



# A·P·O *news*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

## New Year Message

### APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima




I would like to wish all APO News readers a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year and to thank you for your support for APO efforts to achieve socio-economic development through improved productivity. Like the rest of the world, APO member countries had to cope with both predictable and unexpected challenges in 2003. The SARS outbreak and the war in Iraq were two of the more prominent instances. Most APO member countries managed well, with NPOs leading the way in consolidating the results of past accomplishments and embarking upon innovations to ensure that the productivity movement remains relevant to development in a rapidly changing world.

Intensifying globalization of the marketplace is a key challenge facing all member countries today. Attaining and sustaining competitiveness is the solution. Industries have to be innovative, productive, and dynamic to stay ahead. In this economic push, we also must ensure that

development is sustainable by protecting the environment. To be competitive in the global market, it is imperative for industries to be environmentally friendly. With all these considerations in mind, the APO set up a GP Advisory Committee comprising representatives from more than 40 major Japanese corporations to tap their expertise in environmental management for establishing green supply chains in the Asia-Pacific region over the next few years.

Other APO undertakings in 2003 I would like to highlight were:

1. Harnessing IT to make APO publications available online on the APO Web site and to conduct distance learning programs. The convenience, ease, and cost-effectiveness of Web-based training and conferencing mean that the use of distance learning will be further extended this year. The library of e-books will be gradually expanded. In light of this, we will continue to work to upgrade the IT capabilities of the NPOs.
2. Participating in the Third World Water Forum held in Kyoto, Japan.
3. Hosting a APO Liaison Officers' Meeting at the Secretariat in Tokyo. The frank consultations and discussions helped cement relations among the NPOs, as well as between them and the Secretariat.
4. Publishing the 2003 edition of the *APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis*, the third in this landmark annual publication, with substantial improvements over previous editions.

As we look forward to 2004 and what it will bring, the APO will introduce more activities tailored to meet the specific needs of our member countries to strengthen their competitiveness and enhance their socio-economic development. Every effort will be made to ensure that APO activities contribute to a better quality of life for all people in the region based on the spirit of mutual cooperation. 

Volume 34 Number 1  
January 2004

**"Competent (people) in every position, if they are doing their best, know all that there is to know about their work except how to improve it."**

**W. Edwards Deming**

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## The promise of productivity

Federal Reserve Bank Chairman Alan Greenspan's glasses must have fogged over when he read the latest productivity figures: 9.4% productivity growth for the third quarter following 7% growth in the second quarter of 2003. Even a staunch believer in a technology-driven productivity revolution like Greenspan had to gasp at such unprecedented productivity growth. Since the economic recovery in November 2001, productivity has grown at a rate of 5%, the fastest pace for a two-year period in more than 50 years. Economic growth has also started to forge ahead. The third quarter of 2003 witnessed 8.2% GDP growth. The Bush administration grabbed onto these statistics as evidence that national economic policy was on track, buoyed by a tax policy that keeps money in the pockets of consumers and business. Sounds good until someone brings up the matter of jobs.

The idea that productivity could play the role of "job slayer" is a new twist to the notion that producing more with fewer inputs was a priori a sure formula for success. In fact unit labor costs, which comprise an estimated 75% of business expenses, have fallen 1.9% from a year earlier. Productivity growth is also a key factor in how well we live, directly affecting our standard of living. Predictions that America's standard of living would increase dramatically given its high productivity rates brought smiles to workers who were playing a key part in those productivity increases. Gary S. Becker, 1992 Nobel Laureate, believes the "most significant news from the past few years is the continuation and possible acceleration of the sizable productivity advance that began almost a decade ago." So how does one explain the malaise that has crept into economic and labor reporting of late?

Factors prompting deep concern in labor circles are a result of recent studies documenting joblessness, the decline of economic mobility in the USA, and the accelerated pace of job outsourcing overseas. Workers are asking how it was possible to reconcile the good productivity results with the

bleak economic news. Nationwide, 2.7 million factory jobs have been lost since 2000. Nine million Americans were jobless in September and a quarter of those had been out of work for a least a half year. Since the US recovery began in November 2001, the economy has shed one million jobs. In the third quarter of 2003 alone, 150,000 manufacturing jobs vanished. In previous recessions, temporary layoffs accounted for 30% to 40% of the increase in unemployment. This time around only 7% are temporary layoffs. To absorb new workers entering the job market and keep the unemployment rate from increasing, approximately 150,000 jobs need to be created monthly. Obviously the US economy is not yet up to that kind of performance.

