billions of US-dollars of debt which prohibits the Expressway Authority from the construction of the mass transit along the expressways.
- 3) Reroute the propose BMA Mass Transit Ring to turn right along Ratboorana Road instead to turn left along Charoen Nakhon Road and then go across Chao Phraya via Rama IX Bridge and turn right to Sadhupradit Intersection to meet with the Rama III intersection.
- 4) If possible, BMA should ask MRTA to dig the tunnel to go across Chaophraya via Rama IX Bridge and construct an interchange station between the BMA and MRTA Ring system at the foot of Rama IX Bridge.
- 5) If step 3 (above) does not work out, reroute the MRTA Blue line ring to go across Rama IX and then turn right to go along Rat Boorana and Charoen Nakhon to Bukkhalo Intersection and then turn left to Ratchadaphisek Inner Ring Road. At the same time, BTSC must reroute to go along Bang Pa Kaeo canal (or Suksawat Soi 13) and construct a new bridge across Chao Phraya at Thanon Tok Pier After that, the BMA ring system will turn right to Rama III road to connect with Rama III extension at Sadhupradit Intersection. If possible, BTSC should ask MRTA to construct a tunnel to go under the Chao Phraya and an interchange station for both mass transit rings at the beginning of Rat Boorana Road.

All the 5 steps are the only ways to deal with upcoming conflicts. Actually, there are a few more resolutions for this upcoming conflict, but they are NOT so good as those I proposed here.

Furthermore, Rama III, Machai, Lum Lookka and Bang Plee extension must be designed in a way that can be assembled and connected into BMA Mass Transit Ring to save the budget and cut down unnecessary waste

of taxpayer money. I'm a Bangkokian who has to pay tax to the government, so I have to exert my rights to ensure that any upcoming project will not become a waste of taxpayers' money like Hopewell was!

[Mass Transit News main page](#)

For Dogged Devotion to Etiquette, a Kingly Tribute

December 25, 2002

Categories: Uncategorized

[For Dogged Devotion to Etiquette, a Kingly Tribute](#) – *New York Times*, December 25, 2002

What foreigners think: The *New York Times* writes about HM The King's Tongdaeng book. *The book also has a sharper edge. It is a parable with clear messages to those who may need to hear them during a time of change and uncertainty in Thai culture and society. Throughout the 84 pages of the book, which is written in the third person in both Thai and English, just the following passage appears in bold-face type. In her abiding respect for another stray who was her wet nurse, Tongdaeng is, the king writes, "different from many others who, after having become an important personality, might treat with contempt someone of lower status who, in fact, should be the subject of gratitude."*

Somtam on a stamp

December 28, 2002



Somtam
on a stamp

– December 28, 2002

Enjoy a somtam dinner
over this long new year's
holiday!

Also: [McSomtam](#)
[at McDonalds](#)

Skytrain News 2002

December 31, 2002

Categories: Skytrain

Completing the Taksin extension – translated and summarized from *Bangkok Biznew* and *Dailynews*, December 5, 2002

Investment in Skytrain extensions

Governor Samak told the press that the government has approved in principle the investment scheme for the [Skytrain](#) extensions: the central government will invest 65% while BMA invest 35% in public sectors and BTSC will invest the rest. BMA is working on a business plan in detail to be submitted into the cabinet to obtain the money from Budget Bureau for the extensions and this plan will be delivered to BTSC creditors to enable BTSC to obtain loans.

Taksin Extension

Governor Samak also told the press that even though BMA asked STECON to readjust [Phaseecharoen Elevated Way](#) to become the Taksin extension, there will be no station near Charoen Nakorn since he considers that those who live along Charoen Nakhon can rely on ferries and feeder bus service (the stations on the Taksin extension will be at Krung Thonburi Road and another 200 meters further from the Taksin intersection). After Taksin the intersection, BMA will construct a ramp allowing the Skytrain to go down to go to Machai along Mahachai Railway in the future. However, BMA needs money from the central government to implement the ramp. The construction of the rails and station will be finished in mid 2003 and then BTSC will install the system which will be ready by the end of 2003 or early 2004. The extension to Phetkasem will be done later.

Demolishing the Ratchayothin flyover

For the case of the Skytrain Ratchayothin extension, the demolition of the Kaset flyover is a must since the line would terminate at Soi Sena Nikhom.

Taksin extension completion depends on BTS debt restructure and new loans – translated and summarized from *Thairath*, December 5, 2002 and *Than Setthakij*, December 5-7, 2002

Investment for Taksin extension

Mr. Anat (Adviser to the BTSC Board of Directors) told correspondents from *Thairath* about the progress on the Taksin extensions and that the company is waiting for the final result on the investment plan from BMA. The investment plan will be submitted to creditors to obtain the initial loan of 7 billion baht to back up the extension projects. However, the KFW and BTSC have some disputes on debt restructuring such as cutting the registered capital from about 20 billion baht to 14 billion baht, debt cuts by 5 billion baht, and debt transformation into assets. The disputes will be resolved by April 2003. If debt restructure is done, the extension project can be started. According to the plan, BMA will need to invest more on stations and rail installation in addition to the structure readjustment. BTSC will then be able to open Taksin extension in early 2004. BTSC will invest on signal and services. BTSC will use the existing rolling stock without raising the ticket prices since the extension is only 2.2 km long.

Plans for Skytrain extensions

Mr. Khiree said Hong Kong and EU investors are going to invest in BTSC extensions – 10 billion baht for new rolling stock and 10 billion baht more for more systems. There will be new bidding for extensions, but BTSC gets priority to be considered first. BTSC will fight at all costs to get all three extensions. If all three extensions are opened in the next 10 years, the daily passengers will increase by 200,000 passenger a day from the current 300,000 passenger a day (total 500,000 passengers a day). Therefore the revenue will increase by 4 million baht a day from the current 5 million baht a day.

Odds and ends

For the 10 stations with very few passengers during non rush hours, BTSC will install escalator switching to turn the escalators on only when there is a passenger going upstairs to save the energy bills. Furthermore, a Smart card system will be installed in all stations to allow MRTA to use stored value tickets and future joint

tickets can be used without

problems. The new Chao Phraya express boat will be run jointly by BTSC and Chaophraya Express Boat – it stops at 10 piers along the Chaophraya – will be started from Sathon Pier in January, 2003.

The 30-day pass, 3-day pass, and 1-day pass will be sold in banks, hotels, and tourist agencies.

BTSC's service received ISO 9001:200 by TIS (Thai Industry Standard Office), Ministry of Industry on July 12, 2002.

BTSC has rescheduled train times three times this year to fit traffic patterns during rush hours.

Four security, four CCTVs will be installed in each station (Siam Station will get 8), in addition to the current 8.

New station extension list

Samrong Extension:

E10 Bang Chak

E11 Thamma Mongkhon – near Sukhumvit 101

E12 Udomsuk – near Udomsuk

E13 Bang Na – near BITEC – the last station in the BMA (inside Bangkok city limits)

E14 Thepharak – between Samrong Nuea and Thepharak Intersection

E15 Samrong – near Erawan Shrine

Taksin Extension:

1st phase

S7 Charoen Nakhon – at the foot of Taksin Bridge not far from Charoen Nakhon

S8 Krung Thonburi – about 400 -500 meters before the Taksin intersection

S9 Taksin Intersection – 200 meter after Taksin intersection

2nd phase

S10 Talard Ploo – near Talard Ploo Intersection

S11 Southern Bangkok Terminal – in the proposed Southern Bangkok Terminal area

S12 Phetkasem – in Phetkasem Road in Bang Wah – terminal station

Ratchayothin Extension

N9 Lad Phrao Intersection – near Central Lad Phrao

N10 Ratchayothin – before reaching Ratchayothin Intersection

N11 Sena Nikhom – before reaching Soi Sena Nakhom – a terminal station

BTS to find foreign investors for extensions / Skytrain breaks 350,000 passenger a day barrier –

translated and summarized from Thairath Daily and Thaipost Daily, December 3, 2002

Mr. Khiree (BTSC CEO) told correspondents that BTSC is negotiating with investors from the EU and Hong Kong to invest in Skytrain extensions and cooperate with BMA and the government to officially start construction of extensions. Nevertheless, BTSC has to discuss debt restructure with old creditors for a IPO – after it has been postponed for a long time.

