



Towards the 21st Century

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IN THIS WEEK'S HRI/POST-CO-OPERATION COLUMN Dr. Chira looks ahead to a full year of management seminars, and examines the human resources focus of the 8th National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP).

First, another reminder about the big seminar coming up on February 3rd. The event is bound to highlight a lot of interesting ideas, and as chairman of both sessions, I will do my best to ask questions that are most relevant to the readers' concerns. If you plan to attend the seminar, please make sure that you prepare your questions in advance.

Still on the subject of seminars, I predict that 1995 will be a golden year for Thailand. We have just seen self-styled 're-engineering guru of the world' Professor Michael Hammer, and next month we will have the opportunity to see and hear Alvin Toffler and his wife. I have also been informed that the 'Learning Organisations Guru' Peter Senge from MIT, is planning to pay us a visit.

Since we live in a world that is awash with knowledge, we must certainly try to keep up with new ideas. But in terms of the organisation of seminars, my feeling is that to get the most benefit out of such occasions, a proper balance must be struck between the number of people given the opportunity to attend, and the need to allow for interaction between the audience and the speakers. Given the opportunity, there are many very capable Thai speakers who could comment on the speaker's presentation. I also feel the organisers should make some arrangement for subsidising the cost of the seminars, especially in the case of senior figures from the public sector. By the same token, I would like to suggest to the Ministry of Finance, particularly the Comptroller-General's Department, that they invest more in human resources, starting by providing an adequate budget for their key personnel to attend important seminars. If something is not done to make these seminars more accessible, government departments will only send delegates to the relatively inexpensive ones. Cost should not be such an overriding consideration in such an important area. After all, human resources development is at the heart of the country's drive towards sustainable development.

This week, I was happy to learn that the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) is trying to arrange a meeting among senior people from all sectors of the country, to discuss the formulation of the 8th NESDP. Hopefully, the final draft of the plan will keep the primary focus on human resources development.

My only two reservations about the plan are that, firstly, five years is not long enough to talk about human resources. Success depends upon consistent planning as much as the conviction of the people who are actually assigned to conceive and implement the plans. Secondly, I believe the plan should discuss how to assess and manage the results.

Since the 4th NESDP, I have had several opportunities to participate in the drawing up of these plans. However, I believe that while the role of the NESDB is still important, its influence is declining as other forces in society assume more responsibilities.

Fortunately, there are at least three important figures in the NESDB who have been involved in drawing up the 8th plan. I feel confident that they at least are capable of ensuring that the plan meets with great success, especially in terms of its intentions for human resources.

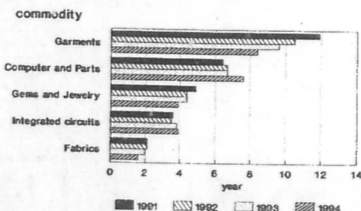
The first of these personalities, is the Chairman of the NESDB, Dr. Sippanondha Ketudat, who in my opinion, is a leader with vision. If he has any weakness it is perhaps that, on occasion, he does not fight hard enough for what he believes in. The second person I admire is the new Secretary-General of the NESDB, Dr. Sumet Tantivejikul, who has been trained as a macro economist. He too considers people to be the most important aspect of development strategies. On one occasion, I interviewed Dr. Sumet on my television programme, and I was very impressed at the time by his conviction. He served His Majesty the King on many rural projects, and fully believes in the correctness of His Majesty's concept of proper development as always centering around what people want, and how their capabilities can be developed to help them get it.

The third in the trio of NESDB visionaries is the Deputy Secretary General Khun Thamarak Karpisit, whose great experience in economics combines most effectively with a vision of how to accomplish human resources development. The secret of Khun Thamarak's success is that he believes in what he is doing. He also works both very hard and very closely with academics. This is in contrast to most economists at the NESDB who do not take much notice of academics and other social groupings, even though these people comprise their customers.

Finally, this week I would like to welcome Dr. Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, who has established an excellent rapport with President Ramos of the Philippines, I would like to see human resources become a point of connection between countries at an international level. My best wishes also go to His Excellency the President of the Philippines, if he should chance to read our column. Many congratulations on all the good work. I think it would be accurate to say that the Philippines economy is in a period of renewal. We here in Thailand support you, and wish to work closely with you for the benefit of us all.

See you next week.

% of Thailand's export Classified by commodity



Source: Monthly Review Vol. 33-36,
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