**"The idea that productivity could play the role of 'job slayer' is a new twist to the notion that producing more with fewer inputs was a priori a sure formula for success."**

Economics commentator Louis Dobbs remarked that "America is using productivity and greater efficiency as code words for cheaper labor." A University of California–Berkeley study projects that the US can expect a future of lower pay and a reduced standard of living. But theory tells us that productivity should bring a higher standard of living. Given the recent impressive productivity gains, economists predict a doubling of the standard of living in 25 years. But so far productivity's blessings have been mainly limited to increasing company and investor profits. That, of course, is not the fault of productivity per se, but how decision-makers see fit to distribute productivity's benefits.

Recent studies have traced the mobility of American families against the promise of the "American Dream." The promise of a better life

through hard work has motivated generations of Americans and attracted immigrants to the US seeking a better life for their families and future generations. Certainly strong productivity growth would only add to the possibilities of upward economic mobility. Researchers, however, are having difficulty documenting the "American Dream" and, in fact, contrary evidence is showing up.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston found that 53% of families who were in poverty in 1970 were still below the poverty level. The study also found that more workers remained in the same income brackets in the 1990s than in the previous two decades. Comparing 1973 with 1998, a Wichita State University study found a higher percentage of sons in 1998 remained in the same income bracket or a lower economic bracket than their fathers.

Job losses in higher-paying sectors have hurt workers' chances of moving up the economic scale. Losses in manufacturing (an 8% decline since November 2001), telecommunications (12% decline), computer systems (9% decline), and Internet publishing (15% decline) have given way to low-wage jobs in health care (4% increase) and temporary help (5% increase). The move to lower-wage jobs is the subject of a recently published book entitled *Low-Wage America: How Employers Are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace*. The book suggests that one-quarter of the American workforce will be stuck in poorly paying jobs. Higher education is cited most often as the key to breaking the chains of economic rigidity, but only 5% of children from poor families go on to a college degree. This figure has not changed in 30 years according to education commentator Thomas G. Mortenson.

It seems more American jobs are going overseas these days than Americans themselves. By 2005, roughly 600,000 American jobs are expected to be outsourced. Forrester Research forecasts 3.3 million American jobs will find their way overseas by 2010. The question arises of whether this is good



or bad. For profits of American companies it is good. For American workers the perception at the moment is that it is bad. While more and more of the jobs leaving the US are in high tech, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that unemployment among American information technology workers runs to about 234,000. Unemployment among software engineers is 4.6%, among electrical engineers 6.7%, and among network administrators 7.7%.

For US companies being pushed to the extreme by global competition, there is no choice but to send jobs overseas. Many large American companies are happy to have the talents of foreign engineers and scientists at the other end of the terminal. The innovation and discovery resulting from the best global minds will, they say, benefit all humankind, and shouldn't that be the ultimate goal of increased productivity? The challenge remains, however, to ensure that the tremendous strides in productivity have an uplifting effect on society as a whole. ☺

*Michael Manson had a long and close association with the APO when he was the Assistant Director of the East-West Center's Institute of Economic Development and Politics in Honolulu. He helped to initiate a number of collaboration programs between the APO and the East-West Center. Manson also served in the Asian Development Bank, and was Director of Communications with the State of Hawaii's Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. He is presently an educator, and a regular contributor to this column.*

## From the SECRETARY-GENERAL'S schedule

### December 2003

#### 1 December

APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima met with members of the APO study mission on productivity promotion from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar who paid a courtesy visit to the Secretariat.

#### 5 December

Received productivity promotion mission members from Paraguay and Brazil organized by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

#### 8 December

Attended the Japan Forum on International Relations' workshop on "The Role of Japan in Asia," in Tokyo. The theme was "Asia as an Economic Community: How Can Japan and East Asia Coexist in the Age of Globalization?"

In the evening, the Secretary-General took part in a forum on "The Rise of China and the Changing Face of East Asia" hosted by the Institute for International Policy Studies, Japan.

#### 11 December

Attended the International Forum on "Green Purchasing and Sustainable Consumption" held in Tokyo as part of the Eco-Products 2003 Exhibition. Delivered the opening remarks at the workshop on green purchasing held the next day.

