

SOUTHEAST



Towards the 21st Century

by

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This week we want to dedicate the whole page to tourism. We will look into such issues as cross-border linkages with Indochina and the role of human resources development in tourism.

My own involvement in tourism began about eighteen months ago when my good friend, Dr. Savit Bhotiwihok, who at that time was Minister in charge of tourism, asked me to join his board. Since then I have primarily been involved in two related areas:

- how to develop human resources to supply the tourism sector
- how to improve human resources among the 800 plus, hard-working staff members at the Tourism Authority of Thailand(TAT).

Of course it is impossible to solve all the problems in such a short space of time, but at least my appreciation of the situation has been enhanced by being able to work at both Board and Department levels within the TAT. As such, under the very excellent leadership of Ms. Phanit Sangkavichit with myself serving as an advisor, the Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (HTTI) has become a particularly important department within the TAT. We must also thank my colleague of over ten years, TAT Governor Mr. Seree Wangpaichitr. And I know that Dr. Savit also believes that HTTI has an important role to play in the development of human resources.

The HTTI has already achieved several things:

- We are organizing a Basic Tourism training course for 20 Indochinese representatives involved in the industry. We expect to do more next year. Ultimately the HTTI may become a regional center for human resources development in the tourism industry.
- We are setting up an academic advisory committee to draw up a curriculum.
- We have begun exchanging up to ten students at a time with Australia.
- We also plan to ask the Canadian International Development Agency for a grant of up to \$1 million to establish a cooperation with Burapa University and Niagra College.
- We are asking the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University Affairs to approve HTTI courses for credit transfer to other academic courses.

In addition, I have been appointed by the TAT board to chair a sub-committee looking into human resource issues along the following lines:

- establish new pay structures to give TAT staff more incentives
- increase welfare supports including housing allowances, loans and provisions for the education of children
- improve the work environment; we cannot stay forever at our present temporary offices
- undertake intensive training among middle and top level personnel
- undertake an organisation survey
- implement a change of organisation structure

Last week the 'International Travel Show' was held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, and two months ago, Post Publishing Public Co.,Ltd. Managing Director Nigel Oakins and I agreed that the Bangkok Post, McCann Erickson and the TAT should combine strengths to help promote Thailand as a hub for tourism to Indochina. As a consequence of that agreement, on 18 August we staged a much anticipated symposium entitled 'The Greater Mekong Basin - Destination for the 21st Century' attended by 400 delegates mainly from overseas, which I both chaired and very much enjoyed.

I think we achieved several things;

- We spread the word about regional destinations and raised awareness about possible linkages
- We established the fact that new destinations are rich in natural beauty and historic cultures.
- And we established the fact that in the space of one short week it is possible for tourists to visit 3-4 countries.

Now we must seize the opportunities. Tourism will certainly expand in Vietnam, Myanmar and elsewhere in the region, but can Thailand co-operate with its counterparts to make the most of the opportunities all round? I would recommend that we take the following steps towards this:

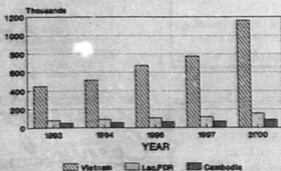
- We should establish a policy of regional cooperation. Perhaps the TAT can play a leading role. The Thai government should co-ordinate the activities of the various ministries concerned; Foreign Affairs, Interior and Communications, and also THAI Airways International.
- Thai businesses must explore the investment potential in the region. There is a serious shortage of good hotels, and yet during my own travels in Vietnam I see more projects undertaken by Singaporean and Malaysian contractors than Thai contractors.
- I would urge the Thai government to diligently follow up on Bangkok's potential for serving as the regional airline hub.

To achieve these goals academics must do more research, and everyone concerned should cooperate with the media. For my part I will continue to concentrate on human resources issues in relation to tourism and we will hold the next such seminar on this topic at Thammasat University, where we will travel further along the road to converting the potential into reality.

See you next week!

HRI in cooperation with Asia-Pacific Consultants (APC) will organize 'HR Strategic Thinking and Action II' between 27 September and 15 December 1994. Interested persons please contact HRI Tel. 226-5324, 223-9286 or APC Tel. 374-0861-2.

Tourist Projection in Indochina 1993 - 2000



Source: TAT.