Mr. Anat (Advisor to the BTSC Board) told the press that the number of passengers has increased 28.04% in the year 2002 compared to the same period in 2001. Now, BTS is averaging 300,000 passengers a day and broke a new record with 350,977 passengers on Friday, November 29, 2002. The total number of passengers from Jan 1 – Nov 30, 2002 is 85.2 million – and the company expects that it will easily meet the target of 94.91 million passengers a year. BTSC also aims for a 10-15% increase in passengers to meet 100 million passenger a year with 330,000 passengers a day using a 30-day pass.

BTS debt restructuring and eventual IPO – Business Day, December 3, 2002

Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS), operator of Thailand's sole elevated railway system, said it expects to complete restructuring of its \$1 billion in debts within the next three months and has set a target for a public offering of shares by the fourth quarter of next year.

Cutting costs for subway extensions by 20% – BMCL will run the extension while MRTA will operate

the existing segments – translated and summarized from *Manager Daily*, November 13, 2002

MRTA is cutting the construction costs for 36-billion baht Southern Extension of the subway by about 20% (about 2 billion baht) by reducing the number of platform levels to enable tunnel construction without having to dig very deep. Once costs are finalized, MRTA will submit the new plan to Premier Thaksin. Earlier, MOF and Thaksin told MRTA to cut construction costs by 30%.

Now it is up to the government to push the extension project forward even though the cost cutting is not reaching the 30% level yet. Minister Suriya told the press that he will definitely push the Subway Extension project forward since rail transportation in Thailand can carry only 3% causing traffic jams in major cities and the loss of lots of money for oil– compared to Japan where 70% of transportation is rail mass transit system.

MRTA Governor Praphat told the press about the progress on the 14-km Subway Southern extension (Hua Lamphong – Bang Khae). He said MRTA has submitted the plan to the Office of Cabinet Secretariat and after that it would go to the cabinet.

MRTA has to reduce the number of platform levels (which are now 3-5) to something less. The level reduction has no detrimental effect on services since some services can be pushed to the ground level.

The extension is 14-km long, has 10 stations and a park and ride facility near The Mall (Bang Khae).

Initially, the price tag for civil work was about 36.387 billion baht, but now it is about 34 billion baht. For the case of the private concession, BMCL will run the service and the new rolling stocks on the extension – with a reciprocal contract with MRTA that BMCL will freeze the ticket price to the current level while BMCL will not pay a dividend to MRTA. The dividend payment to MRTA will be discussed later. The price freeze on the extension will help to attract more passengers since MRTA has cut down the estimation for the 1st section from 460,000 passenger a day to 240,000 passengers a day. The extension will increase the number of passenger by 150,000 passenger a day.

Even though the full Southern extension will end up at Bang Khae, MRTA has to end it at Bang Wah instead (4.9 km underground from Hua Lamphong to Tha Phra) so as to fit into the government budget, and the first section of the Southern extension has to be an underground system. Only the 2nd section will be an above-ground skytrain. MRTA told the press that MRTA will use the ‘Design & Build’ process to construct the subway system since a subway project is very tedious work and has lots of risks.

Contractors will have to take the risk in the case of a ‘Design and Build’ process while the ‘Detail Design’ process (favored by NESDB and MOF) will push the burden onto MRTA and the government’s shoulders.

Even though the opponents of ‘Design & Build’ have pointed out the example of the 6.2 billion baht Bangna-Bang Pakong Expressway Scandal, Governor Praphat said the problem in that case was because of land transfer from the Highway Dept to ETA, not the ‘Design & Build’ process.

Minster Suriya said he will push the extension project forward since Thailand use rail transport only 3% of all land transportation while Japan use rail transport 70% of all land transportation. Therefore, government has to allocate more money to handle building more rail system.

Commentary: Years ago, parents of Minister Suriya, who made their fortunes in the automobile business, lobbied hard for the government not to construct any mass transit system at all–be it subway and skytrain. Therefore many observers feel skeptical that Minister Suriya will be a man of action in mass transit policy.

More Escalators for Skytrain Stations – translated and summarized from *Thairath*, November 12, 2002

BTSC is going to add six more escalators – 1 each for Ari, Thong Lor, Chong Nonsee, and Surasak stations. Two for Ploenchit. The total budget is 77 million baht – 72 million for the escalators and the other 5 million for installation costs. The installation of escalators will be finished by the end of June 2003. BTSC is also going to install roofs to cover the escalators at the following stations: Mochit, Ari, Victory Monument, Ratchathewee, Saladaeng, Thong Lor, Ekkamai, and Phra Khanong. The escalators at Mochit and Ari will be covered right away. The other six will be started in January 2003 and all escalators in the eight stations will be covered by the end of April 2003.

New holding firm proposed to speed Skytrain extensions – *Bangkok Post*, November 14, 2002

BTSC is also attempting to complete the restructuring of 35 billion baht in debt. The BMA has yet to come up with firm details on the skytrain extension and its possible financial participation.

Calling bids for the Skytrain extensions – Contractors claim ITD-UNIC already a secret winner – translated and summarized from *Prachachart Thurakij*, October 28, 2002.

BMA is preparing for the bidding for the Samrong extension of the Skytrain by the end of 2002. The contract will be a turnkey project. The price for the 8.9-km extension is 8.3 billion baht. The Samrong extension will be divided into 2 sections. BMA is checking on the TOR draft. There is also speculation that ITD-UNIC will be the winner. Real-estate investors have been gobbling up land along the extension route.

The extensions

City Hall Correspondents received a statement from City Hall that BMA will call a bid for Skytrain extension after getting cabinet approval.

- 1) Onnut – Samrong 8.9 km, 8.3 billion baht
- 2) Taksin – Phetkasem 4.5 km, 2.3 billion baht (Saphan Taksin – Taksin Intersection is handled by BMA and Sino-Thai Engineering and Consultant PCL-STECON)
- 3) Mochit – Ratchayothin 2.7 km, 2.6 billion baht

BMA and the consultant company are checking the TOR draft. BMA states that the public section will invest 65% on civil works while the private sector covers the rest. According the plan, it will be start in 2003 which means BMA will have to finish the bidding to get contractors to handle the project. Presently BMA has allocated 1 billion baht for the extension.

It is not clear if the bid winner will get all three lines– it is up to the consultant to make a decision.

Details of the extensions

Onnut-Samrong will have to be executed first so as to alleviate the traffic along Sukhumvit Road.

The Samrong extension will be divided into two sections so that the contractors will be able to handle the project without financial problems. The route will go along Sukhumvit Road up to the Eravan Shrine.

For the case of the Taksin – Phetkasem section, BMA will use the structure of Phaseecharoen elevated way constructed by Sino-Thai Engineering and Consultant PCL. So far, Sino-Thai is handling from the end of S6 station to Taksin Intersection. However, BMA may not see the urgency to construct from Taksin Intersection to Phetkasem (Bang Wah).

For Mochit-Ratchayothin, BMA will have to study the feasibility about the route. Even though there are lots of potential customers along Ratchyothin extension, it is quite hard to to construct due to the Ladphrao Flyover. The Ratchayothin extension will go along Phaholyothin Road up to Ratchayothin Intersection and the have a U-turn.

