

Bangkok Post **ฉบับพิเศษ**



Towards the 21st Century

by
Dr. Chira Hongladarom, Executive Director, Human Resources Institute, Thammasat University.

I hope you enjoyed the interview last week with Professor Michael Hammer. Make a note in your diary to catch him on January 20, at the Queen Sirikit Convention Center.

Much has happened to me since I got back from Europe. In terms of the HRI, we have been getting ready to celebrate Thammasat University's 60th anniversary with a unique, high-powered conference on Wednesday, November 23. It will be the first time that the visionary topic of shifting the public sector paradigm has been tackled with such a sense of urgency. The guest speakers will all be distinguished representatives from the Government sector including Former Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Annuay Virawan; Director of the Office of the Governor of the Bank of Thailand Dr. Pisit Lee-atham; Permanent Secretary Ministry of University Affairs Mr. Narong Chivangkur; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Interior Mr. Aree Wongsearay; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Dr. Sawai Prammanee; General Manager of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand Mr. Somboon Manenava; Chairman BMTS Dr. Chumpol Pornphrapa; and Director General Department of Fisheries Mr. Plodprasop Suraswadi.

Private sector speakers will include Managing Director of Thai Farmers Bank Plc. Mr. Banthoon Lamsam, and Managing Director KODAK Thailand Co., Ltd. Prof. Dr. Wicht Srisa-an.

This is a very important conference which will hopefully prove a turning point in Thailand's history and prompt actions that will be of real benefit to the people. For myself, although I have become increasingly active in working on HR issues in the private sector, my heart is still with the government sector. If only we can improve then we will not lose out in this increasingly competitive world.

Tomorrow the Faculty of Economics at Chiangmai University, under the very able leadership of the Dean, Dr. Sangkom Suwannarat, together with the HRI and the Institute of Policy Research for Development, will hold a workshop to discuss the response of northern farmers to the demands of the age of globalization. One of the main purposes of this column is to develop ways of looking towards the next century that will maximise and capitalise on opportunities and minimize threats. Thai agriculture employs most of our workers but contributes relatively little to Gross National Product. Therefore, this seminar will concentrate on innovating new farming practices to replace outdated traditional methods, and suggesting alternative means of generating income that will help farmers provide their children with a better education.

Like the Education ministries, the Agriculture ministry needs more vision. Given that change is the only constant in today's world, and as Prof. Hammer keeps reminding us, these changes will also be unpredictable, if we do not do something the future may not be too rosy. But while the Government has a crucial role to play in our development, Thai society is so dynamic that even the Prime Minister's influence is limited unless he can get everybody's cooperation. A smart government is one which listens to the views of experts and implements their ideas, and then claims the success for themselves. A government that only listens to a few people and relies on bureaucratic routines will not help our country to survive in the increasingly competitive world.

Fortunately this column can at least help. Our work with Bangkok Post is a shining example of what the academic community and the media can achieve when we go hand-in-hand. Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Supachai Panichpakdi, Government Spokesman Abhisit Vejajiva and Finance Minister Tarrin Nimmunhaeminda have all recently voiced strong support for human resources development, and the Chuan government has committed to spending 40,000 million baht on various aspects of education. This might not have happened but for the publicity the issue has received of late. Now we must hope we are not too late, and that the public sector will be able to achieve the results we desire.

Finally, with re-engineering still the hot topic in Bangkok and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, I have invited two expert management consultants to share their views on this topic in a two part series. The second part of their discussion will appear next week. See you then!

Distribution of labour and Entp. of private sector in Vietnam

