

Towards the 21st Century

by

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IN THIS WEEK'S HRI—POST CO—OPERATION COLUMN, Dr Chira notes encouraging signs that Thailand is fulfilling its destiny as a jumping off point for development in Indochina and Myanmar, but warns that there is much still to be done. He also introduces this week's special focus on 'Reverse Brain Drain' of Thais living overseas.

Last week Bangkok played host to the 'World Economic Forum,' which brought together several distinguished senior businessmen from many different countries. I was honored to play a part in the discussions on the topic of 'Identifying Issues in the Mekong Subregion,' and after the meeting in Bangkok, a group of delegates visited Myanmar and Vietnam to learn more about what is actually going on.

I am very happy to see Bangkok emerge as a centre for Mekong Subregional Development in this way. As I keep repeating in this column, capitalising on our tremendous geographical advantages is important for our long term development prospects. Substantial progress has already been made in the energy sector, especially in terms of securing supplies of electricity from Laos and natural gas from Myanmar, but there is much else that still needs to be accomplished.

During the Forum, I met several senior officials from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and was able to conduct exclusive interviews with both vice president Mr. Lee, and program director Mr. Morita, which will appear in a forthcoming edition of this column. After learning more about the activities and efforts of the ADB, I was heartened to discover that they are looking at economic cooperation in this region from the point of view of broad based development objectives, including economic, social, human resources and environmental perspectives. This is somewhat different to the bank's previous philosophy. Naturally, human resources development will be one of the main themes for cooperation.

Last week I also received a visit from Mr. Chris Matthews, who is chairman of Hay Group. He was in Thailand to explain his intention of setting up a human resources consultancy here. Hay Group is one of the world's leading HR consultancies and is able to draw on worldwide experience. Their skills in human resources, particularly in the fields of organisational improvement and leadership, seem to fit very well with what several companies in Thailand are attempting to do. Indeed, in the final analysis it is very difficult to reengineer without fully taking the human resources implications into consideration.

This week, we invited a married couple involved in the HRI's 'Reverse Brain Drain' project, a Thai and an American, to share some of their ideas and experiences. In 1989, the HRI launched a large scale project to survey Thai professionals living in the United States. We found that there were many who wished very much to return home, but could not find the right opportunities. They were also worried about how they would be able to adjust themselves to the Thai environment.

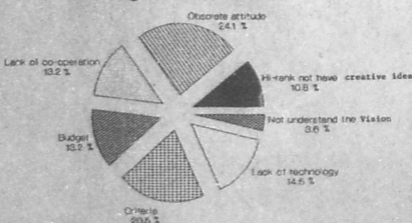
As we move further into the globalization era, I feel that Thais living overseas will become a part of human networking. Some Thai companies could even consider setting up R&D activities in the United States, where a large number of well qualified professional Thais live. The HRI project is only a beginning. The government should try to take these efforts further, both by enticing Thais to return and by networking the ones who choose to stay where they are. Since our human resources are spread across borders, and since we live in an increasingly borderless world, we should at least try to increase our cross border capabilities.

Finally, I would like to let our readers know about two events which are taking place at the HRI next month. The first is Human Resources Strategies III. This intensive 94-hour course is intended to prepare future managers with the kind of strategic human resources skills they will need to drive the companies they work for to high levels of performance. Based on the success of the first two courses in the series, the third one should be at least as good. The speakers will include both Thais and foreigners. We'll let you know the exact details next week, but you can go ahead and reserve your seat now. There is also the possibility that, as on previous occasions, the Bangkok Post will join HRI in offering two scholarships to attend the course.

The other interesting seminar coming up is simply called 'Going Global,' which will take place between 23-24 May 1995. On this occasion Mr. Richard R. Gesteland, president of Global Management, will be explaining how Thai companies can prepare for globalization. To supplement the discussions our HRI/POST radio program will also adopt the same theme.

See you next week!

Obstacles to success Gov. Organization's VISION



Source: From survey by HRI, 1994.