

Firms urged to tidy up act on Samui

Publicity in exchange for better green record

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Environmental officials yesterday launched a "Green Map" programme to relieve the unpleasant impact from booming tourism on Samui resort island, whose resources are increasingly being exploited.

The programme invites more than 280 hotel and resort operators on the island to follow a set of environmentally-friendly practices.

They need to adjust the way they use water, electricity, and other environmental protection activities.

Water often runs short in the peak tourist season when visitors flock to the island. Natural Resources and Environment Minister Praphat Panyachartrak said this forced hotel operators to rely on groundwater, which would encourage its depletion and allow salt water to seep through groundwater layers.

Cooperation from business people to ensure sustainable use of island resources was a must and, in return, people who joined the programme would get their hotels advertised on state tourism and environmental agencies' websites.

Advertisements will be posted on a so-called eco-tourism map, dubbed "Green Map," which could lend a good image to hotels, said Monthip Sriratana Tabucanon, chief of Environmental Quality and Promotion Department.

The time was right to launch environmental activities on Koh Samui. Mr Praphat said unpleasant changes on the island indicated the need for serious remedies.

More coconut trees were dying from pests. This could be linked to a degraded ecological system in which development reduces green areas and insects which prey on pests disappear.