#### 12 December

Attended the Japan Quality Award presentation ceremony in Tokyo sponsored by the Japan Quality Award Council and Japan Productivity Council for Socio-Economic Development.

#### 16 December

Received members of a high-level Fijian mission to Japan sponsored by the APO under the Bilateral Cooperation between National Productivity Organizations (BCBN) Program who paid a courtesy visit to the Secretariat. Mission members included Minister for Labour, Industrial Relations, and Productivity Kenneth Zinck; Secretary Ratu Seremaia Tui Cavuati, Public Service Commission; Director-General Jone Usamate, Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) and APO Director for Fiji; APO Liaison Officer Saverio Baleikanacea; and TPAF Manager for Productivity and Quality Training Karan Yogesh Jitendra. Mission members also met with the departmental directors of the Secretariat.

#### 17 December

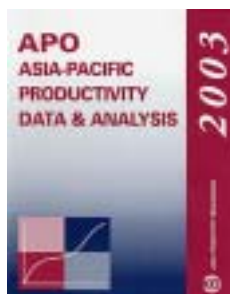
Attended the Second Asia Symposium on "New Possibilities in Japan-China Relations," Tokyo, organized by Genron NPO, a private non-profit organization.

#### 18 December

Met with BCBN mission members from Vietnam to Japan: Dr. Nguyen Quan, Director for Personnel and Organization, Ministry of Science and Technology; Mr. Pham Tran, Deputy Director-General, Directorate for Standard and Quality, and Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich Hang; Managing Director, Vietnam Productivity Center, and APO Alternate Director-cum-Liaison Officer for Vietnam. The mission was also briefed by the Secretariat's departmental directors.



## New APO publication



### APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis 2003

APO 240 pp. January 2004 ISBN 92-833-1143-4 (limp bound) US\$35.00

This publication meets a long-felt need in member countries for a set of vital, fundamental, and authoritative economic and productivity data and their analysis to assist policy-makers, business leaders, researchers, and other concerned parties in their strategic thinking, policy formulation, and socio-economic planning. In addition, since the productivity movement in Asia and the Pacific made its debut almost 50 years ago, much has been invested in organizing programs and activities for promoting and enhancing productivity. The movement has contributed immensely to socio-economic development in the region and there is now an increasing expectation for quantitative evidence of this. For this reason, as stated by Secretary-General Takashi Tajima in his Foreword to the publication, "The APO regards the compilation of productivity data and their analysis as one of its intrinsic duties." Since the publication was first released in 2001, conscious efforts were made to improve it every year. The 2003 edition was released in January this year.

The basic structure and features of the 2003 publication remain the same as in the earlier two editions. Part one comprises analyses of the trends for each of the eight indicator categories, including an executive summary and policy suggestions, by specially appointed national experts for each of the 18 participating countries. Part two is a presentation in table form of 10-year time-series data collected by these experts on 77 highly informative economic and productivity indicators that express the particular strengths and weaknesses of each country. Comparative data for four benchmark (developmentally advanced) countries are also given for key indicators, where this information was available. The sources used for each type of data are also listed.

This 2003 publication differs from its earlier editions in the following respects:

1. The People's Democratic Republic of Laos, which became an APO member in June 2002, was included in the study for the first time. This brings to 18 the total number of participating countries.
2. The number of indicators for which data were collected was increased from 71 in the 2002 edition to 77. When compared with the 42 in the first edition, this represents a substantial expansion in the coverage of this study over the last two years, including data at subsector level.
3. Although the number of categories under which the data are classified remains at eight, the labeling for two has been amended, from "People" to "Human Resources" and from "Trade and Investment" to "International Trade and Investment."
4. For the sake of consistency, the computation of total factor productivity was undertaken by the chief expert for participating countries that were able to provide the necessary basic productivity data. The methodology used is described in the Introduction to this publication.
5. A graph of each indicator for each participating country is no longer provided. They are included on a selective basis by the experts in their analysis reports to support key points they wish to highlight.
6. A new feature of the book is the inclusion of an electronic version in CD-ROM format as part of the book.

"Putting this publication together has proven to be a continuing challenge as we seek to ensure that the data and analyses are accurate, comprehensive, and immediately useful to the readers," said Secretary-General Tajima, adding that "The APO is committed to producing this publication annually as an expression of our core competence in the promotion of productivity practices."

