

THE ECONOMIST

We want survey off Web -- police

Magazine put banned Thailand report on its website for free access

Agence France-Presse

Thai police will order *The Economist* magazine to take its controversial Thailand survey off its website, where it was made available free after being barred from distribution.

The magazine's circulation director for Asia, Peter Bakker, said yesterday the company decided to put the 14-page survey on the website to serve readers and subscribers in Thailand who missed out on the hard copy.

"We made it free of charge this time," Bakker said. *Economist* country surveys are normally only available on the Internet for a fee or to subscribers. National police spokesman Major General Pongsapat Pongcharoen said yesterday that authorities would check *The Economist* website to verify if the article was available there.

"We will check, and if we find it there we will contact them and ask them to remove it from the Web," he said.

Hong Kong-based Bakker said *The Economist* had not yet been contacted by Thai police, but that it would be reluctant to remove the article from the website.

"I doubt that we would, to be very honest," he said. "The web is a worldwide institution, available to everyone.

"We would consider it, but frankly it is something that's quite out of the ordinary. I'd like to see the request first."

The special coverage, written by Bangkok-based correspondent Edward McBride, was reviewed by police, who took exception to a section dealing with the monarchy.

The Economist agreed on Saturday not to distribute the March 2 edition containing the survey, after being told that if it arrived on newsstands, it would be banned and copies seized.

Thai law strictly limits what can be reported about the monarchy, particularly about HM the King.

But it remained unclear what legal precedent, if any, was being set in Thailand by making the survey available to Internet users.

"It's trying not to send any message to Thai authorities but to our readership," Bakker said.

"We have refrained from circulating the hard copy, but *The Economist* will continue to stand by its independent, objective and free reporting."

The Economist's weekly circulation in Thailand is normally 4,500 copies, but Bakker said he had been expecting about 7,000 copies of the special survey issue to be sold. The magazine's survey was released at a tense time in Thailand's relations with the foreign media, after the government threatened to deport two Bangkok-based journalists with *The Far Eastern Economic Review* over an article that touched on the government's relations with the monarchy.



FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW lawyer [David Lyman](#) submits the magazine's letter of apology to Parliament secretary-general Sirilak Panbamrunakit yesterday.