

# LIFE

Bangkok Post WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2013

Gamification, gadgets and the next big things of 2013

TECH P.4-5

Hemingway's six-toed cats draw tourists and legal battles

FEATURE P.8



## ON CAMPUS



PHOTO: THITTI WANNAMONTHA

**A volunteer fixes a bicycle at Thammasat University's Rangsit campus. There are about 200 bicycles which the university loans to the students for getting around.**

◆ Thammasat University is making good progress on its Green vision both at Tha Prachan and Rangsit campuses. Last year, about 200 old, flood-damaged bicycles were repaired by volunteer students, the Thai Cycling for Health Association and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. The repaired bikes have now been on loan to students for getting around Rangsit campus, reducing their reliance on motorised vehicles. More bike lanes are also being introduced.

At Tha Prachan campus, Cafe Velo Dome was launched last year. Unlike typical venues that offer drinks or use bicycle parts as decoration, the cafe acts as a bicycle hub, giving cycling information and leading cycling tours in the city — free of charge.

◆ In Nakhon Pathom's Salaya district, Mahidol University has gone a step further. It successfully introduced the "Jakka Mahachon" project as part of a Green campus concept in mid-2011. Some 420 free-rental white utility bicycles were on loan for students and visitors on a daily basis.

The central academic zone's six traffic lanes, originally paved for motor vehicles, has been divided into two. One half is for one-way traffic flow for motorised vehicles only, with no parking allowed; the other has been raised and paved for bicycles and pedestrians. Bike lanes, painted in blue, are also provided around the campus.

# GETTING ON A ROLL

Cyclists have pushed for friendlier infrastructure and are now banking on the city of Bangkok to make their two-wheeled life more fun and convenient

STORY: SIRINYA WATTANASUKCHAI

**A** recreational activity. A green and convenient transport option. A fashion statement. A major issue for the next gubernatorial campaign. Take your pick, it's all the same thing: cycling.

Once a fading old-world mode of transport, or limited to some university campuses, cycling has re-emerged as a serious business, attracting a large number of urban commuters who flaunt the two-wheeler around the city. The sight of chic candy-coloured fixie riders or individuals on utility bikes has become more familiar.

Their appearance has favourably altered Bangkok's streetscape, and there

has been a growing acceptance of the vehicles on the road. This is in part thanks to a series of campaigns a group of activist cyclists held last year, advocating for better infrastructure, like bike lanes, as well as greater public understanding for those using two-wheelers. Among them was last year's Valentine's Day campaign, when city cyclists showed their love by creating dedicated lanes and spraying pink images of bicycles on the left-hand lanes in the Sukhumvit neighbourhood. While not long-lasting, the signs were a success as a wake-up call, reminding other road users of cyclists' equal rights.

The popular *a day* magazine produced an all-bicycle issue after a search for cycling communities throughout the country. A bicycling-campaign poster competition called *Teep Chan Tammai* (Why Ride?) was held at Chulalongkorn University. More clubs are being established to cater the rising demand of the cycling trips. Regular bike shows have also been held during the past few years.

In November, *a day* held a four-day "Bike Fest" that attracted 22,000 visitors and combined the chic and the practical. The show, held at Airport Rail Link's Makkasan station, drew an unexpectedly high number of visitors and showed how trendy and popular the human-powered vehicle has become among young people.

Another noteworthy project was the launch of the first Bangkok Bike Map, made by the Green World Foundation. It features safer backstreet routes, the "insiders' routes" allow cyclists to go explore the city without having to venture on to main roads. The map will not only become a bible for those pedalling around the city, but also will help create



PHOTO: PATTANADONG HIRUNAROD

**More than 12,000 cyclists filled the Royal Plaza to mark Bangkok Car Free Day 2012 on Sept 23.**

a great network between like-minded people from different neighbourhoods.

While there are no official figures of Bangkok's cyclist population, yet, the gathering on the car-free day in September was stunning, with more than 12,000 people — the highest number ever for this annual activity. Their procession, forming into a tri-coloured national flag, captured public attention.

The increasing number of cyclists means a larger market and more business opportunities. Shops offering used and brand-name vehicles and accessories are mushrooming on street corners and in the online shopping world. New importers are becoming a force, with

mass and niche products for all segments of the market, giving consumers greater choice.

For the upper end of the market, there is greater variety for popular brands like Trek and Giant, while design brands like Vanmoof or sought-after brands like Brompton and Alex Moulton have become household names. People with limited budgets can opt for used bikes from Japan or more affordable options from China.

But without political commitment from authorities in the city, cycling can never be a real success story. For this reason, activists are pushing for cycling policies play a role in the forthcoming

Bangkok governor election, which will take place next month.

Among their demands are an extension of the bike lane network, and making sure existing designated lanes are kept free of parked vehicles and motorcycle taxis.

One candidate for governor, Suharit Siamwala, has already promised to improve public transport and the cycling network: it is one of his eight-point policies. He is to debate his policy — especially on how to enhance quality of life and make the city more green — with other candidates at a forum organised by Thammasat University.

Incumbent Bangkok Governor MR Sukhumbhand Paribatra, seeking a second term, will also attempt to cash in on the bike issue.

In the past few months, the governor has responded favourably to the activists' demand by replacing dangerous vertical-grid drainage on the streets with a safer horizontal version. MR Sukhumbhand will feel the urge to prove that he is ready to take the bike matter more seriously, continuing the work left by his predecessors, former governor Bhichit Rattakul, who was the first to address the need for bike lanes in city development, and Apirak Kosayodhin, who turned the plan into action.

MR Sukhumbhand is likely to highlight the BMA bicycle rental service which he launched to the press in October with two mock-up stations in Siam Square and Sam Yan. If re-elected, the governor is expected to complete the service, inspired by the London version, updating it from a manual system to an online one which will operate 24/7, with more stations to better serve city commuters.