There are lots of investors calling BMA to inquire about the number of stations, the routes, and many have bought land for speculation. BMA has said the distance between stations will be about 2 km.

Secret deals?

BMA said there must be some misunderstanding about the collusion between STECON and BMA. BMA has not designed the routes yet. Some BMA officers want to exploit the projects, by calling the 7-8 major contractors to discuss the project and then use this opportunity to solicit kickbacks to get the contract. However, the contractors refuse to pay for the officers, so they told the press (such as *Manager Daily*) that there is collusion between BMA and STECON.

According to sources from contractors, insiders have concluded an internal agreement that they will let ITD and UNIC handle the project, but ITD and UNIC must make another agreement about which one will handle which section. There are only a few contractors which have ability to handle such projects such as ITD, STECON, UNIC, Civil, KPV, and Ch. Karnchang. So far, most of them have financial problems, and creditors may refuse to grant a loan to handle the project.

Controversy and accusations over Skytrain Extension – translated and summarized from "Taksin Extension: Messy Skytrain Extension – BMA Recklessly Adopting Specifications to Please Sino-Thai" – *Manager Weekly*, October 18-25, 2002)

BMA is allocating about 15 billion baht to implement the Taksin and Samrong extensions.

For the case of the Taksin Extension, it will be allocated as follows:

- 1) Phaseecharoen Elevated way – 675.95 million baht
 - 2) the Construction of 2 stations – 453.45 million baht
 - 3) Rail system installation – 660 million baht
 - 4) Signals – 1,548 million baht
- Total: 2,661.40 million baht

The construction will start from the end of Saphan Taksin Station (S6) to go across Charoen Nakhon Road

and go along Krung Thonburi Road and end up at Taksin Intersection. The pillars will be on the 14-meter-wide island in the middle of Krung Thonburi Road.

However, the way BMA and Sino-Thai development are handling the project is abnormal since BMA refuses to make any environmental assessment on the routes, thus, BMA cannot call a new bid in regular matter. When BMA tried to play around with turnkey project, BMA found that turnkey projects require cabinet approval. Therefore, BMA and Sino-Thai just ordered the construction materials to modify Phaseecharoen Elevated Way without any oversight.

The even worse—BMA and Sino-Thai decided to use Box Girders instead of Segmental Box Girders (which were used by Italian-Thai Development on the 1st phase of the Skytrain).

Even though the Box Girder process is cheaper than Segmental Box Girders, it has many weak points which can override the price advantage.

(1) Box Girder process cannot be applied to roads with high traffic volume since Box Girder process has detrimental effect on the safety of people and cars which go under construction sites.

(2) If BMA insists to apply Box Girder process instead Segmental Box Girder on Samrong extension as Deputy Governor Sahat has, BMA and Sino-Thai have to close at least two lanes of road from Onnut to Sarong Tai. Even OCMLT strongly opposes BMA when they knew that BMA would use Box Girders on Samrong extension to save money.

(3) Box Girder process will obstruct the view since Box Girder requires a 25-meter space between 2 pillars while Segmental Box Girder requires 50-meter space between 2 pillars.

(4) Box Girder process uses only 1 support pillar and the pillars to be used are without a pile cap on the top. Therefore, the pillars have much less ability to absorb stress-strain from traffic and may not be as earthquake-proof as the old sections which use Segmental Box Girder process. Segmental Box Girder process has 4-6 support pillars for each pillar and each pillar has a pile cap, so the pillars are strong enough to handle the stress and strain, and may even be earthquake proof. After all, the old sections are built to last for 100 years.

(5) It is impossible to change the direction of Box Girder segments to go around utilities – on the ground or underground. On the other hand, the multiple support pillars of Segmental Box Girder allows the contractors to move pillars out of the way of utilities.

(6) It is impossible to control the quality of concrete molded on the construction sites when they use Box Girder process. Even worse, the heavy machines are needed to implement Box Girder process, thus obstructing the traffic lanes.

On the other hand, those who use Segmental Box Girder process will mold the concrete (to make a station, and the concrete track) in a factory where it is much easier to maintain quality control. Even better, concrete produced by Segmental Box Girder process can be installed within 1 night and the traffic lanes can be returned back to normal by the next day.

Even BMA received strong opposition from OCMLT about the construction process, but Deputy Governor Sahat and assistance secretary Theeraphol insist that BMA have done the right thing to save construction cost.

Manager Magazine correspondents contend that Deputy Governor Sahat and assistant secretary Theeraphol might receive kickbacks from Sino-Thai so they will support the way SinoThai is going to handle the extension project even though Sino-Thai still in financial rehabilitation. Manager Magazine further states that if Deputy Governor Sahat did not take a bribe from Sino-Thai, the decision is reckless and careless and probably due to budget austerity imposed by the economic hard times. (translated and summarized from "Taksin Extension: Messy Skytrain Extension – BMA Recklessly Adopting Specifications to Please Sino-Thai" – *Manager Weekly*, October 18-25, 2002)

Political vendettas doom Skytrain extensions – translated and summarized – *Matichon*, September 17, 2002

The Ministry of the Interior previously submitted a proposal from BMA about plans for Skytrain extensions which stated that BMA and the public sector will handle civil works while BTSC or the private sector will handle additional rolling stock and services. The private sector would receive an investment privilege from BOI in the same way as BTSC did originally.

However, the Project Investment Committee had turned down the proposal by emphasizing that investment by BMA and the public sector is in violation of Article 2.2 of the Cabinet Resolution of February 29, 2000.

Article 2.2 states that: "According to the Concession between BMA and BTSC, the concession holder MUST make a 100% investment on the initial project and extensions."

The only possible ways to get around this problem are:

- 1) Easier credit, public underwriting for new loans, and financial stimulation of BTSC to render 100% private investment possible
- 2) A new cabinet resolution to override the previous resolution of February 29, 2002 so as to allow BMA and public sector to handle the project

Commentary by Ron: This development is seen to effectively prevent Skytrain extensions...

Commentary: The political vendetta between Ch. Karnchang PCL (a company behind the Skytrain) and the government has put many critical projects on hold: the S1 expressway, consultants for the second airport (to finish the terminal design), and even BMCL concessions for the [subway](#). Ch. Karnchang PCL wholeheartedly supports the Democrat Party (political archrivals of the Thai Rak Thai Party).

Commentary by Ron: Here is an [article](#) from *Prachacart Thurakij* from about a year and a half ago that hints on the same frustrations over Skytrain extensions. These political vendettas are well-reported in the Thai-language press, but are not much covered in the English-language press. *The Bangkok Post* story about the rejection of Skytrain extensions only mentioned that the *Bangkok Metropolitan Administration told to come up with a more concrete feasibility study*...

Commentary: Several ministers in the Thaksin cabinet have automobiles as a family business (Minister Suriya is a good example). Even worse, some of them (the Premier included) have a prejudice against mass transit systems. The freezing of the railway link between downtown Bangkok and NBIA is a good example.

Commentary by Ron: The railway to the [new airport](#) was killed last week: [*Thaksin told the press that NBIA does not need to rush on the construction of a mass transit system linking NBIA with downtown BKK due to the fact that there will be an 8-lane highway with no traffic lights.*](#)

[Skytrain extensions still going nowhere](#) – *Bangkok Post*, September 16, 2002

A planned extension to the skytrain has made little headway, with Bangkok Metropolitan Administration told to come up with a more concrete feasibility study....Routes from Onnuj to Samrong (8.9 km), Saphan Taksin to Taksin Road (2.7km) and Mo Chit to Ratchayothin junction were approved in principle last January.

