



## PRESS RELEASE

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### ROLEX ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF INTERNATIONAL AWARDS SCHEME

'Great Mother of the Hornbills' Pilai Poonswad from Thailand named new Rolex Laureate

**Singapore, 25 October 2006** – Marking three decades since the inception of its international awards programme, Rolex today named the winners of the 12th Rolex Awards for Enterprise. The Laureates – three women and two men – hail from Australia, France, India, Thailand and the United Kingdom. They join the 55 Laureates who, since 1976, have been singled out by the Swiss watchmaker for their innovative projects to change the world and make it a better place to live.

Each Laureate will receive US\$100,000 and a personally inscribed gold Rolex chronometer tomorrow evening (26 October) at a ceremony at the Esplanade Concert Hall in Singapore. The five Laureates – selected by an independent panel of experts from nearly 1,700 applicants from 117 countries – will be recognised for their contributions to science, technology, the environment, exploration and cultural heritage.

There have been an unprecedented number of entries from Asia Pacific this year, including an increase of 66 per cent from Southeast Asia over 2004. With a strong showing of innovative projects from Asia Pacific, five out of ten Laureates and Associate Laureates are from this region, the highest ever. In addition, there are an increasing number of female winners – four out of ten are women.

"We are delighted to be paying tribute to these outstanding individuals, including so many from the Asia Pacific region," said Rebecca Irvin, director of the Rolex Awards for Enterprise. "The number of winners and the record amount of entries from the area are tangible signs of the growing spirit of enterprise.

"We have seen extremely good entries from Thailand over the years. Thai environmentalist Pisit Charnsnoh was named an Associate Laureate in 2004 for his campaign to save the dugong from extinction. This year we are thrilled to honour a new Thai Laureate, Pilai Poonswad, who for the past ten years has overcome multiple obstacles to turn poachers and illegal loggers into protectors of hornbills in Thailand. Honoured as the 'Great Mother of the Hornbills' among conservationists, we honour Pilai Poonswad today for making such a great impact on conservation in Thailand."



Rolex Laureate Pilai Poonswad said: "Thailand has 13 of Asia's 31 species of hornbill; one may be extinct; five endangered; four are near-threatened and three are vulnerable. It is my hope that our efforts will foster more research into the complex web of life and that more Thais will learn anew what it means to live in harmony with the forest."

Poonswad will be using the Rolex Award prize money to create a secure supply of hornbill nests. Teams of villagers will maintain and repair existing nesting sites and construct artificial ones from weathered timber, fiberglass and resins.

## THE ROLEX LAUREATES 2006

### **Alexandra Lavrillier: Run a nomadic school for Evenk hunter-herders in Siberia**

In south-eastern Siberia, a nomadic people are trying to preserve their way of life. The traditional culture of the Evenk, who excel at reindeer herding, hunting and fishing, has been eroded through contact with Western civilization. For eight years, Alexandra Lavrillier, a brilliant French ethnologist, has been helping them to save their heritage by setting up a nomadic school that will give Evenk children the chance to receive a modern education while maintaining their ancestral traditions.

### **Brad Norman: Establish a global photo-ID network for whale shark conservation**

Impelled by a love of the sea and its largest fish, the elusive whale shark, Australian marine conservationist Brad Norman has created a photo-identification system to assist its conservation. Based on a pattern-recognition method originally invented to study constellations in the night sky, the system will soon enable scores of coastal communities and thousands of individual divers to gather information about this gentle giant of the seas.

### **Pilai Poonswad: Engage rural communities in Thailand in saving threatened hornbills**

After rediscovering a species of hornbill thought to be extinct in southern Thailand's ravaged rainforests, Thai microbiologist Pilai Poonswad set about turning former poachers and illegal loggers into protectors of these glorious birds and their precarious habitat. Her plan for city families to "adopt" hornbill nests to fund the work has brought about remarkable changes in community attitudes towards conservation.

### **Chanda Shroff: Revive the craft of embroidery in Kutch, India**

In a remote part of India, Chanda Shroff has established a movement to revive a local form of artistic expression, hand embroidery, creating a sustainable means of income. The region of Kutch once had a long and rich tradition of embroidery. But, since the 1960s, synthetic materials and machine work have pushed this craft close to extinction. Shroff is preserving this unique heritage while promoting an exquisite art form and empowering women in highly conservative societies.



### **Rory Wilson: Develop a revolutionary electronic logging device to track animals**

English zoologist Rory Wilson is renowned for developing ingenious ways to track wild animals and record their behaviour without directly observing them. His latest invention, a lightweight logging device, can go where satellite-based tracking devices cannot, to observe free-living animals. Wilson's new logger harnesses the laws of physics to accurately estimate the energy expenditure of animals, and is set to revolutionise research into the behaviour of threatened species and obtain precious data to help save them.

"The Laureates demonstrate the unwavering spirit of enterprise that has underpinned the Rolex Awards since their beginning 30 years ago," said Patrick Heiniger, Chief Executive Officer of Rolex SA and Chairman of the Awards Selection Committee. "We at Rolex are gratified that we have been able to support these brave individuals who dare to do things differently to improve the human condition."

### **The Associate Laureates**

In addition to the prizes awarded to the 2006 Laureates, five Associate Laureates will each receive \$50,000 and a steel-and-gold Rolex chronometer. These runners-up will be honoured at ceremonies in their own countries or regions in the months ahead.

### **Selection Process**

This year's Selection Committee, a voluntary panel of nine world-renowned scientists, educators, entrepreneurs, conservationists and explorers were eminently qualified to apply their own spirit of enterprise in judging the diverse projects presented to them. "The committee members and I were struck by the originality of thought put forth by the winners, by how these pioneers have broken new ground in an innovative, yet constructive way," commented Mr Heiniger.

Joining Mr Heiniger on the 2006 Selection Committee were Dr Laretna T. Adishakti, Indonesian architect and founder of the Center for Heritage Conservation; Professor Denise Bradley, vice chancellor and president of the University of South Australia; Motoko Ishii, Japanese lighting designer; Erling Kagge, Norwegian polar explorer and mountaineer; Professor Tommy Koh, diplomat and patron of the arts from Singapore; William K. Reilly, American conservationist; Dr Luis Rojas Marcos, American professor of psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine; Mark Shuttleworth, South African technology entrepreneur and philanthropist; and Sir Magdi Habib Yacoub, British surgeon and founder of the Magdi Yacoub Institute.

### **Seeking New Applicants**

Rolex will shortly announce the official call for entries to the 2008 Rolex Awards, inviting enterprising individuals in a broad range of areas to apply to the 13th series of the biennial programme. The Rolex Awards aim to find and reward extraordinary and often unrecognised men and women worldwide whose ongoing projects benefit the global environment and mankind. These projects must be original, feasible and positively impact the community.



The regional deadlines for entries for the 13th Rolex Awards are:  
31 May 2007 for Asia, the Pacific and North, Central and South America;  
30 September 2007 for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

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**For further information and photography please contact:**

James Ward or Nuttaporn Tangwongsan

Grayling Public Relations

Tel: 02 610 3601

Email: [james.ward@th.grayling.com](mailto:james.ward@th.grayling.com) / [nuttaporn.tangwongsan@th.grayling.com](mailto:nuttaporn.tangwongsan@th.grayling.com)