**Bangkok cyclists have a new option for enjoying the city safely, with the first Bangkok Bike Map offering a guide through the backstreets of the capital.**

Photo courtesy of GREEN WORLD FOUNDATION

# A bike fit for BANGKOK

At last, a two-wheeler designed specifically to cope with the obstacles that urban cyclists have to surmount every day

STORY: SIRINYA WATTANASUKCHAI  
PHOTOS: CHANAT KATANYU

**B**angkok poses a special set of challenges to those brave souls who choose to travel on two wheels. The mixture of narrow streets, typically choked with heavy traffic, and broad, multi-lane avenues that cover large expanses, but which can be hazardous because of speeding motorists, makes this ever-expanding metropolis of ours a very difficult place to negotiate with a single-purpose bicycle.

A folding bike is most suitable for Bangkok commuters because it allows them to make the best use of Skytrain and underground options. A city or mini bike is best for getting through areas clogged with traffic. A road bike is ideal for sprints on those long-distance, multi-lane routes, but sometimes the road surface is so bumpy that a mountain bike is what is really required for the job. So, for a smooth, minimally stressful ride across Bangkok, a cyclist would need several different sets of wheels.

Frustrated with the mismatch between Bangkok's street topography and the selection of specialised bicycles available on the market, long-time cyclist Phongsathorn La-iad-on has come up with his own version, the Angl, a bike that combines several functions, can assume various forms and which was designed specifically with the Bangkok cyclist in mind.



His invention, which went on sale here in November last year, is designed both for sustained bursts of speed and for zigzagging around obstacles in narrow streets. Its chic look and pastel colours should make it even more attractive to fashion-conscious city slickers.

There are quite a few local bicycle-makers around, some filling the need for reasonably priced, mass-produced bikes, others catering to those who want a lovingly hand-assembled set of wheels.

But what sets the Angl apart is that it was designed by a Thai national, and it is being manufactured in a Taiwanese factory which meets international quality control standards.

"Never before has there been one single bicycle that could cater to the mix of street features that you get in Bangkok," said Phongsathorn, a product designer by training who is the founder and CEO of Angel Bike Co Ltd. Earlier designs of his include those for industrial products like an air-conditioner, washing machine and an electric car.

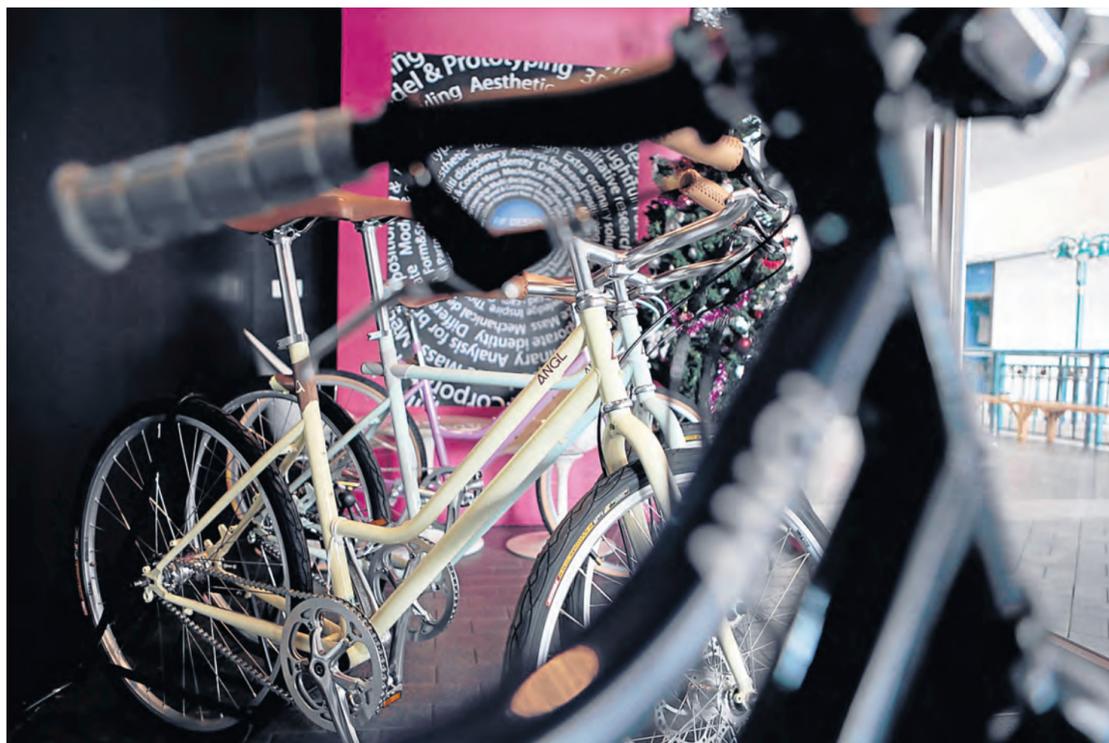
"Angl" is Phongsathorn's play on the words "angle" — the angles in the frame of a bicycle which is what makes one differ so much from another — and "angel", as in Krungthep (City of Angels), the Thai name for our capital.

A graduate in industrial design from King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Phongsathorn owns more than 10 different types of bicycle, which is how he familiarised himself with the different capabilities of each sort. While cycling only became a major means of transport for him five years ago, he says that he was a keen recreational cyclist for a decade before that.

If the Manhattan bike messengers in the 2012 film *Premium Rush* made you wonder why zipping through Bangkok's rush-hour gridlock is so much harder than squeezing past New York City's notoriously rude motorists, take a closer look at the road surface our poor cyclists have to contend with.

This is sometimes as uneven as an unpaved rural track and rainfall gutters that run parallel to the left-most lane pose a risk for the unwary.

To zigzag between snaking lines of cars on narrow streets, a cyclist needs to be very manoeuvrable and for this task a dynamic bike with smaller wheels — like the mini, folding or city types — is recommended. But Bangkok also has



Phongsathorn La-iad-on.

