



Towards the 21st Century

by
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By the time you read this, the political situation in relation to the stability of the Government will have become clearer. With the next millennium just six years away, I wonder what the future holds for Thai politics, and are we ready for the challenges? At least I was happy to hear that Parliament is establishing a Democracy Training Institute to prepare Thailand's future political leaders.

Among the many interesting events of last week, the international conference on Economics and Environment, jointly organised by *Herald Tribune* and the Thai Environment Institute, and chaired by Khun Anand Panyarachun, particularly stood out. In my opinion, it takes someone like Khun Anand to push for an effective environmental policy and action. Such individuals who possess both wisdom and long-term vision are rare in our society.

I am in agreement with those who say that Thailand should reprioritise its goals away from achieving economic growth at all costs, towards taking the environment and human resources into consideration in order to achieve what we call "sustainable development." This was also the subject of a talk I gave last week as guest speaker at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) graduate programme on human resources, which is very ably led by Dr. Chatchai na Chiangmai. My own ideas on this subject centre around the fact that this country is shifting from a policy of maximising Gross National Product (GNP) through investment and utilisation of non-human resources in-puts such as infrastructure, capital goods, natural resources and finance, towards a second stage of development as outlined in the forthcoming 8th National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) plan. The 8th plan will instead emphasise investment in human capital in terms of education, training, health etc, which is also naturally the thrust of my own efforts at influencing policy.

At the same time, I believe we must also move towards a 3rd stage of development in which a long-term balance between man, industry and environment is achieved and maintained. Here the questions are whether economic growth can ever go hand-in-hand with the environment? And can the agricultural sector raise its productivity and income levels so as to narrow the gap between urban and rural incomes? In addition, can we reach the stage when we can be sure that our children and grandchildren will enjoy a good quality of life and even feel confident about the future for their own offspring?

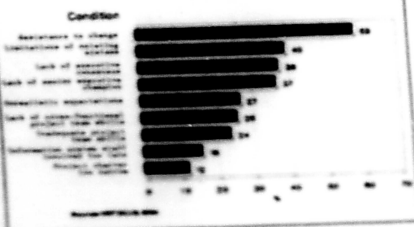
One of our problems is that in Thailand there are 3-4 organisations which basically control development policy; the NESDB, Bank of Thailand, Board of Investment and perhaps the Finance Ministry. Please don't get me wrong, all these leaders are my friends and we debate a lot. Nevertheless, I wonder if Thai people should fully trust them with the task of mapping the way to achieving sustainable development goals. Personally I doubt it, but not because they are not smart enough. Rather it is because this is not the way these institutions have been thinking for the past 25 years and they are slow to change.

I very much agree with His Majesty the King's development ideas, which center around maintaining the balance between life and the inner happiness of the people. Who in Bangkok is not sick and tired of the traffic and pollution? And yet are we offered any alternatives? And as I saw during my visit to NIDA, the same is happening in Chiang Mai, where city planning seems to be just as badly neglected.

Finally, let me urge our readers and the public in general to become more involved. Thailand's future depends on everybody's participation, so anyone with bright ideas and sound knowledge should speak out now and not just leave everything in the hands of a few bureaucrats. And while you are about it, why not let the HRI/Post Cooperation column know what you think too!

See you next week!

Obstacles to Success of Reengineering



IN THIS WEEK'S HRI/POST COOPERATION COLUMN: SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY!

Philippe Garnier, General Manager of Royal Carillon Resort Hotel, Pattaya, a 35 year-old Swiss who graduated MBA from Business school in Geneva, looks at how three phases of HR development in the Eastern Thailand are challenging family businesses to become more professional. He also explains how progressive hotels can fill an shortage of skilled professionals by implementing enlightened HR management techniques involving career development programmes and production employee performance assessments.

Dr. 'N' Smith of Thai Hospitalier, for the good of the guest, the worker and the nation, Australian Duncan T. Mackinnon, Manager of the Royal Car Hotel, rolls up his sleeves and gets to work to generate more enthusiasm for the training task among private businesses, corporate professionals and government agencies.



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