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## Towards the 21st Century

by

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IN THIS WEEK'S HRI—POST CO—OPERATION COLUMN, Dr. Chira interprets Alvin Toffler's visionary ideas in the context of Thailand, and welcomes further developments on Thailand's road to becoming the regional centre for human resources development.

### Welcome to the Third Wave!

At the time of writing this week's column, Mr. Alvin Toffler, famous author of *Future Shock* and *The Third Wave* has just delivered his address to a gathering of over a thousand people. I was fortunate enough to participate in the seminar myself, and as such I would like to share some of my thoughts on the distinguished speaker's ideas.

But first let me tell you that in order for readers of this column to get a better understanding of Mr. Toffler, we will soon publish a transcription of an in-depth interview involving Alvin, former deputy prime minister Dr. Amnuay Virawan and myself, in which we discussed the relevance of 'the third wave' to human resources and other issues. I think you will find Toffler's knowledge of many areas is quite breathtaking. It was the first time in Thailand that Mr. Toffler had talked about his work, and it was immediately obvious that he is a man of long term vision with great skill in blending intellect with imagination.

Mr. Toffler told us that he believed that the 'third wave' would be one in which countries move from emphasis on industrial production to an age of information and knowledge. He predicted that the new era will be characterised by consumers who want greater variety and who want to be able to order products which exactly fit their particular tastes and requirements. Mass production will gradually become a thing of the past, as will mass marketing and even mass education.

Nevertheless, if his predictions are going to come true, then I think we must ask whether and how the third wave technologies can assist important first and second wave industries such as agriculture and raw materials production. The nub of Mr. Toffler's vision is that information and knowledge will become the most important factors in production. In his book *Power Shift*, he states that 'knowledge is power.' Therefore I must ask whether Thailand in its present state can equip itself with enough knowledge to be able to contemplate its future in this new world with confidence.

Mr. Toffler himself is a very strong and healthy 66-year old who surrounds himself with all kinds of information systems and high tech wizardry so that he has instantaneous on-line access.

As I mentioned in earlier columns, 1995 is the year of the 'guru' for Thailand, with several eminent theoreticians scheduled to pay us a visit and deliver their ideas in person. Perhaps this will mark the beginning of a new culture of learning in our society - a form of education which is not confined to the classroom or even centered around teachers.

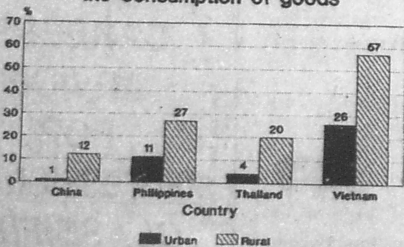
I hope that the HRI/POST cooperation column can act as a focal point for developing these ideas, and judging by the many letters we receive this has already started to happen. For instance, an expert on Deming's quality is among those who have recently expressed a wish to participate in our column.

As for our most recent activities at the HRI, besides the business of Mr. Toffler's visit, we also welcomed 25 officials from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. They are attending a special 'Market Transition' course with me at Thammasat University with the support of the Department of Technology and Economic Cooperation (DTEC).

We also received a group of 3 senior Vietnamese economists: Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Tuan, Vice Chairman of the Government Price Committee, and Dr. Nguyen Tien Thoa and Mr. Nguyen Thang from the Institute for Markets and Prices. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Mr. Vijit Supinit, Governor of the Bank of Thailand and Director-General of the Department of International Trade, for sharing Thailand's experiences in controlling inflation and various other relevant issues with our guests.

As I have said on many occasions in the past, we are committed to making Thailand the center for human resources development in Indochina, and in an important way. I feel these two visits have significantly advanced our prospects for achieving this. See you next week!

### Poverty measured by the consumption of goods



Source: Vietnam News, Feb 15, 1995.