

Towards the 21st Century

by

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IN THIS WEEK'S HRI-POST CO-OPERATION COLUMN, Dr. Chira looks at HRI developments in Myanmar, expresses disappointment that human resources appears to remain a low priority with the new government, and notes how re-engineering is gaining momentum since Michael Hammer's recent visit.

We should begin this week's column with something related to the good news of the release of Aung San Suu Kyi after 6 years of detention. Purely coincidentally, I am about to travel to Myanmar this week to discuss a human resources cooperation project with the government there. Over the past 2 years, the Myanmar government has sent about 15 senior officials to study market transition at Thammasat University. The visits are supported both by the Royal Thai government and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF). This next time my trip will be to discuss arrangements for a 2 week high level intensive course on Market Transition and Human Resources Development for 50 senior Myanmar officials, which again is organised by SPF and HRI. My contact there is H.E. General Abel, Minister of Planning, who has cooperated with us before.

It is crucial to our nation's future to establish academic links with Myanmar, because one day it will be a very important partner of ours. For 40 plus years Myanmar has existed outside the main stream of the world economy in socialistic isolation. As a student, I was always impressed by the high calibre of Myanmar academics and all the very many similarities in our social and cultural backgrounds.

Anyway, we hope to fly in up to 20 Thai scholars and experts in the fields of economics and management for this high level training course. As such, it is a new and innovative project for the HRI. Although we have conducted numerous training sessions all over Thailand, this time we will actually present the course inside Myanmar, which enables us to offer a more cost effective training program for such a large group.

The visit will enable our scholars and experts to learn about the situation in Myanmar first hand. The only drawback is that these 50 senior officials are not able to travel to Thailand to see how we live in return. Perhaps the ideal compromise for foreign groups in the future would be to combine training in their own countries with a study tour in Thailand.

So much for our perspective on international relations - an area which is vitally important to Thailand as we move into the next century. Let me also talk a bit about our local political situation. Firstly, I must say I was deeply disappointed that the leader of the Palang Dharma Party Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra chose the Ministry of Industry rather than Education. I am particularly disappointed because Education needs some fresh ideas and a new style of management. Nevertheless, it seems that despite some campaign promises, human resources will again be given the lowest priority.

As it seems unlikely that the ministries which are responsible for the various aspects of human resources - Education, Health, University Affairs and Labour - will adopt any fresh initiatives, it will be left up to us to continue to press for greater government commitment to this crucial area of national development. I believe that if Palang Dharma or the Nam Thai Party had decided to take charge of those ministries, there would be some hope that new ideas and a new style of management would emerge. Since they didn't, it will again be left to the mass media and academics to keep pushing.

This week, Khun Charnchai Charuvastr continues as our guest columnist for the second week with his fascinating presentation on 're-humaneering' which has already sparked a great deal of interest. Khun Charnchai is one of the younger generation of Thai managers who have shown great promise as up and coming global managers. There are others like him, but nowhere near enough.

Before I sign off, I would also like to mention that since Mr. Michael Hammer's visit to Thailand and his appearance with me on Channel 11, interest in re-engineering has been expanding rapidly. As I mentioned before, the HRI is working on a re-engineering project for the Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand (ETA). So far what we have discovered is that the customers which use and deal with ETA are relatively happy with the product, but they are very unhappy with the services, especially including access to information and the way the customer is treated. This means that there is something very wrong, and there appears to be no help in sight. So I am very pleased that we are now trying to help the ETA plan for a more customer oriented organisation.

On another topic, last week I was guest speaker to the senior management of Thai Airways International Public Co.,Ltd. (THAI), and among them I noticed some deep motivation and feelings towards re-engineering THAI in order to recover some of their past glory.

Finally, I am happy to be able to tell you that the Royal Thai Air Force and the Royal Thai Police Departments have invited the HRI to discuss improvements in their organisations, including re-engineering. So with or without effective government, life goes on, and we must continue to work very hard in order to achieve our goals for the 21st century.

See you next week!

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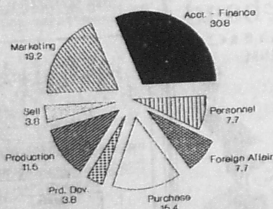
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Source: HUMAN RESOURCES INSTITUTE, 1994