

# Explore the blue wide world

## “Khanom Marine Biodiversity Initiative Project”

Thailand is known for its high marine biodiversity. The country faces the South China Sea of the Pacific Ocean on the eastern coastline; and the Andaman Sea of the Indian Ocean on the western coastline. The country is sloping down towards the equator, receiving a perfect sunlight. These all combination, provide a rich marine biodiversity for Thailand both from the Pacific and Indian Oceans.



Islands and coral reefs, which are the study sites of “Khanom Biodiversity Initiative Project”

Global warming is, however, causing concern around the world. It is considered to be a serious threat to marine biodiversity especially in coral reef ecosystem. Rising water temperature causes coral bleaching; and in 1998, massive areas of corals were affected all over the world by the higher sea temperature including the coral in Thailand. Gulf of Thailand has become one of the twenty-five ‘hot spots’ since then.

Pink dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*)

This rare marine mammal is a symbol of Khanom District. It is usually found swimming in coastal water of Baan Leam PraTrub.



Map of Khanom - Mu Koh Thale Tai National Park. Navy blue indicates an area of the national park where there are mud flats, beaches and islands with shallow water coral reef.

around each of the islands. Healthy shallow water coral reefs harbor hundred of associated species can still be found in this area. A rare species of marine mammal, Pink dolphins (or Indo-pacific Humpbacked Dolphins), are living in the coastal water of the national park. Local people still live their lives simply and together in a warm fisherman community, making shrimp paste in the late afternoon.

“Khanom Marine Biodiversity Initiative Project” is not only partially funded by BRT but is also supported by TOTAL Foundation, France and TOTAL E&P Thailand, which operate gas and oil business and is also the co-investor of natural

gas exploration and production in Gulf of Thailand. This has been a great opportunity to cooperate with business section to develop and build up knowledge on marine biodiversity and environmental conservation.

Goals of this project is to study biodiversity covering coastal and marine ecosystems at Khanom - Mu Koh Thale Tai National Park and to gain

Recognizing the prime importance of this issue, BRT has launched an area-base research “Khanom Marine Biodiversity Initiative Project” to encourage researchers to develop research on biodiversity study covering coastal and marine ecosystems including a long term monitoring of climate change.

Khanom - Mu Koh Thale Tai National Park is chosen to be the based area of this project because of its highly diverse habitats, which are still pristine. There are white sandy beaches along the coast, seagrass bed, which provide food and shelter for the juveniles and coral reefs beneath the sea



On February, 18<sup>th</sup> 2006, BRT-TOTAL MOU signing ceremony was organized at House of Commons. Jacques Chirac, the president of the French Republic, has been an honoray representing the French Republic together with Thai prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra.

information of climate change from long term monitoring in order to build up database for sustainable management. This project would be operated by working and sharing together among researchers, students and local communities.