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กรุงเทพมหานคร



Towards the 21st Century

by
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I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers 'sustainable' happiness in 1995. Over the last 6 months, the HRI/Post Co-operation Column has worked with many distinguished guest columnists who have greatly contributed to our success. They have also given us a number of suggestions for future topics, and we will take these into account in the New Year. I can assure you that we will continually strive to improve because I believe that customer satisfaction is the key to our success.

This week's column is quite special and unique as I have invited several of our former guest columnists to reflect on the usefulness of this project, and also look forward to the HR situation in 1995. The New Year is a particularly appropriate time for such reflections. But before I give you some of mine, first let me report on the latest events at the HRI.

The most interesting of the many activities in which I was involved last week, was a trip I took to Vietnam. You may recall that the HRI has undertaken several projects in cooperation with Vietnam, especially their State Planning Committee. On this occasion I spent a little less than 3 days there accompanied by two of my staff. As I have said before, my hope is that Thailand will emerge as an international centre for Human Resources Development for Indochina. Our experiences in the areas of market transition and management, especially in the global context, are of particular use to them.

This was my ninth trip to Hanoi, and although I was also there three months ago, even after such a short interval, there was evidence of further rapid change. Firstly, the Vietnam national airline has started using US-made Boeing 767 airplanes and European Airbus 320s, and Hanoi has become a noticeably busier airport, with more arrivals and departures. Secondly, I noticed that the government has set up a modern duty free shopping facility at the airport, which apparently only opened two months ago. I take this as evidence that the Vietnamese economy is expanding fast. My good friend at the State Planning Committee, Dr. Luu Bich Ho, told me that the 1994 economic growth rate is 8.5%, while exports grew 20%. Unlike the former communist countries of Eastern Europe, Vietnam is doing very well with its market economy.

Our visit to Hanoi was aimed at achieving two things. Firstly, we are planning a fourth, high level training course involving 20 provincial chairmen of the State Planning Committee which will take place in May 1995. The first three training courses of this nature were sponsored by Sasakawa Peace Foundation. This time, it is the turn of the Thai Government, through the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation. This training course will not only seek to facilitate a transfer of knowledge between our two countries, but at the HRI we also strongly believe that when such encounters take place between people from different countries, as they get to know one another, friendship also blossoms. The staff at the HRI are not only specialised in various technical fields, we are also well versed in the history, society and even the language of Vietnam. Our training course will cover both macro and micro economics, as well as certain other aspects of human resources including employment, education and management.

During our visit we also checked up on our project on off-farm employment in Hi Hung province, which you may remember I mentioned in an earlier column. We anticipate that by March next year we will have interviewed 500 households in the province and collated the information into our final report. Fifteen years ago, the World Bank carried out a similar project in Thailand, and I hope and expect that on the strength of our own experiences, we will be able to assist Vietnam in terms of employment and income generation among its rural people.

As far as the outlook for 1995 is concerned, I would like to share some of my predictions for the human resources picture. In general terms, I expect that while the economy will expand at a faster rate than in 1994, the pressure on the ability of our industries to compete in global markets will intensify, and the manpower shortages will continue. Our education system has still not caught up with the changes taking place in the economy. We definitely need a new vision for education, but I am left wondering where that vision will come from.

Meanwhile, several labour intensive industries will find it increasingly difficult to compete, including textiles, garments, food processing, shoes, and others. The implications for human resources are that many workers, especially those with only primary education, will find it very difficult to adjust if they are made redundant.

I would like to see senior managers taking a deeper interest in human resources development and building it into their corporate strategies. They must look upon their human resources as an asset and as their most important strategic resource. We need to equip our future leaders with human resources skills, so as to create a new breed of HR manager who understands the broad, financial and technological implications of change on their business.

For sure, training will become more important, and I see a distinction emerging between good and merely average programs. Good training will be more costly and difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, many private and even government sector entities will opt to thoroughly review their training programs with the aim of achieving higher productivity.

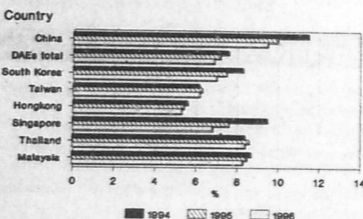
All things considered, we can also predict that the buzzwords for 1995 will be things like productivity improvement, vision, team work, leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, cross-cultural management, globalization and HR.

And just before I close, I would like to ask you all to take one minute to think about the agricultural sector and other small and medium scale industries. What are you going to do to help?

Last but not least, I hope that 1995 will bring us better quality politicians. We need our politicians to take a long term view and implement policies aimed at benefiting the people. What we don't need are politicians who take a short term view and who are completely preoccupied with playing politics for their own survival.

See you next week!

Asian Economic's growth Forecasts by OECD



Sources: Vietnam News, Dec. 25, 1994