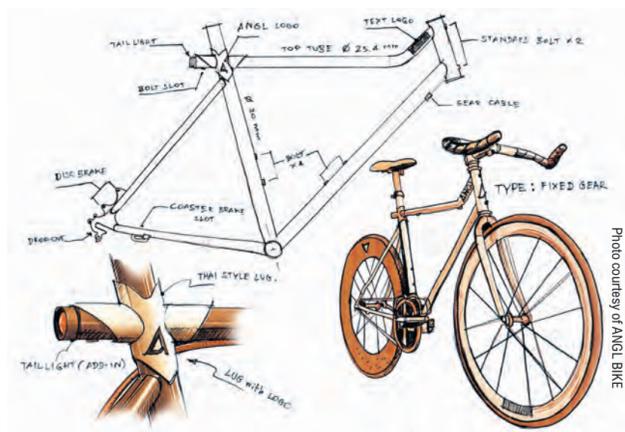


Photo courtesy of ANGL BIKE

A standard bicycle has wheels that are 26 inches in diameter and 1.5 inches wide, but the wheel diameter for a mini bike is 20 inches and for a roadster it's 27 inches. If one was riding a mini, it would take forever to reach the next set of traffic lights on Vibhavadi or a recently opened road like Kaset-Navamin. But the larger wheels of a road bike make it harder to zigzag through gridlocked traffic, and their width, usually only 1 inch, makes them susceptible to getting trapped in those road-side gutters.

Mountain bikes have wide-gauge wheels and tyres designed to provide increased grip on off-road trails, so they would be able to cope with the most pot-holed of Bangkok streets; the only drawback, however, is that they're much too heavy for urban commuting.

"You need a bike that's dynamic, but also stable enough to get into the narrow spaces between lines of traffic. Nor should it require a great deal of strength to produce a burst of speed," Phongsathorn explained.

To make it go faster, the triangle on the rear of the Angl frame has been minimised. To provide better balance and control, the front of the Angl has a lower head-tube to enable a lower sitting position and its wheelbase is also shorter than normal.

"Cyclists tend to feel more confident when the seat is closer to the ground," he said, adding that he had learned from a survey carried out during the product-development process that the reason most people give for not cycling is fear for their personal safety.

And anybody who has ever bought a bicycle knows how difficult it can be to find one that fits your body size precisely. A person's height and inside-leg measurement are important, of course, but other factors have to be taken into consideration, too, like torso and arm length.

Some serious types have their bicycles tailor-made, just like commissioning a gown or suit for a special occasion.

But to build a bike from scratch, one needs to find components designed to fit a specific frame-set, the collective term for the actual frame plus parts like the wheel forks and seat post. Some parts are made for fixed-gear bikes, so they can't be replaced with items meant for multi-gear hubs. Many components fit only a certain size of wheel. Other parts only mesh with disc brakes and can't be used on models which have old-fashioned V-brakes.

After two years of research and design — and the construction of no less than three prototypes — Phongsathorn finally solved all the problems confronting him. His frame-set is designed for Asians (or people between 152cm and 178cm in height) and can be given either a vintage or super-modern look with the use of appropriate parts. One of the unique features of the Angl is the curved toptube on the model intended for men; this makes it a good deal easier to get on and off the bike. Phongsathorn isn't only targeting Thai cyclists; he hopes to sell the Angl in other parts of Asia, too, and has produced a larger version for sale in the European market.

Nor is the 40-year-old content to rest on his laurels now that he's designed a revolutionary two-wheeler for urbanites. He is currently working on his next project, a folding bike. Most of the commercial models available these days fold up perfectly, but don't perform so well on the road, or vice versa; Phongsathorn's dream is to create a vehicle that fulfils both functions well.

"If we can't design something better," he said, "we should stick to what's available on the market. There's far too much much garbage in this world already."

[www.facebook.com/ANGLbike](http://www.facebook.com/ANGLbike)



INTERVIEW ■ SIRINYA WATTANASUKCHAI

# Champion of commuters

Dr Sukamon Wipaweeponkul is on a mission against motors

**W**ith his solid, well-paid job at a private hospital, Dr Sukamon Wipaweeponkul has every reason to own a car. Going against social expectations, however, he chooses not to.

Sukamon, Chief of the Psychiatric Division of Phyathai 2 Hospital, said the rising number of cars is becoming a tough problem every city commuter confronts. The majority of new vehicles are due to last year's first-car tax rebate policy.

"This policy only boosts the demand for cars and makes commuters more dependent on them," said Sukamon. The psychiatrist, who can't drive, has relied on his bicycles and public transport for the past seven years.

The 48-year-old psychiatrist chose to move into a house in the city that was easily accessible by public transport. Welcoming the cars of his friends and relatives from time to time, the parking space on the ground floor houses his five bicycles including one folding bike for short-distance rides, one mountain bike and one touring bike for longer routes.

Sukamon is encouraging Bangkok commuters to live an independent life and not rely on the unpredictable traffic. Unlike car drivers who have to try their luck with the traffic every time they sit behind the wheel, independent commuters should be able to rely on themselves or the predictable public transport system.

For Sukamon, life is perfect when it's safe and predictable. He recently missed a domestic flight because his taxi got stuck on the expressway. Since then, he's minimised the use of road transport that could get him stuck in the gridlocked traffic.

From his house, about a five-minute walk from BTS Krung Thonburi, Sukamon can get to work — with public transport such as electric trains — in the Sanam Pao area in 45 minutes, and to Suvarnabhumi airport in about 60-95 minutes. And on weekends it takes him less than 60 minutes to cycle to see his mother who lives near Wat Kalaya.

Motorcycle taxis could be a popular option for commuters, but Sukamon doesn't rely on strangers. If cycling in the city is considered dangerous, at least it's under your control. "Why would you want to put your life in a motorcycle taxi driver's hands?"