[Keep laying Skytrain tracks](#) – Editorial from the *Bangkok Post*, September 15, 2002

Last week an article in the Post described the debt problems faced by the privately owned BTS system. BTS owes about 35 billion baht to international and Thai creditors, only about a quarter of which is now being serviced. It is now in the process of restructuring the debt repayment schedule.

Building the Skytrain bridge across the Chao Phraya – translated and summarized – *Thairath*, September 2, 2002

Sana Tothong (Deputy BMA City Clerk) said that contractors have finished testing bridge pillars supporting the Skytrain extension. All of the 26 small pillars are in very good shape, ready to carry 6.5 kiloton of weight for each. Now, the contractors are knocking cement out of the bridge pillars before pouring new cement on the Sathorn Bridge in early September 2002. The concrete pillars at Sathorn Bridge will be 11-meters high. BMA is warning those who go along Sathorn Bridge to use other bridges (e.g. Rama III Bridge and Bangkok Bridge). Furthermore, BMA have a PR campaign to tell Bangkokians about the day when the Skytrain bridge will be done. There is very little chance of having a head-on collision between automobile and a Skytrain since Sathorn Bridge (AKA Saphan Taksin) will have concrete fences between the lanes. Furthermore, there will be a 2.50 meter wide space as a buffer to prevent any accident.

More Skytrains starting August 30

Silom Line: 7.00-7.30am, the train will run every 4 minutes; 7.30-8.30am, every 3.30 mins; 8.30-9.00am, every 4 mins; 4.00-4.30pm, every 4.20 mins; 4.30-6.30pm, every 4 mins; and 6.30-8.00pm, every 4.20 mins.
Sukhumvit Line: 7.00-7.30am, every 4 mins; 7.30-8.30am, every 3 mins; 8.30-9.00am, every 4 mins; and 4.00-8.00pm every 3.20 mins.

BMA and government planning 50-50 investment in BTSC extensions – translated and summarized – *Dailynews & Thairath*, August 16, 2002

Governor Samak boasts that PM Thaksin agreed with him that the public investment for BTSC extension is necessary – 80% public investment on civil work and track laying (50% from the central government and 50% from BMA) and 20% from the private sector (BTSC – Siemens) on services and new rolling stock. BMA is working on the bridge from Saphan Taksin Station to Charoen Nakhon Intersection. For the case of 21-billion-baht Suvannabhum extension, BMA needs to expropriate and demolish about 17 blocks of commercial buildings along Sukhumvit Road and Onnut Road. For the case of the 82-km BKK Ring Railway, it will have a price tag of 41 billion baht – with branches to Mahachai – Samut Prakarn Crocodile Farm and Lam Lookka. Details will be submitted to the cabinet in the next 2 weeks.

[Skytrain doomed without debt restructure](#) – *Business Day*, August 6, 2002

Skytrain updates from Thai-language papers – translated and summarized – *Matichon Daily*, August 5, 2002

Elevated walkways

Ratchaprasong Shopping Street (a new viaduct connecting Chitlom Station with Kesorn Plaza, Amarin Plaza, and Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel) opened for service. Amarin Development and GS Property Management Co. Ltd. made a joint venture investment of 50 million baht for the elevated walkway so as to support the tourist policy of the government and BMA. Ratprasong Development will handle the maintenance of the via duct. Ratprasong Shopping Street is the 12th elevated walkway connecting Skytrain with the commercial buildings – after the previous 11 via ducts ...

Station	Buildings
National Stadium	MBK and Tokyu
Ploenchit	Wave Place
Saladaeng	Silom Complex Chitlom – Central Chitlom, Bhanunee Building, and a building nearby
Siam	Siam Center
Ratchathewee	Asia Hotel
Phromphongse	The Emporium
Onnut	Tesco Lotus (Onnut)

Average daily passengers

The Skytrain now has an average daily passenger of 300,000 passengers a day (the current highest record is now standing at 337,275 passengers a day).

More updates from Thai-language papers – translated and summarized from *Manager Daily*, August 3, 2002 & *Bangkok Biznews*, August 3, 2002

Debt restructure

BTSC is speeding up the US\$ 800-million debt restructure to be finished by the end of 2002 so as to attract more foreign investors in additional to Siemens (Thailand) Co.Ltd. and other German firms.

BTSC expects revenue for 2002 will be 2 billion baht – 50-70% up from the 2001's revenue of 1.5 billion baht. BTSC has received 1 billion baht for the first 6 months (January-June 2002) from tickets, space renting, and advertising, so the 2 billion baht target is not too far to reach at all.

Daily revenue is about 6 million baht while the daily interest payment is about 8 million baht.

BTSC has signed contracts with creditors that BTSC is obligated to pay 25% (fluctuating up to 30% or down to 20% depending on the daily exchange rate) of daily interest payments (at 2 million baht a day). The US\$800 million baht debt is not considered a non-performing debt (NPL) at all since BTSC could pay the interest back to the creditors.

After the creditors have approved the debt restructure plan, BTSC will offer an IPO on SET (Stock Exchange of Thailand) even though BTSC expected that the creditors will cooperate with BTSC on the debt restructure plan and invite more foreign investors. BTSC also is negotiating with Siemens (Thailand) (a major shareholder, member of BTSC Board of Directors, and major creditor of BTSC) about the debt restructure as well as the extensions. The plan will be delivered to the Central Bankruptcy Court on August 9, 2002.

Adding more trains to the routes

After hearing complaints about the crowded Skytrain, BTSC decided to shorten the waiting interval from 5 minutes to 3 minutes for the Sukhumvit line to carry more passengers—expected to be 400,000 passengers a day—starting early August 2002. To shorten the waiting period, BTSC has to use all a few more sets of rolling stock from the reserve instead of the current 28 sets of rolling stocks (7 sets for the reserve—a total of 35 sets).

Extensions

For the three extensions (Samrong, Taksin, Ratchayothin), BTSC has to ask BMA about this matter, even though BMA and BTSC have to get new cabinet approval to override the older cabinet decisions on the matter.

Connecting to the subway

For [MRTA \(subway\)](#) connection, BTSC and MRTA plan to install escalators connecting Skytrain and Subway together at Mochit, Asok and Saladaeng. After that, joint tickets will be issued ... with the new rates, of course.

After via duct at Ratchaprasong is opened for service, the 13th via duct will connect Saphan Taksin and Shangri La Hotel together. However, the Bridge across Chaophraya must be done first before the construction of the 13th via duct can be started.

Now, BTSC has already offered 1-day pass (100 Baht), 3-Day pass (280-Baht), 3 tourist service centers at Siam, Saphan Taksin and Nana, and jointed with Chaophraya Express Boat Co.Ltd. to offer a 780-Baht package tour (food and guide included) along the river, starting at Saphan Taksin to Wat Arun, Royal Barge Museum, Sumen Fort, and so on.

BMA also plan to construct the connection between BITEC and Bangna Station (of Samrong extension) and set up a park and ride facility at BITEC with the monthly rent of 1000 baht a car. This will increase the revenue for BITEC by 10 million baht a month.

For the case of Suvannabhum extension along Onnut Road, BMA trying to push very hard despite of strong disapproval from OCMLT and SRT.

Skytrain extensions require approval from seven ministries – translated and summarized – *Matichon Daily*, July 26, 2002

Dr. Bhijit Rattakul (former BMA Governor) has delivered a letter to Premier Thaksin that the government should be decentralized even more rigorously since BMA cannot wait for the approval for Skytrain extensions from at least seven ministry levels of the central government. Even the BKK Ring Railway has been stalled after 10 months due to red tape at the ministry levels. It is beyond tolerable to be back to square one every time BMA tries to get approval for Skytrain extensions. The 1 billion baht rule in the Joint venture Act causes delays on the extension projects many times. Therefore, the central government should grant immediate approvals for extension projects even though the projects will start on a one-by-one basis.