For order and inquiry on APO publications and videos, please contact the Information and Public Relations Department, Asian Productivity Organization, Hirakawa-cho Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg. 2F, 1-2-10 Hirakawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0093, Japan. Phone number: (81-3) 5226-3927, Fax: (81-3) 5226-3957, e-Mail: [ipr@apo-tokyo.org](mailto:ipr@apo-tokyo.org)

## COMMON SENSE TALK



"Where all think alike, no one thinks very much."

*Walter Lippman*

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out."

*Robert Collier*

"Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right, or doing it better."

*John Updike*

"It is amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about who gets the credit."

*Robert Yates*

"If you want creative workers, give them enough time to play."

*John Cleese*

"When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die."

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."

*Albert Schweitzer*

"Competent (people) in every position, if they are doing their best, know all that there is to know about their work except how to improve it."

*W. Edwards Deming*

"Perception is strong and sight weak. In strategy it is important to see distant things as if they were close and to take a distant view of close things."

*Miyamoto Musashi*

# NPC Malaysia wins prestigious Minister's Award



Mr. Mah Lok Abdullah (front row, second from left) and NPC senior management staff pose with the award

Award 2003 (Training Provider Category). NPC Director-General Mah Lok Abdullah accepted the award from the Deputy Minister for Human Resources Datuk Dr. Abdul Latif Ahmad at a special presentation ceremony held in conjunction with the National HRD Conference and Exhibition, 21–22 October 2003.

The NPC Malaysia was established in 1962 to enhance the country's productivity and quality of life through research, training, systems development, organizational excellence, and promotional programs and activities. An ISO-certified organization, it has over the last 12 years conducted more than 3,500 training programs, with a total attendance exceeding 80,000. The NPC Malaysia won the Public Sector Efficiency Award in 1999.

A year later, both its Chairman, Tan Sri Dato' Azman Hashim, and the then Director-General Ismail Adam were honored with the APO Regional Award and the APO National Award, respectively. 🌀

In recognition of its outstanding and significant contributions to developing the country's human resources, the National Productivity Corporation (NPC) of Malaysia received the prestigious Human Resources Minister's

## GP for curriculum developers

In 2002, the Islamic Republic of Iran hosted an advanced workshop on Green Productivity (GP) for educators to explain the importance and benefits of GP, its applications, and the desirability of integrating GP into the academic curriculum. Last year, it hosted a follow-up workshop on "GP for Curriculum Developers" to plan and design GP curricula for both the formal and informal educational systems. It was implemented 30 November–4 December by the Organization for Education Research and Planning, Ministry of Education, and the National Iranian Productivity Organization. Twenty-one participants from 13 member countries took part. The workshop was inaugurated by Deputy Minister for Education Dr. Alaghmandan.

Dr. Alaghmandan said that as developing countries industrialize, there is always the risk of harming the environment irreversibly. To avoid this possibility and to achieve sustainable development where economic development and environmental protection exist in harmony, an effective and inexpensive way is to train people to seek development without harming the environment, the Minister added. "Preserving the environment is both rational and scientific. It is rational because it requires a deep understanding of human life, needs, and long-term interests. As for being scientific, it is related with the mechanisms of industries and their solutions."

The workshop was structured in two parts. The first was a series of presentations by experts familiar with integrating the GP concept into educational curricula. In the second part, workshop attendees deliberated on GP interventions in education and formulated curricula suitable for implementation in their own countries. 🌀

## NPO heads to confer in Sri Lanka

The annual APO Workshop Meeting of Heads of National Productivity Organizations (NPOs) for 2004 will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 10–12 February. This 44th meeting, to be hosted by the National Productivity Secretariat of Sri Lanka, will be attended by more than 60 delegates. Apart from NPO Heads, the delegates will comprise agriculture representatives of APO member countries, observers from other countries and international organizations with whom the APO has collaborative relationships, and APO Secretariat staff members led by the Secretary-General. The chief guest at the opening session will be the Sri Lankan Minister for Employment and Labour Mahinda Samarasinghe. The delegates will hear a statement from APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima and a special presentation on a topic of current interest by an eminent local speaker.

