

A clean and green AIT

Campus is looking for a more environmentally friendly approach

With its slogan "Clean, Green AIT", the Asian Institute of Technology seeks to be a learning institution with a more active approach to environmental concerns. In May, AIT president Prof Said Irandoust appointed a task force to create a campus environment that is healthy and clean.

According to AIT's Dr Elizabeth Bola Ogunlana, environmentally focused activities started at the university with the launch of AIT Environment Month during celebration for World Environment

Day on June 5. On the day, Grade 5 students from AIT Community School put on a play entitled *Nurture Nature for Our Future*, which promoted environmental conservation. The play enlightened members of the AIT community about environmental awareness and consciousness.

Later in the day, a workshop was held in which participants discussed what kind of environmental practices should be encouraged or discouraged at AIT.

On the following day, 117 trees were planted at the school, with an emphasis on fruit bearing trees such as jack fruit, mango and guava trees as well as Indian mast trees. The event was sponsored by the United Nations Environmental Programme's Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign, which aims to see at least one billion trees planted worldwide during 2007.

Clean AIT Day was another of the institute's green activities. "AIT community members came out at 'the sound of the gong' to pick up rubbish lying around the campus," said Ogunlana. "Each volunteer was issued with gloves and a bag to collect trash. Members of the Environment Task Force wore Clean, Green AIT T-shirts. Each community member returning to the meeting point with a full bag of trash was also given a Clean, Green AIT T-shirt on a first-come first-served basis. At least 300kg of rubbish was collected on the first day alone. Clean AIT Day is now done once a month.

"The community has also embarked on a waste segregation demonstration project. The project is being spearheaded by the

Student Union and the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Knowledge Hub and the Canadian International Development Agency is its official sponsor. It is being implemented in Student Village Two and the staff housing area. Bins have been given to each housing unit and residents have been informed about waste separation, its importance and how to do it. The housing units now segregate waste for reuse and recycling."

To discourage the use of plastic cups, a Bring Your Own Cup (BYOC) campaign was launched.

"Community members are encouraged to take their own cups to coffee shops whenever they buy coffee," said Ogunlana. "The first coffee shop

on the campus to participate in BYOC is giving a five baht discount to customers who bring their own cup. Another shop gives a free coffee mix sachet to everyone who brings their own cup. Task force members also sold portable thermos cups with the Clean, Green AIT logo on them to community members. This activity reduced the use of plastic cups and the amount of rubbish produced on the campus."

A similar practice is helping to get rid of plastic bags, and from January next year the use of plastic bags will be banned on campus.

"A new AIT Environment Policy has been formulated," added Ogunlana. "During orientation day, new students were asked to take the AIT Environment Pledge. The pledge commits them to care for the environment and to encourage others to do the same. On September 8, AIT community members launched the Cash for Trash campaign. The task force invited a waste recycling company to the campus. Members of the community came with their segregated waste to exchange it for cash. Cash for Trash is done on the first Saturday of each month. You may be able to sell the junk in your house for cash if you head to the AIT campus."

How are you helping to reduce your carbon footprint?

Share your eco-friendly activities with us by emailing usnisas@bangkokpost.co.th.

EarthALERT
USNISA SUKHSVASTI