

OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH THEM ...

Words cannot even begin to describe the horrors that unfolded on Boxing Day 2004 when news broke of the devastating tsunami that swept across south-east Asia, causing the loss of over 150,000 lives, decimating families, and causing widespread structural and economic damage. Amongst those missing and presumed to have died in this tragic event were several thousand tourists enjoying what should have been a happy Christmas holiday and our thoughts are with their families at this time of great loss just as they are with all the local residents of the area affected by this freak of nature.

Amongst the worst affected places are Indonesia, the western coast of southern Thailand and the east coast of Sri Lanka. Fortunately, Malaysia, although near the epicentre, was largely spared due to it being shielded by Sumatra and although Penang was hit, Singapore mercifully remained largely unaffected. Although, perhaps, comparatively few bus enthusiasts will have visited these areas in the past, most will undoubtedly know of them through the influence of British buses, new and secondhand, which for several decades have been operated in such places as Sri Lanka, Singapore and Penang.

Pictures shown on television and in the national press have, amongst other things, shown several buses and coaches severely damaged by the tsunami, most of which are beyond repair and as part of the area's rebuilding programme there will be a dire need to replace these in the months ahead. In a bid to offer assistance, an Asia Bus Response campaign has been set up by a voluntary, co-ordinating group of UK bus professionals with the objective of sourcing 'decent mid-life buses' which can be shipped out to the worst affected areas of Sri Lanka and Indonesia to help them rebuild their transport network. As well as providing a means of transportation, Islamic Relief will arrange skills training for drivers and engineers in the countries of destination and will pay those people a living wage. Donor companies will be responsible for delivering buses to a UK departure point while Islamic Relief is co-ordinating and



sourcing funding for shipping, taxes, registration and licensing. It isn't about palming off elderly vehicles, however, as all the buses donated should be robust, high floor, low-tech vehicles (from minibuses to double deckers) which are capable of a few

Top : Operating a service between Pakman and Tharat is a Mercedes Benz (82-4004). (M.Templeton)

Above : Fitted with dual door bodywork and operating route 25 in Bangkok is a well loaded and well ventilated single decker. (M.Templeton)

Left : Also seen at work in Bangkok is this Micro Bus with coach-style bodywork fitted with a jack-knife front door. (M.Templeton)



years hard work. Asia Bus Response has undertaken to ensure that the buses dispatched fit the needs of the destination countries and is arranging for each bus to be independently inspected prior to shipping to ensure worthiness. With so much having to be put into place, mid-late March is the soonest likely shipping date and with the sea journey taking around six weeks it thus appears that it will be the middle of the year before the buses will first be used in their new homes.

Within a week of the appeal being launched, no fewer than 65 buses had been

Right : One of Blazefield's Alexander-bodied B6s of the type pledged to the appeal, this example is Keighley & District 221 (L6420WY). (K.A.Jenkinson)

Below left : Nottingham City Transport has donated one of its Alexander-bodied Scania N113DRBs of the type illustrated here by 368 (G368RTO). (P.T.Stokes)

- pledged (with more expected to follow) amongst which are :
- Blazefield Holdings* : 2 Alexander-bodied Volvo B6s.
 - EYMS Group* : Mercedes Benz 709D & 811Ds.
 - Emsworth & District Motor Services* : 1 small Bedford coach and 1 Bedford bus.
 - Group Travel, Cornwall* : 1 Mercedes Benz 811D.
 - Harris Coaches, Blackwood* : 1 Caetano-bodied DAF MB200.
 - Ipswich Buses* : 1 Leyland B21 single deck & Leyland Chieftain breakdown wagon.
 - Nottingham City Transport* : 1 1990 Scania Alexander-bodied N113 double decker.
 - Oxfordshire County Council* : 2 VW Transporter minibuses.
 - Southern Vectis* : 10 Iveco 59.12 minibuses.
 - Thamesdown Transport* : 1 ECW-bodied Leyland Fleetline double decker.
 - Trent Barton* : 2 Northern Counties Palatine-bodied Volvo B10Bs.
 - Go-Ahead Group* : To be confirmed.
 - National Express* : To be confirmed.

In addition, encouragement is being given to filling the buses with supplies required by destination countries at the time of despatch.

We are sure that many of our readers will have already made a donation to the

Two of Trent Barton's Northern Counties-bodied Volvo B10Bs will soon be departing for an as yet unknown destination in south-east Asia. Illustrating the type is 109 (L109LRA) seen here at Derby bus station operating the 120 service to Mansfield. (D.J.Stanier)



tsunami appeal, but to those who have not, it is not too late to send whatever you are able to afford to help the people of south-east Asia to recover from this crisis and begin to rebuild their shattered lives. Remember, it could have been any one of

us that through no fault of our own had to suffer that dreadful experience In conclusion, we have included a few pictures of buses in Thailand in happier times. Some of these will have survived the recent devastation, sadly others won't