During the workshop, the delegates will evaluate the APO projects implemented in 2003, undertake strategic planning, and formulate the detailed programs for the next two years. There will also be mutual sharing of views and experiences on productivity promotion and enhancement. For strategic planning, delegates representing the industry and service sectors and those from the agriculture sector will meet in separate concurrent sessions to discuss current concerns and challenges facing the NPOs and their role in improving agricultural productivity, review thrust areas, and plan the APO programs and activities for 2005 and 2006. Their conclusions and proposals will be presented for further discussion and adoption at a joint session. A report of the overall proceedings will be submitted to the APO Governing Body for approval at its annual meeting in June.

# — APO supports green purchasing confab —

On 11–13 December 2003, the Eco-Products 2003 Exhibition was held in Tokyo, Japan. In conjunction with this event, an International Forum on Green Purchasing and Sustainable Consumption was organized to propagate the Japanese experience in promoting green purchasing and to seek opportunities for expanding green purchasing on a worldwide basis. Among the consortium of nine organizers were the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development (JPC-SED), Green Purchasing Network (GPN), and Japan Environment Management Association for Industry. The APO was one of the supporting organizations, which also included the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry and Ministry of the Environment.

The forum featured three separate conferences, including the International Workshop on Green Purchasing where APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima gave the opening remarks. He expressed the hope that “the establishment of green purchasing practices would lead to the formation of green supply chains in Asia, which would increase the competitiveness of the Asia-Pacific region... and contribute to global sustainable development.” One of the speakers was Kazunori Kitagawa, Head of the JPC-SED Eco-Management Center. He reported on the current situation of green purchasing in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore based on the findings of research conducted by



Mr. Tajima speaking at the GP workshop

the APO with the cooperation of the JPC-SED and GPN. A similar study was also conducted in the Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand. These studies were undertaken under the auspices of the APO Green Productivity Program. 🌀

## Au revoir, but not goodbye

Senior long-serving APO Secretariat staff member Yoshikuni Ohnishi, former Research and Planning (R&P) Director, retired on 31 December 2003, after 36 years of dedicated service. Since joining the Secretariat in 1967, his career with the organization was almost entirely devoted to the R&P Department, rising from officer (1974), to senior officer (1986), to chief coordinating officer (1996), and to director (1999). The latter two positions were effectively that of departmental head. Although he has retired, Ohnishi will continue to serve the Secretariat as a consultant on a part-time basis.



Mr. Ohnishi (at lectern) chairing one of the sessions at the APO 2nd GP World Conference, Manila, 2002

Stern in demeanor, Ohnishi is usually seen as unapproachable by those who first make his acquaintance. However, when one knows him well, he is a friendly and caring person. His booming laugh belies a serious nature. He is usually the first to report for work each day, when he is not visiting member countries to oversee APO projects, and he enjoys tackling new challenges.

Ohnishi holds the firm conviction that the APO and NPOs are one and the same family with the identical mission of increasing productivity. For this reason, as head of the R&P Department, he paid considerable attention to strengthening the less advanced NPOs with groundbreaking projects like productivity roundtable conferences, productivity specialists' workshops, forums for NPO heads and senior officials, and workshops on developing NPOs' core competences. “All these activities were implemented with the cooperation of the advanced NPOs; they were always ready to share their resources and experiences. This networking is very unique among international organizations and must be further nurtured and sustained,” Ohnishi said.

Ohnishi believes that the productivity concept is difficult for the general populace to appreciate and understand. He advocates the use of indirect approaches, like putting an emphasis on innovation and competitiveness. These are easier to understand and are closely related to productivity. On the future of APO activities, he had this to say: “We may need to review our eclectic approach to productivity improvement and sharpen our focus, especially in these times of limited resources.”

In 2000, Ohnishi received the Government of Japan Foreign Minister's Commendation for outstanding contributions in promoting friendly ties between Japan and foreign countries.

Ohnishi's successor as R&P Director is Takuki Murayama, who joined the Secretariat in August 2002 as Senior Program Officer (Environment) and Counselor for Industry Projects, following a distinguished career with the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan. He graduated from the University of Tokyo with a Bachelor of Science in engineering. 🌀



# p-Experts deputed by the APO

## BANGLADESH

**Mr. Suzuo Murotani**, Chief Engineer, Azuma Kogyo Co., Ltd., Japan, was deputed to provide technical expert services on Improving Productivity in the Steel Pipe Manufacturing Industry, 6–11 December 2003.

