



Towards the 21st Century

by
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IN THIS WEEK'S HRI-POST CO-OPERATION COLUMN, Dr. Chira reviews some of the disturbing events of the past week, and based on the early performance of the present government wonders if it can survive the stiff challenges to come.

Our country has gone through another week in which a lot of major events occurred. First, our beloved King returned to hospital for more heart treatment. You may recall that on the previous occasion I wrote how His Majesty the King of Thailand is the key element in the country's progress towards the 21st century. And as His Majesty himself recently expressed his wish to live long into the next century, we must all wish him a speedy recovery.

In the last two months His Majesty has been under extreme pressure. The most important thing has been to see that the Princess Mother is properly honoured and respected at the highest levels now that she has passed away, and His Majesty has personally attended the mourning services each day.

Another important role for His Majesty has been to advise the new government in various matters, especially concerning traffic policy. I was told by my secret sources that several doctors have advised His Majesty not to work too hard, and not to put too much pressure on himself. However, with his commitment to accountability for the nation's long term prospects, His Majesty remains as deeply involved in his work as he has been all his life. His Majesty sets a strong example to all of us with what we might term his 'work culture'.

Another sad event in Thailand last week was the flooding which affected a lot of people in the North of the country. The majority of the people worst affected by the floods were poor. I deeply understand how much suffering they have to bear and offer the sincere good wishes of the Bangkok Post/HRI cooperation project.

Meanwhile, just as many notable events have taken place outside government, so the political leadership of Khun Banharn has come under extreme pressure from all sides. Two things are particularly significant. Firstly, the fear among many people in economic, diplomatic and business circles that this government will probably not endure. Thailand's economic and financial stability is the cornerstone of our conservative style of policymaking. Therefore when inflation rises to 6.2% as it did in August, we have to sit up and take note. To me the inflation alarm is all the more worrying because of the way the government is handling the crisis. We live in a world where people have expectations, and if Khun Banharn cannot meet these expectations and impart confidence to the public, inflation will probably not go away.

Another dramatic event last week was the drastic and wholesale changes to the boards of directors of several state enterprises. While I think that change is important, to put less qualified people in important decision making positions is not a very wise policy in the long run. Don't forget that we are competing with other countries, and the key to comparative advantage in the future is the quality of our human resources.

So we might conclude that here at the dawn of the 21st century our dear country is struggling to survive rather than to lead. But as I have said many times before, I believe in my country. We have survived so many crises that I am sure we can again overcome whatever difficulties face us in the future.

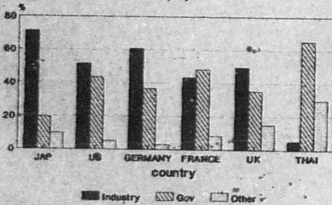
I want to end my column today by welcoming the new members to our high level HR Strategic training course mark IV. Last week we met for the first time, and I sensed a lot of interest in human resources among the delegates from the private sector. Perhaps this indicates some fresh hope for a Thailand in which the private sector can contribute to improving the quality of our human resources.

I am very fortunate in my work because I have so many opportunities every day to disseminate my ideas to various groups of people. Judging by the feedback I get from these contacts, the expectation is of a trend in Thailand's long term development which focuses on human resources development.

Readers of this column should also set an example by forming strategic alliances and mobilizing the resources and efforts of the different groups which must necessarily be involved if we are all to attain our positive vision of the future.

See you next week!

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