Sukamon may be considered lucky being able to afford a house in the city. But that was by choice. The psychiatrist could have afforded a large house with a big garden, but that would put him in the city outskirts where it's not possible to travel around with public transport and he'd have to rely on a car.

"I don't want to put myself in a situation that makes me need a car," he said.

As a child living near Wat Kalaya, he got around by bus. As a medical student at Khon Kaen University, he travelled around on a motorcycle. He used the same mode of transport when he moved to Bangkok to work as a psychiatrist



PHOTO: PAMWAI LAOPASANTAKSIN

after graduating. Growing up in a garage near Wat Kalaya where his father was the owner and head technician, Sukamon became familiar with the sight of broken-down cars. This created a negative perception of the vehicles. His father also spoke frequently about dishonest technicians who tried to cheat customers who had no idea about car engines.

"It gave me the impression that cars were high maintenance and cost a fortune to own and run," he said, recalling that his father's garage was never empty. The garage later closed down as neither he nor his four siblings were interested in continuing the family business.

After seven years of serious cycling, Sukamon was not only able to shed weight and keep it under control, but he was also able to reduce medication for his high-blood pressure that he inherited from his parents.

In his view, cycling not only improves health, but can also boost the economy. And using public transport is a way to distribute the income to every part of society.

"Driving your own car and buying the petrol to fill your gas tank will only give money to the giant entrepreneurs."

Sukamon hopes to see more government support for bicycling. Instead of

the first-car tax rebate, the government should introduce a first-bicycle tax rebate for city commuters, or offer payments in instalments for low-income earners. More importantly, to make bicycles more affordable for all, the import tax should be reduced from the current 30%.

He also hopes the Bangkok governor continues his plan to improve the cycling infrastructure in the capital as promised, including a proper bike lane and ring route that connects inner and outer Bangkok.

"That's how the government and the BMA should support commuters," he said.

“ Why would you want to put your life in a motorcycle taxi driver's hands? ”

SOCIAL SCENE



**ROYAL BOOK:** HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn recently launched a special edition of *Naree Nakhara*, translated and signed by her, at the Shangri-La hotel Bangkok. Also pictured are Wang Junzheng, second left, vice-governor, Hubei province, People's Republic of China, Chinese Ambassador Guan Mu, third left, and Suwadee Chongsatitwatana, left, managing director of Shangri-La hotel Bangkok.



**STUDENT WORKSHOP:** The '5th Annual Mid-Year Enrichment Workshop for American Fulbright Students and Scholars in Southeast Asia' was recently organised by former Thai ambassador to the US and chair of the Fulbright Thailand, Dr Manaspas Xuto, and US ambassador and honorary chair of the Fulbright Thailand Kristie Kenney, who presided over the event at the Dusit Thani Bangkok. From left: Asst Prof Edward Geerson, Judy Benn, Jim Coffman, Mike McCoy, Ambassador Kenny, Dr Manaspas, Pissmai Khanobdee, Anthony M. Zola, Michael Honnold and Paul Wedel.



**BRAND PARTY:** Graeme Harlow, president of Diageo Moet Hennessy (Thailand), on behalf of Johnnie Walker Gold Label Reserve, and Vatanika Patamasingh Na Ayudhya, owner and designer of the Vatanika brand, recently hosted an exclusive fashion party to celebrate the ultimate success of the two brands with a special mini fashion collection — Vatanika Gold Reserve Edition — at Swissotel Nai Lert Park Bangkok. From left: Nachanok Ratanadaros, Sikanya Saktidej Bhanuband, Sam Fischer, managing director, Diageo Southeast Asia, Mr Harlow, Ms Vatanika, and Korn and Naphaporn Narongdej.



**FASHION EVENT:** Charnchai Cherdchoowongthanakorn, executive vice-president of Siam Piwat, recently held 'Synthesis By The Selected x The Wonder Room', which was a Siam Center Fashion Visionary event. From left: Julaluk Piyasombatkul, Wasuthida Chonprawet, Karatphet Issara, Mr Charnchai, Parisa Chatnibandhu, Sappasit Phoonfuangchavaeg and Athiwat Toothongkham.



**YSL COUNTER:** Yeon Ah Choi, general manager of Luxe division, L'Oreal (Thailand), and Songsamorn Hattet, brand manager of Yves Saint Laurent Beaute Thailand, recently held 'The Grand Opening of The First YSL Counter in Thailand' to launch the first Yves Saint Laurent Beaute counter in Thailand at Central Chidlom. From left: Sritira Jensen, Nutthaset Poonsapmanee, Ms Songsamorn, Ms Yeon, Natira Boonsri, vice-president of merchandising, Central Department Store, Ornara Poonsapmanee and Kimberly Tiamsiri.

ANNIE'S MAILBOX

■ KATHY MITCHELL & MARCY SUGAR

## How to help a friend who has waited 50 years to be 'discovered'

Dear Annie: I've been friends with a small group of people since junior high. We're in our late 50s now, and though none of us has set the world on fire, we have good families and stable careers. All except "Joe".

Ever since he was a boy, Joe dreamed of making it big in a profession in which, with a good deal of skill and some luck, you can make a lot of money in a relatively short time. Unfortunately, Joe's skills are no better than average, and he's never had much luck. He hasn't gotten further than the fringes of his dream profession, no matter how hard he's tried. But that's his dream, and he is absolutely sure his big break is right around the corner. His interests haven't changed since junior high.

Joe has had one entry-level job after another, with no interest in moving up the ladder. He's never had a serious relationship. Joe is a nice guy, and we all like him, but if we hadn't been friends all these years, no one in our group would have anything in common with him at all.

A few months ago, Joe was laid off from another dead-end job, and at his age and with his haphazard work experience, he's had no luck finding employ-

ment. Now all he talks about is moving to a big city where he's convinced his dream will finally come true.