Skytrain Insider Info: Taksin Station Fate – 07:37, July 19, 2002

From an anonymous BTS insider: *I have just confirmed that the Saphan Taksin station will not be torn down, and that the space issue will be dealt with quite simply: The two rails will converge into one, and the opposite-moving trains will take turns using it. Just like a single-lane car bridge with a signal light. Delays will be minimal, under half a minute probably. So Saphan Taksin station is safe—it's an elegant solution that should make everyone happy. And a "rumor only:" new skybridges are being planned for Asoke station to connect to Robinson and the Sheraton, probably early 2003.*

Thonburi Skytrain bridge – July 18, 2002

On Glimpse of Thailand at cityrain.com, there is a [photo](#) of the work at Taksin Bridge to extend the Skytrain line across the Chao Phraya River. There's only one photo now—more will be added soon.

BTSC Suvannabhum Extension vs. SRT High Speed Train to NBIA

Governor Samak says BMA is not a slave of OCMLT so BMA has the right to make its own decision

Matichon, July 9, 2002

Governor Samak told the press on July 8, 2002 at the City Hall that he will push the NBIA Extension (Onnut – NBIA) via Onnut road at all costs since the distance from Onnut to NBIA is 20 km and easy to construct, requiring a 21 billion baht investment.

BMA has a duty to implement mass transit projects while OCMLT has a duty to plan. BMA is not a slave of OCMLT, so BMA has full rights to implement the project on its own. If the government approves the BMA project, BMA could implement the plan immediately.

For the case of the OCMLT decision to approve the SRT High Speed Train to be a rail link to NBIA which will be submitted to the cabinet instead of the Skytrain extension, Governor Samak told the press that the cabinet has not made the final decision yet. However, BMA has an opinion that the Skytrain extension is easier to construct than the SRT Elevated railway due to the fact that Onnut station is 20 km from NBIA. BMA expects that the budget will be 21 billion baht.

After connecting to NBIA, BMA and BTSC will use Skytrain with large luggage racks installed. There will be no need for taxi or bus connections. BMA has named NBIA extension as "Suvannabhum Express." Samak contends of laypersons listen to the project details comparing BTSC Skytrain and SRT High speed railway, they'll see that Suvannabhum Express is much more useful than a high speed train.

The details of the project will be published in second year anniversary book of Governor Samak to be presented to the press on July 26, 2002.

What will happen to Taksin Station? – 04:26, June 29, 2002

Wesley Hsu writes: *Kudos again for posting regular updates on infrastructure news—no one else does! Anyway I was wondering whether the new approved extension to Wong Wian Yai means that BTS is definitely tearing down the Taksin station so that two tracks can squeeze through the bridge. I recall some controversy over this a year ago. The Taksin station is quite popular, and they're now building a new big pier below it to accommodate the increase in boat traffic which has partly resulted from the presence of the BTS connection. Furthermore, according to the posted boards, the Taksin Pier is now renamed CENTRAL PIER on the CP Express route, indicating that indeed it is being packaged as the interchange hub that has become.*

Skytrain extension to NBIA via Onnut rejected

"Sprinter" train for Hopewell Pillars

Matichon, July 3, 2002

Khamroperux told BMA about the reasons why OCMLT refuses to approve the Skytrain extension to [NBIA](#) via Onnut. He explained that the abandoned pillars of Hopewell project will become a High Speed Train (actually the Sprinter) which has a minimum cost to construct while creating international-standard services.

Khamroperux Suratsawadee (Deputy Director of the Office of the Secretariate, Mass Transit Subcommittee, OCMLT) said OCMLT has issued a resolution on July 2, 2000 that the NBIA rail link must be a SRT high speed train (a Sprinter train which will have three air-conditioned bogeys and soft armchairs for passengers).

The Sprinter is favored because:

- 1) A SRT high speed train link has the lowest cost – no need for the land expropriation -> just evict those who live along the Eastern railway and set up a new home for them at either Lad Krabang or Rangsit
- 2) 20-km distance from Makkasan to NBIA by Eastern railway -> a short distance from downtown
- 3) 40-km from Donmuang Airport to NBIA by Northern and Eastern railway is a very suitable distance -> 30-minute trip from NBIA to Donmuang with a speed of 160-180 km/hr (100-120 km/hr for Sprinter)
- 4) SRT plans to set up a City Air Terminal (New Makkasan Station) with an Immigration Office as well as other facilities such as MRTA subway at Phetburi station, Eastern bus terminal, ticket confirmation at City Air Terminal, luggage transportation by rail and so on.

Khamroperux said that OCMLT and SRT will submit the plan to the cabinet which will definitely be approved due to the low budget. OCMLT also asks for the government to grant a budget supporting the project, and requests that the NBIA Board of Directors readjust the main terminal to accept the railway system which has been approved by the NBIA Board.

The route will follow the Northern and Eastern Railway -> Elevated from Donmuang to Bangsue and then going to ground level from Bangsue (actually Samsen to Phayathai or Uthongse-Yommaraj). After that, the line will be elevated from Phayathai to Klongtan and go at the ground level to Lad Krabang before going into a tunnel to NBIA. The first phase will start from Makkasan to NBIA.

OCMLT said the Skytrain extension has to follow Bangna-Trat Highway so as to feed the 2nd and 3rd terminal of NBIA in the future (at least 20 years after opening NBIA) since the SRT rail link as well as road connections from Bangkok-Chonburi Motorway, Bangna-Chonburi Expressway, the connection at Onnut Road, Kingkeo Road, and Romklao Road will provide adequate services for NBIA, so there is no immediate need for a Skytrain which requires at least 50 billion baht to implement.

Commentary: OCMLT and SRT want to turn Makkasan into the Eastern Bangkok Transportation Center, so the rail link along Eastern railway is approved. BTSC better join the bandwagon by setting up a feeder bus (and later on a feeder Skytrain) from Phayathai to Hua Mark since the SRT highspeed railway will refuse to stop at the stations other than Donmuang, Bangsue, Makkasan, Hua Mark and NBIA (some express links will only stop at Donmuang and NBIA).

The level of the elevated railway must be reduced by Chitlada Palace from 3 floors to 2 floors, another unresolved issue.

Two choices for the Taksin Extension to be submitted–BTS leasing BMA tracks or BMA renting Skytrain rolling stock from BTSC

Thairath, July 3, 2002

Director Praphon Wongsewichain stated that the BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau has submitted the project to construct Skytrain extensions to the Ministry of Interior to be approved by the cabinet. The project will allow the public sector to handle civil works while the private sector handles the service. The 8.9-km Samrong extension requires 8.38932 billion baht while 2.2 km Taksin extension requires 1.11344 billion baht.

According to the 2003 budget, the Traffic Bureau receives 740 million baht to handle the project. If the project is approved, BMA Traffic Bureau will call a bid and start the construction of Taksin and Samrong extensions without delay.

The Phaseecharoen elevated way was constructed in 1999, but BMA readjusted the route to become the Taksin extension. BMA said the Taksin extension will be done and opened for service in July 2004. BMA and BTSC have discussed the plan for opening the Taksin extension. There will be 2 choices for opening the service of Taksin extension:

- 1) BMA rents Skytrain rolling stock to pick up passengers
- 2) BTSC rents the rails and land from BMA

However, they have not concluded the deal yet since they will make a study about the choice which will satisfy both the BMA Traffic Bureau and BTSC, the price to pay, the facilitation for passengers to and from Thonburi. After finishing the study, BMA Traffic Bureau will conclude the study and submit the results to BMA.

