

## MAKING CHANGE

As Thailand continues to grow economically, so do the institutions and people looking to solve these problems. Concerted efforts are being made across the country to solve the issues of water pollution, deforestation, urban planning and conservation from organizations leading all the way up to the monarchy. Established back in 1993, the Thailand Environmental Institute has been providing hands-on help and evaluation concerning all areas of ecology. Its aim is to serve as a respected research institute, a center of high-quality information and to provide plans of action committed to sustainable human development.

Likewise, the Plant a Tree Today Foundation ([www.plant-a-tree-today.org](http://www.plant-a-tree-today.org)) is helping businesses offset their carbon emissions through community-based forestry projects in developing countries. The project plants tens of thousands of trees across Thailand every year with

the help of schools and volunteer workers to restore the natural balance and replenish forest areas. Since being launched in 2005 the project has grown dramatically and continues to gather international support from its efforts.

Many businesses that have a negative impact on the environment are imposing stringent measures to make sure they contribute to, rather than damage, Thailand's fragile ecological balance. A prime example is the good the Siam Cement Group is doing to curb the impact their operations have on the environment (as seen on the comprehensive feature on page 88).

So, all is not doom and gloom. Although Thailand is not without its problems, with the help of these organizations and many others across the country – and so long as we each take onboard efforts to minimize our own carbon footprints – things look set to change.

★ Take our Green Quiz on page 132 to see how well you fare in living a green lifestyle.



## GREENWASH

How do you know what you're buying is really green? We spoke to Steve Pearmain, managing director of SLP Environmental, a leading environmental consultancy firm, to find out what's really being done by businesses to curb their carbon emissions.

### 2Magazine: So what exactly is greenwash?

**Steve Pearmain:** Manufacturers, retailers and developers are all falling over themselves right now in the rush to purport themselves as environmentally friendly. Most of the time, however, you only have to scratch the surface to find that their claims are just something cooked up by the marketing department. Whilst we should all applaud businesses who seek to raise public awareness of environmental issues, it is also fairly evident that some unscrupulous companies are capitalizing on the green theme merely to swell their coffers. Businesses need to understand that hawking greenwash in the face of a global threat is entirely irresponsible as it trivializes the extent of the problem by suggesting there's a painless quick-fix solution.

### 2: So what do you think businesses should be doing?

**SP:** If businesses are serious about joining the battle against climate change and environmental degradation, then their efforts would be best spent exploring what tangible actions they can take to significantly reduce their environmental footprints, rather than coming up with new marketing gimmicks. Determining a company's carbon footprint is the critical first step in developing an effective carbon management strategy, as it sets the benchmark against which all future improvements, modification practices and activities can be measured.

### 2: Which types of businesses are the main offenders in terms of environmental impact?

**SP:** The building sector is responsible for the largest consumption of fossil fuels and natural resources in the world today. For every 1,000 kg of cement produced nearly 900 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>E is emitted into the atmosphere.

### 2: What can be done to curb this?

**SP:** Simple passive solutions in tropical countries can include sun shading, building orientation and placement, less reliance on materials such as concrete that have a high thermal mass and the use of natural ventilation and recycled building materials. More active solutions include the use of solar panels and wind turbines to generate renewable energy.

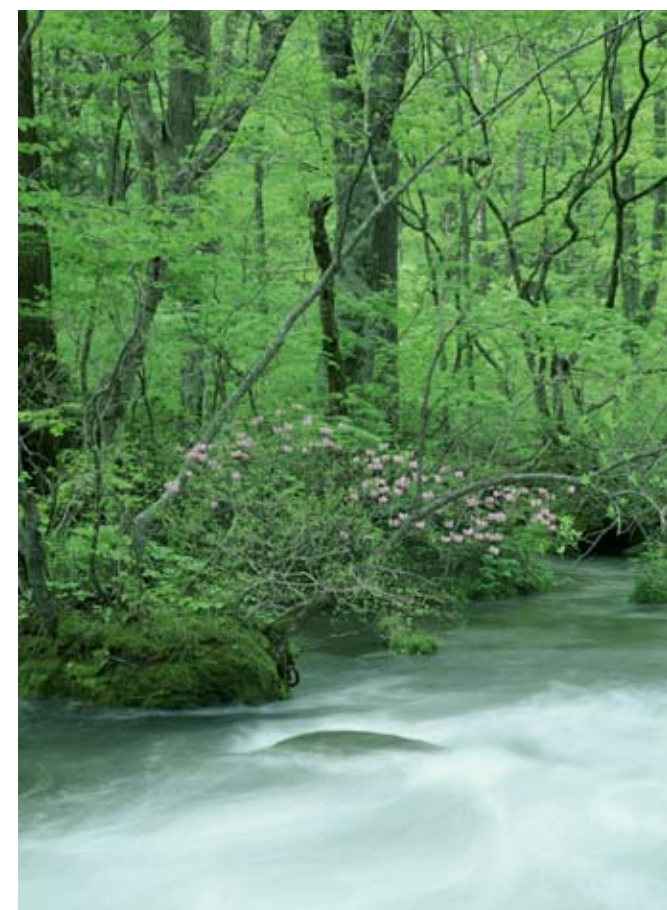
### 2: As so many supposedly 'green' buildings fill the Southeast Asian skyline, how can buyers be sure a developer's claims are not just greenwash?

**SP:** It's time for Southeast Asian countries to implement a formal third-party rating and certification process such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System used in the US. LEED certification gives third-party verification by accredited professionals that a building project meets the highest green building and performance standards, is environmentally responsible and will provide a healthy place to live and work.

For more information on SLP Environmental visit [www.slpenvironmental.com](http://www.slpenvironmental.com)



## ECO KNOWLEDGE



### BAN THE BAG!

In many countries around the world, plastic bags have rightfully been banned, and even become somewhat scarce – but Southeast Asian countries have been slow to catch up. Even the smallest items here are given to you in needless plastic bags that have no place in an environmentally conscious nation. It's time for Thailand and the rest of Asia to follow suit and stop endorsing these most pointless of environmental offenders.



### URBAN WATER

Would you drink from the Chao Phraya River? Crossing the river from a bridge, looking at the brownish color and observing the industrial activity taking place all along its banks, we probably all have doubts about the river's water quality. But the fact is, whether it's the bottled water you've bought or the cool draught beer you're sipping on, the water has all been sourced from the River of Kings.

### GET CONNECTED

Meet the people making a difference to Thailand's environment with Green Networking Days which aims to bring like-minded people together in an effort to raise public awareness on all of these issues and more. Go to their website at [www.gndays.com](http://www.gndays.com) to find out more about upcoming events.