Some guys in our group say maybe he'll come to his senses when he fails yet again. Others believe he will end up living in a cardboard box. The rest want to find a way to get him to wake up. How do we help someone who's thrown away his entire life on an impossible dream?

*Joe's Buddies for Life*

**Dear Buddies:** Most people eventually learn the limits of their talent and find success in areas in which they can do well. And while extremely gifted people can find some degree of success later in life, Joe has deluded himself into spending 50 years waiting to be "discovered". And he obviously isn't ready to confront that depressing fact. The kindest thing you could do for Joe is suggest he look into job counselling and work on becoming more successful — in any field.

**Don't be so rude**

Dear Annie: I read the letter from "Angry and Embarrassed". As a mother of three small children, going out to dinner gives me a break from cooking. I try to teach

my children manners and tell them that making a mess is not OK, but this lady's grandchild is 16 months old and cannot understand that yet.

When my kids make a mess at a restaurant, my husband and I apologise and then leave a more generous tip for the server. But I do not feel that these parents were rude in not cleaning up a few noodles that landed on the floor.

*Done That*

**Drink etiquette**

Dear Annie: This is in response to "Not a Fan of the Big Gulp", who was offended that guests brought their own drinks to a bridal shower.

I've also gotten into the habit of bringing my own drinks. I'm allergic to coffee, and many times, that is the only beverage served. Some hosts get offended if you ask what drinks will be available, and I understand they cannot cater to everyone. The people who brought their own drinks may have had a similar allergy.

*Orlando*

**Dear Orlando:** That doesn't quite cut it. When you are invited to someone's home, it is rude to bring your own beverages,

especially when they are large soft drinks in plastic tubs. Those who are allergic to coffee, tea, lemonade or anything else can politely ask for a glass of water.

**Green-eyed monsters**

Dear Annie: Tell "Going in Circles in the Circle City" to run as fast as he can and never look back. His situation with a jealous girlfriend is toxic.

I was married to a jealous woman for nearly 40 years, and it was hell on Earth. I feel I wasted all those years. My wife passed away, and I wish I could say nice things about our marriage, but it would be one gigantic lie. If you want to live a life of torture, your stomach in knots, constant phone calls, having to justify going to the store, go right ahead and marry that otherwise lovely companion. The jealousy never ends. It's like an incurable disease. For the sake of his health and welfare, he should take a fast hike.

*Paul from Pennsylvania*

**Dear Paul:** Extreme jealousy can make any relationship toxic, but it is usually rooted in insecurity, and sometimes counselling can help.

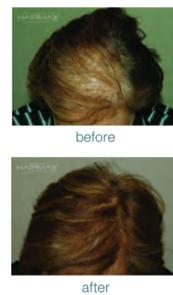
# LIFE

Bangkok Post TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2013

**HAIRMAX**  
The science of hair growth.

Home used Innovation for treats hair loss and promote hair growth

- 93% of participate in clinical studies experienced hair growth
- Save money & NO side effect
- Better hair loss treatment option than Propecia and minoxidil



Fast result within 8-12 weeks

FDA  
CLEARED  
FOR  
MARKETING

Tel. 091-041-3839 www.hairmax-thailand.com

Lost your appetite for rice?  
Check out the alternatives

HEALTH P.6

Teaching jailbirds  
creative writing

PEOPLE P.9

Golfers improve their swings  
with meditation

FEATURE P.12

# I want to ride my bicycle

The BMA's new pedal-powered sharing scheme has a bumpy road

STORY: SIRINYA WATTANASUKCHAI  
PHOTOS: PATIPAT JANTHONG

Amsterdam first started it in the 1960s. Copenhagen followed. Decades later, Paris joined the bandwagon, followed by London, Melbourne and cities in China. New York got its own version in place earlier this year.

Now it's Bangkok's turn for a full-scale bike share system. By the end of this week, the Pun Pun bike share project will see the completion of 50 stations set up in business districts like Phaya Thai, Ratchadamri, Phloenchit, Silom and Sathon.

"I cannot wait for the system to be completed and expand to other parts of Bangkok," said Piyalak Nakayodhin, a travel writer who's keen on alternative transport. She recently tried the rental bike service and was impressed.

Piyalak said the service was a good start for the city to provide long-term infrastructure for cyclists and to attract newcomers to the cycling community.

This is not the first effort by the BMA to operate a bike share scheme. The first scheme, which primarily targeted tourists, was introduced in Rattanakosin's old town square in 2009, with only one station located under the Pin Klao bridge. But it was short lived because the zero-income system only drained the BMA budget. Without a membership fee system — anyone with a passport or ID card could rent a bicycle — shop owners got hold of the vehicles for an entire day for personal use, sometimes leaving an empty station for tourists.

But the system, however, wasn't invented for tourism. First established

in Amsterdam in 1965, the share scheme named White Bike was meant for city commuters with bikes reused many times throughout the day. But the scheme failed within a month; bikes were stolen, leaving only broken ones.

The free scheme was later developed into a rental service for short trips in the city. Bikes are now properly stationed at designated locations, usually close to public transportation such as bus stops, subway stations or boat piers.

The bike share scheme has become alternative transport in metropolitan cities around the world. A bicycle is the best choice to get around congested cities. The number of cyclists has risen fast in Europe in recent years, thanks to well-designed bike lanes. Two-wheelers, an economical form of transportation, have become an alternative as petrol costs and public transport costs are high.

So will the new scheme work for Bangkok? That's a big challenge for the BMA to live up to. With 50 stations and 500 bikes scattered around the heart of the city for the first phase, the life of a city commuter is supposed to get easier as they avoid the congested traffic. They can travel from point A to point B using a rental bike, and return the vehicle at any station on the way, without having to return to the starting point.