Two Skytrain extensions awaiting cabinet approval

Dailynews, July 2, 2002

Praphon Wongsewichain (Director of BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau) told City Hall correspondents that BMA is going to submit the plan for the Taksin and Samrong Extensions to the Cabinet this week so as to override the Cabinet resolution of February 29, 2000. The previous cabinet resolution stated that BTSC must invest 100% on the approved extensions on their own (or with other private sectors if the company could not invest on their own). The existing resolution (by former PM Chuan and his party) forced the company to suspend the extension project.

This new plan will allow the public sector to participate in the extension project–80% public investment on civil works and rails, and 20% private investment on signals, systems, and rolling stock. For the public sector investment, 65% will be handled by the central government (52%) while BMA will handle the other 35% (28%) and BTSC handle the other 20%.

According to the plan, the 2.2km-Taksin Extension requires a 1.113 billion baht investment while the 8.9km-Samrong extension requires a 8.389 billion baht investment. So far, BMA has invested 242 million baht on the Skytrain bridge across Chaopraya and the readjustment of the Phaseecharoen elevated road into Taksin extension (from Saphan Taksin Station to Wat Ang Kaeo).

BTSC has issued a letter stating that BTSC will allow BMA to invest on the project if creditors refuse to grant more loans. The creditors said they refused to cut BTSC debts owed since they see the investment potential of the Skytrain and they do not consider the debts BTSC owes as Non-performing Loan (NPL). The creditors said they will continue granting more loans to BTSC if BMA and the central government decides to invest in the extensions since they see that BMA and the central government will do their best to bail BTSC out of trouble. The creditors also saw that the Skytrain will reach a limit on the number of daily passengers at 290,000-300,000 despite strong campaigns to boost the number of passengers– e.g. 1-day pass (20 trips – 100 baht), 3-day pass (40 trip-280 baht), Sunday Tour along Chaophraya and Grand Palace, 30-day pass (10, 15, and 30 trips for students and adults).

BMA insists that NBIA extension must go along Onnut Road

Dailynews, July 1, 2002

Praphon Wongsewichain (Director of BMA Traffic and Transportation Bureau) told City Hall correspondents (after receiving the message from OCMLT about the rejection of the Skytrain extension to NBIA via Onnut Road) that BMA considers the [NBIA](#) extension along Onnut Road the best route available.

Praphon pointed out that the 20-km NBIA extension along Onnut road requires "only" 21 billion baht investment and this route is very easy to construct. The NBIA extension along the Eastern Railway is quite hard to implement since SRT is running out of cash due to the fact that SRT is burdened with heavy debts–no cash to pay PTT PCL (Petroleum Thailand PCL) for diesel fuel and lubrication. There are also legal problems about the eviction of those who live in slums as well as those who lease the land along the Eastern railway–especially at RCA, and the SRT labor union will oppose the plan to evict them outright by SRT board. SRT will have to start from the scratch even though SRT can use the leftover pillars at Klongtan Station -> 80% public investment and 20% private investment -> with at least a 30 billion baht price tag .

The Skytrain extension to NBIA along Bang Na-Trat Highway (according to the OCMLT master plan of 1995) is very hard to implement since the Bang Na-Chonburi Expressway has already consumed much of the space needed put Skytrain pillars on. This extension also requires an investment of at least 30 billion baht to realize it .

The BMA Traffic Bureau has submitted the plan for Skytrain Extensions (Taksin and Samrong) to the City Hall to be signed by the BMA Governor and BMA City Clerk. After that, BMA will submit the plan to the cabinet for the final approvals. This plan will allow BMA and the Central government to invest on Skytrain extensions.

Commentary: If BMA insists on the NBIA routes along Onnut Road, BMA should discuss with SRT as well as NBIA Board about the tunnel and the train station since NBIA and SRT has not included the Skytrain into a consideration for the tunnel construction under NBIA Main Terminal. Do not forget that SRT uses the meter gauge rail while Skytrain uses the standard gauge (1.435 meter gauge) so it is impossible to use the

same tunnel. They would need to construct another tunnel for the Skytrain in addition to the SRT Railway to NBIA.

Skytrain extension news!

Summarized and translated – *Thairath Daily*, June 28, 2002 & *Bangkok Biznews*, 15:50, June 28, 2002

Completing the Taksin Extension by June 2004

Praphon Wongsewichian (Director of BMA Traffic Bureau) told the press that BMA has hired Sino-Thai to construct the [Skytrain](#) Taksin extension from Saphan Taksin Station to the beginning of Phaseecharoen Elevated Road with a price tag of 242 million baht. Sino-Thai has moved to the base of Sathorn Bridge to construct pillars to support the Skytrain bridge. The pillar will have a V-Shape structure so as to fit into the structure of Sathorn Bridge. BMA also asked Sino-Thai to move all equipment and construction materials by boats so as to prevent traffic jams. Taksin Extension will start from Saphan Taksin station and run to Wongwian Yai Railway station. BMA hopes that Taksin extension will be done by the end of June 2004.

Extension of the Taksin line beyond Wongwian Yai on hold

Even though the pillars for the Skytrain reach to Ratchadaphisek Ring Road (Tha Phra), BMA decided not to construct the extension to that point since the cabinet has not approved the extension from Taksin Intersection to Bang Wah (Phetkasem Road) yet. OCMLT and BMA are also still negotiating over the terminal station for the second phase of the Taksin extension (beyond Wongwian Yai Railway Station) and whether it should terminate at Wat Ang Kaeo Primary School (Phetkasem Road) or the Skytrain should connect with [MRTA Subway](#) Southern extension (Hua Lamphong – Tha Phra – Bang Kae).

Onnut Road extension rejected

OCMLT has turned down the NBIA extension (to the new airport) via Onnut Road since this extension has very low potential and SRT could revive the [Hopewell project](#) to construct the elevated railways from Bangsue to NBIA via the Eastern railway lines (Makkasan station). Nevertheless, OCMLT will invite BMA to explain why OCMLT refuses to accept the NBIA extension via Onnut Road.

The three other extensions

OCMLT will ask BMA to speed up plans for the three Skytrain extensions to be approved by Traffic Committee and the cabinet:

- 1) Onnut – Samrong (Samrong extension)
- 2) Saphan Taksin – Woangwian Yai – Phetkasem (Taksin extension) and
- 3) Mochit – Ratchayothin (Phaholyothin extension)

Getting around the private investment rule

Even though the first two extensions were approved by the cabinet in 2000, the new approvals will override cabinet resolutions to allow BMA and the government to invest on Skytrain extensions in the same way as the MRTA subway project operates. The third extension (Phaholyothin extension) is a substitute for the Rama III extension since the development of the Rama III area is in decline due to economic downturn and the large traffic volume on Paholyothin road. BMA will be asked to draft a construction plan and budget for all three Skytrain extensions to be submitted to the Traffic Committee so as to change from 100% private investment to 80% public investment on civil works and 20% private investment on rolling stock and systems (BTSC is running out of cash and their creditors have encouraged BTSC to ask the government to bail them out of trouble). Once the plan is complete, it will be submitted to the cabinet.

Commentary: Taksin extension has started and I hope that it will be done on schedule so that BTS will have bargaining power to negotiate with MRTA about the ticket rates connecting the two systems.

I hope that BTSC and OCMLT will choose to connect the Skytrain and subway into a single system at Bang Wah for convenience in the long run even though it is more expensive than terminating at Wat Ang Kaeo. The extension to Ratchayothin is indeed very good. Ratchayothin station will become an interchange station in the future if the cabinet approves the line from SCB Park Plaza to Samrong via Lad Phrao Road, Sri Nakharin Road and Thepharak Road. People around Chokchai 4 Road and Bang Kapi are desperate for a Skytrain extension along Lad Phrao Road.

