



Those interested in donating their bicycles can call Bike Aid on 346-4466.

ANSWER

ASIAONE COMMERCE

Scrap metal to you... But to some children in Thailand, it means getting to school on time

BY IRENE KEW
Dec 11, 1999

HAVE you got a bicycle collecting dust in a corner of your storeroom?

Or have you seen a discarded bike somewhere?

Here's a chance to turn that piece of scrap metal into a valuable gift this Christmas.



Pic/ JOYCE LIM

Since January, Bike Aid, a non-profit organisation in Singapore, has been collecting old bicycles for poor children in the rural villages of Thailand.

Explained Mr Peter Lye, treasurer of Bike Aid: "In Thailand, many of the children have to walk several kilometres to get to class.

"Because of this, sometimes they simply do not attend school."

Mr Boonchoon Vajanapanich from the Thailand Cycling Club (TCC), whom Bike Aid is working with, agreed.

"Most children walk to school in bare feet. Their homes are about three kilometres away and the kids have to walk on hot, dry and uneven roads."

Bike Aid, which was formed in 1992, organises bike rides every two years to raise funds for needy organisations like the National Kidney Foundation.

It was a bike trip to southern Thailand last year that gave birth to this bike collection project.

Said Mr Lai: "While there, we came across this newspaper report about the Thai Cycling Club collecting old bicycles

for the children.

"So we got in touch with them and started our own collection."

So far, Bike Aid has collected 138 bicycles which were sent to Thailand in September.

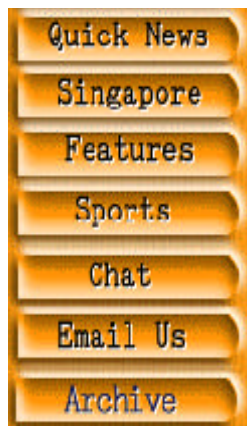
The partly refurbished bikes were then taken to rural schools.

The first batch of bicycles were given to pupils of the Lopburi provincial school.

When the pupils complete their education, they have to return the bikes so that other children may enjoy the same benefits.

Bike Aid will continue to collect bicycles till March 31, 2000. They already have 46 bikes.

Said Mr Lai: "We go round to collect the bikes from people who leave their contact numbers with us. Hopefully, we'll get more this time round. The children in Thailand really need these bikes."



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