The BMA has the ambition of seeing 10,000 public bikes, or about 1,000 stations, by the end of governor MR Sukhumbhand Paribatra's current four-year term — that was the promise given earlier this year during the election campaign. The second phase should start when the first concession ends at the end of next month.

Continued on page 4



## Start spinning

At the station, you will find a booth on the far right. Select "rent" on the menu and put your Pun Pun smart card on the screen to verify your PIN code. Choose the bike from the available docks. A red light will appear on the screen of the chosen dock, tap your card on the screen.

The bike will be released and the rental fee starts. You can also check your credit balance and top up your card at any station. To register for the service, fill out the form

with your ID card or passport at the website www.punpunbikeshare.com. You can collect the smart card from stations with staff. However, staff will be working only at stations in busy locations like Siam Square or Chamchuri Square.

Your identity and address will later be used to track down the bike if it's not returned. That's why a coin booth system isn't possible.

In some cities, rental fees can be simply paid by credit/debit card. Since not every

city commuter owns a credit card, BMA was worried that the service wouldn't be accessible for all.

Membership costs 320 baht. The price is divided into 120 baht for registration, 100 baht for the membership fee and another 100 baht as prepaid credits; life insurance is also inclusive. The package is being discounted to 100 baht until the end of this month.

In case of an accident and you are not able to return the bike, call 087-029-8888.

### RENTAL FEE

|                      |          |
|----------------------|----------|
| 15 minutes           | Free     |
| 15 minutes to 1 hour | 10 baht  |
| 1-3 hours            | 20 baht  |
| 3-5 hours            | 40 baht  |
| 5-6 hours            | 60 baht  |
| 6-8 hours            | 80 baht  |
| More than 8 hours    | 100 baht |

## UNFORGETTABLE DINING EXPERIENCES

### WITH MICHELIN STAR

*Chef Alfredo Russo*

Rossini's, award-winning Italian restaurant, at Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit invites you to an extraordinary wine dinner by Michelin Star Chef Alfredo Russo.

Join us for **Allegrini Wine Dinner on Friday August 30, 2013 at 19.00 hrs.** Guests at the dinner can also take part in a wine auction as part of the "UNICEF Fund Raising Events 2013".

Price is Baht 4,000 net per person includes 10% service charge and 7% government tax. The special privileges apply for The Grande Club members.

Chef Alfredo's a la carte menus will also be available every evening from August 24 - 29, 2013.

For reservations, please call 02 6498364, dining.sgs@luxurycollection.com or visit our online store by scanning this code.



SHERATON GRANDE SUKHUMVIT  
250 SUKHUMVIT ROAD, BANGKOK 10110

ROSSINI'S



## CELEBRATE



WITH  
HANDPACK  
PROMOTION



Don't Forget to Mark your Calendar.



- Paradise Park G fl.
- Platinum Mall 2 G fl.
- Future Park Rangsit fl. 1
- Fashion Island G fl.
- The Mall Ramkhamhaeng G fl.
- The Mall Bangkoe G fl.
- Mega Bangna fl. 2
- Central Plaza Rama 9 fl. B
- Terminal 21 L G fl.
- MBK Center G Fl
- Central Festival Phuket fl. 1
- Jungceylon Phuket
- Central Pattaya Beach fl. 4
- Market Village Hua Hin fl. 2
- Siam Paragon fl. 3
- Impact Arena Sky Kitchen fl. 2
- Ambassador Hotel
- Central Plaza Bangna G fl.
- Laemthong Rayong G fl.
- Seacon Square fl. 2



Upcoming Stores  
• K Village • The Walk Kaset Nawamin • Central Hatyai  
• The Paseo Town Ramkhamhaeng

for more information visit BaskinRobbinsThailand



# Brazilian belter extends her reach

Axé singer Ivete Sangalo steps out of home country to a big international audience

LARRY ROHTER

NYT

**I**f Ivete Sangalo were an American singer, rather than the most popular female vocalist in Brazil, she would undoubtedly be described as a belter. Onstage, she is bold, brassy and boisterous, part of a lineage that includes Tina Turner, Janis Joplin and Bette Midler, and on her records she has often favoured songs that allow her to emote loudly and dramatically.

It's an approach that has worked splendidly for Sangalo. She has sold more than 15 million records as a solo artist; is said by the Brazilian news media to be the country's highest-paid active performer, earning up to US\$500,000 (16 million baht) a show, has 8.5 million followers on Twitter, and runs her own production company.

"To be able to entertain people is a triumph, but the funny thing is that I never dreamed as a child about being a singer, never looked in the mirror and played at being a pop star," Sangalo, 41, said in an interview this week at a New York hotel.

"I played at being an actress, and it wasn't until I started going to Carnival as a teenager and heard all that loud, joyous music blaring from the trucks that I said to myself: 'There's nothing I'd rather do than this.'"

Sangalo (pronounced San-GAHL-oh) is the leading exponent of an upbeat and often raucous style known as axé music, which combines a variety of Brazilian and foreign influences into a high-octane blend, reminiscent of what is heard at Carnival. Samba and reggae are the most obvious sources, but rock, soul and Caribbean genres such as salsa and merengue, as well as local regional rhythms, also enter the mix.

Her enormous popularity illustrates the gap between foreign perceptions of Brazilian music and the reality there. While singer-songwriters such as Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil and Marisa Monte win plaudits abroad for their subtle vocals and sophisticated melodies and harmonies, Brazil's charts are dominated by axé, romantic pop ballads and a local version of country music called sertaneja.

"For better or worse, Ivete reflects the state of Brazilian popular music at a moment when people are buying a lot of upbeat, simple dance music with lyrics that are very basic," Chris McGowan, a co-author of the pop music history *The Brazilian Sound*, said in a telephone



Ivete Sangalo, the most popular female vocalist in Brazil. Sangalo has sold more than 15 million records as a solo artist.

interview from Brazil. "She's a consummate professional with a powerful, controlled voice that can soar over drums and polyrhythms. On the other hand, there is not much subtlety about her and no great artistry, just pure show business."