Skytrain is still the system to beat

I refer to a letter in Postbag, June 10: “Skytrain is going rapidly downhill” by “A Skytrain Freak”, and “What was brilliant is now badly timed” by Christian Lloyd. First, the reference to the Kanjanapas family: Khun Keeree Kanjanapas has been the driving force behind the Skytrain project and as CEO, he is committed to operating and maintaining the system to world-class standards.

The statement that “the rails are loosening” is not correct. BTSC is maintained to the highest standards by Siemens with a combined foreign and Thai maintenance team. Regarding the rocking motion experienced between Siam and Chitlom, regular users of the system will note that due to the slight curve in the track there is a sideways motion. The swaying motion of the train has been present since the railway’s opening and is completely safe; this is normal and not due to poor maintenance.

With regard to the view that BTS is becoming overcrowded “Tokyo-stuff in the morning”, passenger density in the “peak-of-the-peak” at the busiest period between 8:00-8:15am in the most crowded section is only about half that of the busy sections in Hong Kong and Tokyo metros. BTSC is monitoring passenger loading levels very carefully to ensure that standards of comfort are maintained. In fact we have, and will, continue to increase the number of trains each hour to meet demand.

Our daily records show that the average for the peak hour in May was 65% of capacity or 3.25 passengers/square metre (p/m²). Most metros in Asia (including Hong Kong and Japan) have peak hour loading standards of 6-7 p/m².

Skytrain Freak’s opinion that “a typical metro train length in Europe and America is perhaps 20 cars long” is incorrect. Metro train lengths range from 3-9 cars. A 20-car train is not possible as it would mean stations up to five hundred metres in length, more than three times the size of BTS stations. In fact, shorter trains operating more frequently deliver a better service than longer trains operating less frequently; that is, short trains operate at three-minute intervals whereas a longer train could only operate at 10-minute intervals.

The view that there is “drastically limited technical competence of Thai companies, since the owners are not willing to pay” could not be further from the truth, based on my 30 years’ experience working with leading mass transit railway operators in Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia.

Concerning Christian Lloyd’s view that punctuality is worsening, the system is in excellent condition _ with on-time performance for May at 99.40%. The Skytrain is one of the most reliable metro systems in the world and delivers a level of reliability such that a passenger could ride every day for three years and not experience more than one delay greater than five minutes. Simultaneous train arrivals at Siam at the peak is not synchronised simply to avoid a clashing of passengers changing from one line to the other; the average waiting time during the peak is 90 seconds. Train arrivals in the off-peak period are synchronised to avoid longer waiting time. The same technique is used in other leading metros.

New Skytrain extension from Onnut to NBIA? – Dailynews & Matichon Daily, June 13, 2002

BMA is pushing the 8.9-km Samrong extension and 2.2-km Taksin Extension forward and asking the cabinet to allocate 9.5 billion baht to enable BMA to handle the civil work for these extensions while BTSC is investing 5.5 billion baht on signals, systems and services, said the City Clerk. The committee will submit the investment plan and the route to the cabinet this week.

BMA is proposing a new extension from Onnut to NBIA via Onnut Road (Sukhumvit 77 Road) so as to connect the passengers to the Downtown BKK after the opening of NBIA on December 5, 2004.

Nevertheless, BMA will ask BMA Traffic and Transportation Office to make a feasibility study about the route from Onnut to [NBIA](#) via Onnut Road with total distance of 23 km. If the route is feasible, BMA will send the plan to the NBIA board to draft a proposal to the cabinet to allocate the budget.

Commentary: OCMLT proposed that the Skytrain to NBIA either go along Eastern Railway or Bangna-Trat Highway (there are too few people living along or close to the eastern section of Kanchaphasek Outer Ring road).

The route to NBIA via Onnut Road is a new one good for the suburbs, but not very good for either those who live and work near the eastern railway (Pratoonam, Makkasan, Phetburi, RCA, Klong Tan, Hua Mark, Lad Krabang) or Bangna-Trat Highway (BITEC, Ramkhamhaeng, Central City Bangna, the Nation, Thana City, and the new HQ of Charoen Phokkhaphan Group). Onnut Route is good for those who live around Onnut Road (Sri Nut Intersection, Phatthanakarn, Hua Mark Station, Rom Klao, etc.). Which route offers the best deal is up to BTSC and BMA....

OCMLT supports Skytrain route readjustment: Phaholyothin extension instead of Rama III

translated and summarized from *Matichon*, May 20, 2002

Minister Suwat Lippataphanlop (Minister of PM Office) told *Matichon* after visiting BTSC and surveying the [Skytrain](#) extension routes that OCMLT would support the following three extensions:

- 1) Taksin Extension (for the Silom Line) – from Taksin Bridge to Phet Kasem Road (Saphan Taksin – Bang Wah), 6.6 km
- 2) Samrong Extension (for the Sukhumvit Line) – from Onnut to Samrong (Onnut – Samrong Tai), 8.9 km
- 3) Phaholyothin Extension (for the Sukhumvit Line) – from Mochit to Ratchayothin (Mochit – Ratchayothin), 2.8 km

All 3 extensions would require a total investment of 25.954 billion baht. OCMLT is sending the proposals to BMA for consideration.

OCMLT decided to change the 3rd extension from Rama III to Phaholyothin since the Phaholyothin extension would carry much more passengers than the Rama III extension

Minister Suwat noted that [Phaseechooen Elevated Road](#) (which BMA is modifying to become a Taksin extension) has lots of problems to be solved to ensure that this extension can serve people who travel across Chao Phraya River.

Subway/Skytrain interchanges

[The MRTA Subway](#) will have three interchanges with the Skytrain at Dusit Thane Hotel, Asok Intersection, and Mochit. Minister Suwat suggested that BTSC and BMCL negotiate about joint tickets before the opening of the subway since both systems start from 10 baht.

Suwat also mentioned that BTSC and BMA must find resolutions for the extensions as soon as possible to speed up the construction. Even though the cabinet resolution stated that BTSC must construct the extensions on their own, BTSC said they want the contract for extensions to be like the MRTA Subway—the public handles the civil works while private sector handles the service.

The Skytrain Extension to Thonburi – 18:32, April 27, 2002

Prapong Wongsewichian (Director of BMA Traffic and Transportation Office) said that the BMA Traffic Office has hired a consultant company that also worked as an architect for the Phaseechooen Elevated Way to study the plan from OCMLT which asks BMA to make a Western extension of the Skytrain from Sathon

Bridge to Wat Angkaeo (from April 2001). The study will explore:

- 1) The structural detail of the Skytrain route
- 2) The structure of Sathorn Bridge
- 3) The structure of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way
- 4) The structure of the bridge across Chaophraya River from Saphan Taksin Station to the end of Phaseecharoen Elevated Way (about 460 meters).

According to the preliminary study, BMA needs about 276 million baht to install the pillars on Sathorn Bridge. BMA could install pillars on the pillar bases of Sathorn Bridge since the bridge was designed to carry the structure of a mass transit system in addition to the automobile bridge. The area also has enough space to accept a double track.

