



Towards the 21st Century

by

Dr. Chira Hongladarom, Executive Director, Human Resources Institute, Thammasat University.

IN THIS WEEK'S HRI—POST CO—OPERATION COLUMN, Dr. Chira welcomes His Majesty the King's recent television interview, congratulates the Democrat Party on its 50th Anniversary, and stresses the necessity of regional cooperation.

It must have made all Thai people happy to watch His Majesty the King in an exclusive television interview last week. On behalf of the HRI/POST Co-operation, we would like to extend our warm wishes to His Majesty for a speedy recovery and happiness.

As Thailand looks towards the 21st century, His Majesty's role appears to be the most significant factor in the hopes of Thai people for continuity and stability. Our present king is surely the most important of all the things which the Thai people have and love.

I was delighted to hear how good His Majesty feels about his health, and how he is looking forward to the next 20 years in the full expectation that he will be able to see his vision and ideas through to reality. Of the many excellent qualities which His Majesty possesses, his wit, intelligence and simplicity, it was his sense of humour which I liked the most about the interview.

One of the great success stories which we owe to His Majesty is the acquisition and development of advance technologies in the field of medical science. Many readers may know that the famous doctor who performed the 'balloon' operation on His Majesty is Dr. Tasana, who still practices his medical career in the United States. Readers may also recall that two weeks ago in this column we were discussing the topic of Thai professionals living overseas and our attempts to network their skills. Dr. Tasana is a prime example of someone who has acquired expertise and experience in the medical field through working abroad, but has brought these assets back to help Thailand, so that he was able to help His Majesty on this occasion.

We need to learn more about how to harness these cross-border capabilities, so that physically these people need not necessarily return permanently to Thailand, but can come in and out as required.

Given the advances we have seen in air transportation, there must be many ways in which we can benefit from this 'brains across borders' concept. We would therefore also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to Dr. Tasana, if he should chance to read this column. According to my sources Dr. Tasana expressly returned to Thailand in order to visit His Majesty for the second time.

Let's move on now to other areas of importance. Last week our oldest political party, the Democrat Party, celebrated its 50th anniversary. The event was both a large and politically significant one. One of the most significant developments which occurred during the celebrations was the election of three technocratic politicians to the party's executive committee, Khun Tarrin Nimmanahaeminda, Dr. Savit Bhotiwihok, and Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, who joined a committee which also includes Khun Abhisit Vejjajiva. If this political party is able to attract such excellent people, it will be able to play a significant role amongst political institutions. I hope that the party will also become stronger in the area of policy research, so that in the future its party political platform does not necessarily have to be identical to the national development plans.

I keep telling my friends that our political parties should be sources of knowledge and wisdom which offer the people alternatives. Otherwise our only option is to go back to bureaucrats for ideas. In future, parties which support the creation of knowledge and offer alternatives for the people will be the ones which provide long term support for democracy. Those are the parties which will have my support. To me, democracy must give the people some real options and choices.

Finally, let me say a little about this week's interview with Mr. Bong-Suh Lee and Mr. Noritada Morita from the Asian Development Bank. I was able to speak to both gentlemen during the recent World Economic Forum in Thailand. I think regional development in various areas is absolutely crucial, and I would like to see Thailand playing a significant role. Even the theme of this year's annual ESCAP meeting was regional co-operation.

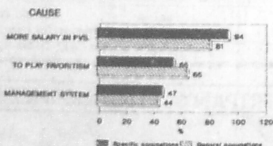
To me regional co-operation should be based on mutual trust and respect, as well as the equality and dignity of the people. And readers may agree that the HRI at Thammasat is good at using this philosophy to cement our relationships with neighbouring countries. We have conducted several training courses because we want people from other countries to learn from us and share our ideas and aspirations. By the same token, we in Thailand can also learn from others.

I personally have many friends from all over the region. I believe that peace is so important to the future of the world, and I also believe that peace can only come with trust and mutual understanding. This is why Thailand is in such a strong position to lead in human resources development. Thai people know very well how to extend their friendship and sincerity among their neighbours.

See you next week!

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TO PRIVATE SECTORS (%)



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