Increasingly, the popularity of Sangalo, a former model with dark, expressive eyes, a husky voice, and an effervescent personality, extends beyond the stage and recordings. She appears regularly in television and print ads and on the cover of celebrity-oriented magazines, has been adopted by players on the national soccer team as their muse, has branched out into acting and has also shot fashion spreads for Brazilian *Vogue* and other magazines.

"She's not just a singer or entertainer,

she's also a personality whom people here like a lot, someone who is admired and seen as a role model," Ricardo Pesanha, the other author of *The Brazilian Sound*, said from Rio de Janeiro. "Women in particular are inspired by her, seeing her as a person who is strong, independent, happy, well-dressed and fulfilled, with a child and lots of money."

Sangalo was born in the interior of the state of Bahia, in Juazeiro, also the birthplace of Joo Gilberto, one of the fathers of the bossa nova. As a child, the youngest of a brood of six, she listened to all kinds of Brazilian music, but after her family moved to Salvador, the capital of Bahia, the most musically rich state in a country obsessed with music, her horizons broadened to include reggae and American pop and soul music.

"I adore Sly and the Family Stone, George Clinton, Prince, Kool and the Gang, and especially Stevie Wonder," she said.

Normally, "I don't do covers, but I bring them into my music and translate them into the percussion lines."

After Sangalo's father, a jeweller, died when she was a teenager, she began playing the bars of Salvador, accompanying herself on guitar and learning to project above the din and disarm potentially hostile crowds with humour and between-song patter. She joined a group called Banda Eva in 1993, had several hit records with them, and then ventured out on her own in 1999.

Marco Mazzola is a producer who, before working with Sangalo at the start of her solo career, had made records

with every major Brazilian female singer of recent decades, including Elis Regina, Gal Costa, Elba Ramalho and Fafá de Belém. Asked to name Sangalo's distinguishing characteristics, Mazzola listed the power of her voice, her charisma on the stage, her business savvy and her "integral" sense of who she is.

"There is something in her voice that is very warm, that transmits happiness to listeners," he added. "She's a theatrical performer, an actress and dancer as much as a singer, who sings with a lot of heart, and man, does she have drive and determination."

With nothing left to prove in Brazil, Sangalo has begun looking to the global market. She first toured the US in 2010, including a sold-out show at Madison Square Garden that was turned into a hit DVD, and arrives for her Newark show after testing the waters on the West Coast and in the Boston area, with Miami coming Sunday.

During her first go-round, the bulk of the audience at her US shows had roots in Brazil or Portugal, where she is also quite popular. But in her debut in Los Angeles last week, she happily reported, "half the audience was Americans", both English- and Spanish-speakers.

Last year, she won a Latin Grammy for a record she made with Gil and Veloso, whom she idolised as a child. To ease into the international arena, she has also performed with Dave Matthews, Shakira, Juan Luis Guerra and Alejandro Sanz, and when, in December, she makes her next live record, at a show in Salvador to commemorate her 20 years as a professional singer, she plans to include songs in English by Bob Marley and Stevie Wonder.

But it is not clear, even to her, whether she wants to follow in the footsteps of someone like Shakira, the Colombian singer who alternates between projects in English and ones in Spanish. That would require a commitment to absent herself from her homeland, which has enjoyed an economic boom — lifting as many as 50 million into the middle class — that coincides with the start of her solo career and that is the source of her success.

"It's a card in the sleeve, to leave my own country and come here for a year to dedicate myself to this and take advantage of what's here, which is really good and marvellous," she said.

"But what I've got there, in Brazil, is also marvellous, but different. What I can't do is stop singing." © 2013 THE NEW YORK TIMES

**“To be able to entertain people is a triumph ... There's nothing I'd rather do than this**

## I want to ride my bicycle

Continued from page 1



The station on the corner of Silom and Rama IV roads is too big for a footpath with a line of trees in the middle. Two of the eight docks were removed recently after photographs of them standing against a tree had been repeatedly shared on Facebook. Some stations will be relocated to more convenient and appropriate spots.

But the expansion plan isn't finalised, yet. There are two possible models: to increase the number of stations in a "satellite" format, and the other is to create a bike share system in different districts around Bangkok, in particular Thon Buri.

The public bike has the simple look of a utility bike, a single-speed machine

that comes in green without any accessories like built-in lights, baskets, locks or mirrors.

It's also light to ride. The size has been designed for Asian riders.

Under the new scheme operated by Smart Bike Service, who won an approved concession from the BMA, the rental fee is affordable and cycling in Bangkok doesn't require a helmet like cities in the West.

But it's hard for the scheme to attract newcomers in Bangkok to use the service. They are too scared to share the road with motorised vehicles; many refuse to cycle unless they are provided with a proper bike lane, which now is only available on Ratchadamri and Sathon roads. Many cyclists find the stations crammed in the central business districts and want it to stretch into tourist districts.

A Pun Pun station shares the look and size of a bus stop. Comprising eight parking docks, the back wall and the roof of the station, and the eight bikes are used as the commercial space.

The computerised rental hours, which operate from 7am to 8pm in the trial stage, will be expanded, it will run from 6am to midnight. The bike share system is meant for a short-trip commute in a day. If you fail to return the bike by midnight, a 500-baht fine will be imposed.

Ideal locations are busy spots in congested traffic areas, which can be on the main roads or on smaller streets. But some of the current locations are not proportionally fit.

Compared to 16 stations on Sathon Road, 10 on Rama I Road, and nine on Rama IV Road, there are only three stations on Silom.