However, the physical readjustment of the Phaseecharoen Elevated way to become Skytrain tracks is a must. For example, BMA has to turn the silencer walls into the normal walls, cut down the ramps that go up and down from the elevated way, readjust the road surface to handle the skytrain double track, and quit installing the lights and the traffic signs since they are no longer needed. The consultant said the company will submit the study details to BMA by the end of 2002. (from "276 Million Baht for the Studies on the Skytrain Extension to Thonburi," *Thairath*, February 11, 2002)

When new Skytrain cards expire

Remember how BTS (the Skytrain company) was replacing the original stored-value cards originally issued in 1999? *Thairath* has info on when the newly issued cards will expire: March 2004 . (from "BTSC Changing Expiring Cards," *Thairath*, February 1, 2002)

The Skytrain on CNN – 20:19, March 27, 2002

CNN has a [cursory article](#) on the Skytrain: *Bangkok's traffic is a cauldron of earsplitting noise, lung-corroding fumes and hours of waiting in idling vehicles snarled in gridlock. Some call these streets a hell on Earth.* Thanks to Don Entz for pointing this out.

Adding a new BTS Skytrain station at BITEC

Thai Post Daily, March 15, 2002

The committee of the BMA Mass Transit Administration is aiming to add a new Skytrain station (to the Samrong extension) at BITEC to attract more convention attendants to take side trips and spend money in Bangkok downtown.

BMA Deputy Governor Sahat Bunditkul told the press that the committee concluded that the 9-km Samrong extension needed to have a new station at BITEC since BITEC has hosted several international conventions. The new Skytrain station at BITEC would facilitate both tourists and the convention attendants so that they could stay at hotels along Sukhumvit and Silom Road and go shopping.

Deputy Governor Sahat said OCMLT has issued a resolution for three Skytrain extensions that public sectors must invest on structure and the rail system while private sectors (BTSC) must invest in the rolling stock system.

Passenger numbers & tourist passes

BTSC reported to the committee that the number of passengers in January 2002 increased from the number of passengers in January 2001 by 34.83% Even though BTSC has issued 3-day pass tickets for tourists (280 baht each), BTSC found that they should issue 1-day pass tickets for tourists (100 baht each) since lots of tourists take only one-day trips to Bangkok.

Chong Nongsee walkway

BTSC also decided to construct a via duct connecting the Chong Nongsee Station to the pedestrian overpass at Sathorn Thanee Intersection to add more convenience for passengers around Sathorn Road.

Commentary: One-day passes would be a blessing for tourists indeed! It should be accompanied with a one-day BMTA air-conditioned bus pass (60 baht) to facilitate the trips around Bangkok and suburbs.

Even though the new station at BITEC is a must, I could not imagine how BMA and BTSC are going to construct the tracks and curves without expropriation the area around Bang Na. They can construct Samrong extension without expropriation but the area has narrow curves and a U-turn. It is possible to go along Udomsuk Road (Sukhumvit 103), Sri Nakharin Road, Bangna-Trat Highway and back to Sukhumvit at Bang Na intersection, but this would increase construction costs.

For the case of the Rama III extension, BTSC might have to design single car rolling stock bigger than

BMTA air-conditioned buses (EURO-2 standards) since it would be inappropriate to run 3-car Skytrain rolling stock along Rama III Road and Narathiwat Ratchanakharin Road. The normal 3-car Skytrain requires very large curves (200-m radius) while the conditions of both Rama III Road and Narathiwat Ratchanakharin Road has limited the curve radius of 80 meters.

BTS extensions in limbo

Krungthep Thanakhom to handle project if BTSC fails to do so

Prachachart Thurakij, February 28, 2002-March 3, 2002

The BTSC extensions are in limbo. BMA has lots of headaches to deal with concerning the economic and financial benefits of the extensions. Furthermore, the BTSC balance sheet is still in the red. Therefore, BMA asks Krungthep Thanakhom to deal with this matter. BMA will also have to get around with the laws so it can readjust Phaseecharoen elevated road to become a part of Taksin extension without getting into trouble.

Prachachart Thurakij correspondents got the message from a BMA source that BMA and BTSC are studying a joint venture between the public and private sectors to see if the joint venture will increase the financial and economic benefits. Even though the cabinet has set the rule that the extensions must be 100% private investment, the continuing economic downturn renders such resolution impractical since BTSC is still deep in the red (5 million baht revenue a day vs. the breakeven at 11 million baht revenue a day – 600,000 passengers a day target vs. 220,000-300,000 passengers a day in reality).

"BMA has no potential to study on their own, so the subsidiary (Kurngthep Thanakhom) will handle the study. When Krungthep Thanakhom finishes the study, they will deliver the results to the committee headed by the City Clerk. If the committee approves the results, BMA will push the results to override the cabinet resolution of 2000 so that BMA and Krungthep Thanakom can bail BTSC out of trouble. "

The preliminary study contends that the public sector deal with civil works while private sector deals with rolling stock, the system, and services. However, BMA would like to see if BTSC could handle all the things about rolling stock, the system, and services. Furthermore, BMA would like to see how public sector could find the financial resources to back up the extensions and the exact amount of money which public and private sector have to pay to realize the project. If Krungthep Thanakhom finished the final draft, BMA will negotiate with BTSC to see if they could accept the conditions specified from the study to comply with 1992 Joint Venture Act. If BTSC would not accept the BMA terms, BTSC will call a new bid.

"BMA has hired [Sino-Thai Engineering and Construction PCL](#) as a contractor to readjust the former Phaseecharoen Elevated road with a distance of 7 km and a price tag of 700 million Baht. Sino Thai has cut down the ramps to go up and down, and plans to construct a bridge to Saphan Taksin station. Sino-Thai will finish this job soon."

"Everything about readjustment must comply with the law. We are not so sure if the readjustment ordered by BMA would cause any legal trouble since the current cabinet resolution states that BTSC must invest in the extensions by themselves."

Patronage vital for skytrain expansion

Excerpted from the *Bangkok Post*, February 12, 2002

....A senior SCB executive said one obstacle was the high cost borne by BTSC, particularly for maintenance services paid to Siemens, the main supplier of the train system. "The problem is that a lot of the cost of servicing was based on earlier projections of daily ridership of 600,000 to 700,000," he said. "But while ridership has grown over the past two years, it remains under 300,000 a day...."

According to SCB, the skytrain operator is still making "occasional" payments on its debt, enough to avoid being classified as non-performing....

The BMA has pledged to look at extending the skytrain from the city centre to the suburbs. While existing creditors are unlikely to consider financing any expansion, all agree that they would welcome any state assistance to increase ridership and long-term profitability of the system. Mustapha Man-nga, a Bangkok deputy governor, said the BMA considered three routes most favourable for expansion _ from the Sathon station to Taksin bridge and Thon Buri, from Onnuj to the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Centre, and from Mor Chit to Lam Luk Ka. To reduce costs, the BMA proposes that trains run on existing tracks used by the State Railways of Thailand.

Info hubs at Skytrain

Bangkok Post, January 21, 2002

Johan Prinsback alerts us to an article about info kiosks in Skytrain stations: *Turning the city's skytrain stations into indispensable hubs for information on what to do and where to go is the new goal of Groovy Map Co, which holds the contract to distribute 2.8 million official BTS skytrain maps for Bangkok Transit System Co (BTS)....Information centres at skytrain stations would feature high-tech, liquid crystal displays featuring current and future city events, as well as low-tech but essential maps and flyers....."The first rack will be built by the BTS, hopefully by Feb 1," Mr Frankel said....Mr Frankel declined to give the value of the contract with BTS, but said that advertising in the maps, flyers and guides would be sold for rates starting at 10,000 baht per month. The company hopes to attract 100 advertisers a month....Up to 100,000 copies of the BTS maps and 10,000 flyers will be produced by Groovy Map monthly. The materials will be distributed free by the skytrain operator through ticket booths at all 23 skytrain stations and concierge desks at 60 major hotels, the Bangkok airport information desk and restaurants, bars, travel agencies and shops. (excerpted from "Skytrain to be hub for finding what's on," Bangkok Post, January, 21, 2002)*