



Towards the 21st Century

by
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IN THIS WEEK'S HRI—POST CO—OPERATION COLUMN Dr. Chira relays his impressions of Frankfurt, Germany as well as information he picked up talking to representatives of important Thai government offices there, and looks forward to the forthcoming top level seminar organised by the HRI and *Bangkok Post*.

After my trip to Israel, my next overseas trip was to Frankfurt, Germany, where this week's photo was also taken. Frankfurt is the financial center of Germany, but it is also interesting to note how much capital the city makes out of organising international fairs for all kinds of products.

I've seen quite a few fairs in my time, but Frankfurt's expertise is particularly impressive, so it is good to see the Board of Investment (BOI) taking a similar initiative by organising its own investment fair at Laem Chabang next month. It is an excellent idea. Fairs are the quickest way to introduce sellers to buyers and vice-versa, and I am particularly pleased to note that the BOI is involving Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, China and Myanmar in the event.

Even in Frankfurt, I had the feeling that as we move into the 21st century, Asia is the center of economic power. However, in order to make the most of this situation, we must equip ourselves with facilities which will have a long term beneficial impact on our future. Of course, we already have the Queen Sirikit National Exhibition and Convention Center, but even this is rather small by international standards. So when I got back home and read in the *Bangkok Post* that a group of private companies are planning to invest 8 billion baht in building a new exhibition centre at Bangna Trad, I was pleased indeed. I think the concept is very sound, especially since it will be close to the new Nong Ngu Hao international airport.

While I was in Frankfurt, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to visit three overseas representative offices of important Thai organisations, namely the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the BOI and the Department of Export Promotion, all of which are housed in the same building. You can be sure that they are all ready to assist representatives of the private sector and academics alike in whatever ways they can in order to promote tourism, investment and trade. It used to be that such services were reserved for the government sector, but this is no longer the case. So, if you are going that way, please make a note to pay them a visit, because it is very important to keep up the exchange of views.

So far as tourism is concerned, I was told by the assistant director of the TAT's office, Khun Anuphap, that Germany is still a good market for Thailand, with the number of Germans visiting Thailand rising by about 10% annually and totalling around 320,000 at present. I was also interested to learn from Khun Anuphap how the number of Russian visitors to Thailand is growing. John Naisbitt predicted that eventually all people will travel to different countries. Having seen first hand the way the TAT office in Frankfurt operates, I am sure all tourists, wherever they come from, are in very good hands.

Coincidentally, after I got back from Germany, I went to Cha-am with the TAT governor and his senior staff for a management conference. I hope to share with you some of the conclusions next week.

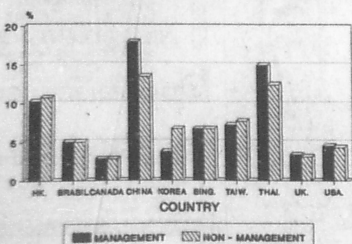
As for the BOI, it is interesting to note how strongly the German government is pushing investment in Asia these days, following several years of investing in Eastern Europe in general, and East Germany in particular. I see a lot of potential for partnerships in high-tech industries. The recent announcement that Khun Pya Bhirombhakdi of Boonrawd Brewery had bought a beer factory from Germany is a case in point. Globalization is already under way, and like Khun Pya, we must be prepared to take advantage.

As I talked to some of the directors of these overseas outposts of the Thai public sector, I was gratified to discover that some of them are former students of mine in the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, which today celebrates its 46th anniversary. Indeed, looking back, under the leadership of Dr. Puey Ungphakorn, we have produced very many outstanding students. Therefore, this week I have invited Dr. Naris Chaiyasoot, Dean of the Faculty of Economics, to share his vision and commitment to producing the future leaders of Thailand.

I would like to conclude by reminding all our readers about the forthcoming HRI/Post Co-operation seminar on February 3, 1995. If you clip the coupon on this page you are entitled to a 10% discount on the ticket price. I am very pleased that this high level event is taking place thanks to the Post and HRI. In Thailand, it is so hard to implement improvements to the human resources situation, so the more we mobilise our efforts, the better the outcome is likely to be. I am confident the seminar will be a resounding success because we have done our homework into what the market wants very thoroughly. You can even send in your questions for the speakers in advance.

I look forward to meeting as many of our readers as possible at the seminar. Until then - see you next week!

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