That busy street requires more stations to allow commuters to move from the BTS or MRT stations to their office buildings on this congested road. Of course, no building owners want this

**Dos and Don'ts:**

- Bring your own helmet if you care for your own safety.
- Bring your own lock if you plan to park the bike somewhere.
- Bring your own lights if you plan to ride after sunset.
- Bring your own map or navigation device if you wish to explore the backstreets.
- Try the bike before setting off as some of the bikes start to wear out.

station to block the view of their commercial building and some pavements are occupied by street vendors, who refuse to move out of the way for the stations.

"The project has been delayed because of the untidy infrastructure like old water pipes and underground wires," said BMA spokesperson Threedow Aphaiwongs.

Hidden obstacles were found only when construction started on the spot and some of the stations had to be relocated from their original positions. Construction of the first 50 stations, however, have to meet a deadline of the end of next month.

As the deadline approaches, the construction of these stations has been rushed, resulting in many being placed in inappropriate locations. Some footpaths are too narrow to accommodate an eight-dock station and that makes it inconvenience for pedestrians.



## Move around on a bike

In a recent "race" between Pun Pun bikes and a car, cycling enthusiasts Umalux Bankhumasuta and Nonlany Ungwiwatkul proved that bicycle is a best way to move around the inner city.

The route was set to depart from the Chamchuri Square station to U-Chu Liang Building on Rama IV Road, then move on to Sam Yan Market, before ending the race at the station at Siam Square, in front of the Digital Gateway Building.

It took bicycles only seven minutes from the Chamchuri Square station to U-Chu Liang; 10 minutes to Sam Yan Market; and another 15 minutes from the market to return the bike at Siam Square Soi 5 station.

Despite the light traffic and empty parking at 10am on a week day, bicycles easily beat the car at the end of the race. The car driver may have arrived at U-Chu Liang before the cyclists, but it took time to find parking.

At the last stop, cyclists returned their bikes at the station and walked to the meeting spot. Five minutes later, the car arrived at the Digital Gateway Building.



# Bike babes

Two of the best-dressed women on the road give some tips on how to cycle in style

**STORY:: SIRINYA WATTANASUKCHAI**

**D**onning her shirt dress, high heels, light make-up and perfect hairdo with a flowery hair pin, Chada Wannapong was ready for the Bangkok Bike Chic ride in the city.

She wore her stylish outfit to convince other commuters that cycling wasn't limited only to those in Lycra tights and jerseys. The afternoon ride, held by the Green World Foundation on Car-Free Day last month, was a short trip around Rattanakosin's old town square after a talk by cyclists who "dress for the destination", instead of for the ride.

"We [make] the vehicle fit our life, not change our lifestyle to fit the vehicle," said Chada, 28, who joined the ride to show how women around the world dress for cycling.

"Those lycra uniforms make cycling [seem] unfriendly for those who don't cycle," she added.

Since April last year, Chada and her buddy Lalita Pingkasan, 27, who appeared at the ride in her jumpsuit, started to share photos on their Bicycle Belles Club of Siam Facebook fan page. It started after Chada's personal photos — where she featured herself in chic dresses on a red bike cycling around the city — attracted public attention.

To some, the combination of outfit and vehicle may not seem to fit such a tropical country as Thailand, but Chada and Lalita disagreed.

"Catholic nuns in Italy are wearing their uniform on a bike," said Chada. Maxi dresses, miniskirts, and high heels are as common as

shorts, pants and sneakers. These fashionable cycling outfits are displayed on websites such as Copenhagen Cycle Chic, Amsterdam Cycle Chic, and Skirt-clad Romanian.

Wearing high heels isn't a problem while cycling. Chada borrowed the professional cycling technique of pressing the front part of the feet on the pedals to maximise strength, as well as to keep her legs slim. One also needs to sit at a high-seat position.

"With high heels, it's even better when you don't have to tiptoe or jump off the saddle when waiting for the green light," said Chada who now lives in Nakhon Ratchasima province and commutes around town with her city bike.

Lalita suggested closed-toe high heels for cycling trips, preventing any possible injuries.

The traffic in Nakhon Ratchasima, which is apparently not too bad, makes Chada's cycling routine easier than that of those living in the capital. But it doesn't always mean the

roads are empty. The postgrad student spends about 70 minutes on her bike commuting to her university 17km from home every day.

Her simple trick was to use the backstreets to avoid traffic and possible accidents. "Why do we have to risk our life on the main streets?" said Chada.

However, it's not only fashion that the duo share on their Facebook fanpage, but also tips and tricks for how to be stylish like those portrayed in the photos.

To keep yourself safe and in style, Chada suggested keeping left on main roads, and parking on the left side of the first car at the traffic lights to make yourself visible to other commuters. Always give hand signals when making a turn or stop.

Cycling can become the choice of transport for many commuters in Bangkok and the provinces, said Chada, since one can always dress up for their destination without having to wear those lycra tights.

As Bangkok has been listed as one of the cities in the world with the most congested traffic, Chada wanted the fan page to inspire more city commuters to opt for cycling as a means of transport. One can go for dinner, a film, shopping, or to the park on a two-wheeler with little sweat.

"You can even go to the temple in your *pha sin*," said Chada, referring to the traditional narrow Thai skirt. The trick was to wear shorts under your skirt to always keep you in style and to ensure you don't have to worry about causing an unwanted scene on the road.

Cycling around in a skirt on a bicycle isn't complicated. The duo suggested a city bike with a sloping frame, which is easier for cyclists in skirts to mount. An umbrella holder and a bottle holder can be attached to the handlebars to keep you out of the strong sun and the thirst at bay. A tiny bell can be useful to warn pedestrians and other commuters along the way. And if you are afraid that your skirt will be drawn into the spokes of the rear wheel, a fabric skirt guard is easy enough to make and install to cover the wheel.

While Chada encouraged everyone to dress for the destination, rather than the ride, she has some cheeky words of wisdom for those who are interesting in relying on a bike as their primary mode of transport: "Most car drivers tend to give way for cyclists with pretty dresses."



Photos courtesy of GREEN WORLD FOUNDATION