## APO/NPO update

### New APO Director for India

Mr. Lakshmi Chand, Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was designated as the new APO Director for India w.e.f. 12 December 2003, in place of Mr. Rajeeva Ratna Shah.

### New APO Liaison Officer for Korea

Mr. Kook Bin Woo, Executive Director, Korea Productivity Center, was appointed as the new APO Liaison Officer for Korea w.e.f. 1 January 2004, in place of Mr. Sang-Kun Kim.

### New APO Alternate Director for Sri Lanka

Mr. M.A.R.D Jayatilake, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Employment and Labour, was appointed as the new APO Alternate Director for Sri Lanka w.e.f. 1 January 2004, in place of Mr. J. Abeywickrama.

### New APO Alternate Director for Bangladesh

Mr. Md. Nurul Amin, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Industries, was appointed as the new APO Alternate Director for Bangladesh w.e.f. 19 January 2004, in place of Mr. Kanak Kanti Barua.

### New R&P Director in APO Secretariat

With effect from 1 January 2004, Mr. Takuki Murayama has been appointed Director of the Research and Planning Department of the APO Secretariat. He succeeds Mr. Yoshikuni Ohnishi, who has retired. Mr. Murayama joined the Secretariat in August 2002 as Senior Program Officer (Environment) and Counselor for Industry Projects.

Mr. Ohnishi has been appointed Consultant to the Secretariat on a part-time basis.

## INDONESIA

**Mr. Koh Kasuga**, Special Adviser, JPC-SED, Japan, was deputed to serve as resource person in the symposium on the Role of the Citizen Sector in Socio-economic Development, 9–12 December 2003.

## ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**Dr. Mohammed Taeb**, Associate Fellow, United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies, Japan, and **Dr. Chaiyod Bunyangidj**, Vice President/Director, Thailand Environmental Institute, Thailand, were deputed to serve as resource persons in the workshop on Green Productivity for Curriculum Developers, 29 November–4 December 2003.

**Mr. Farid Ravaei**, Chief Technology Officer, TuneIT Inc., Canada, was deputed to serve as resource person in the study meeting on Reengineering of Government Agencies through IT, 15–18 December 2003.

## LAOS

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the APO Roundtable Conference on the Productivity Movement and Role of National Productivity Organizations, 12–13 January 2004: **Dr. Nguyen Huu Thien**, Director-General, Directorate for Standards and Quality, Vietnam; **Ms. Nik Zainiah Nik Abd. Rahman**, Deputy Director-General, National Productivity Corporation, Malaysia; **Mr. Low Choo Tuck**, Director, External Relations, SPRING Singapore, Singapore; **Mr. Prasit Tansuvan**, Management Development Adviser, Thailand; and **Dato' Ismail Adam**, Deputy Director-General, Public Service Department, Malaysia.

## PHILIPPINES

**Mr. Mervin Hew Pang Wei**, Vice President, PSB Corporation, Singapore, was deputed to provide technical expert services in the seminar/workshop on Creating Knowledge and Innovation Circles, 8–12 December 2003.

## SINGAPORE

**Mr. Roger La Salle**, Engineer and Technologist, Australia, was deputed to provide technical expert services in the International Exposition of Innovation & Quality Circles 2003, 2–3 December 2003.

## SRI LANKA

**Dr. Netajirao Sakharam Ingale**, Joint Director,

## Program calendar

### India

Training Course on Development of e-Specialists, 23–27 February 2004.

### Pakistan

Seminar on Enhancement of Productivity of Civil Society Organizations, 10–14 May 2004.

### Singapore

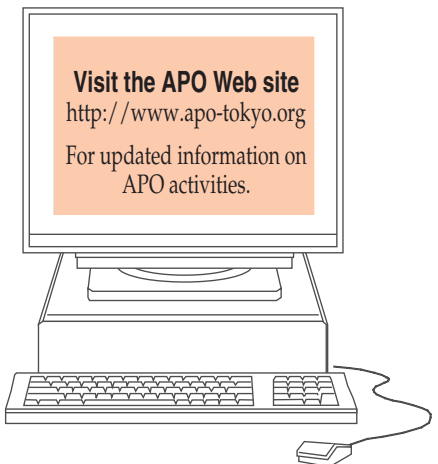
Study Meeting on Business Continuity Management, 22–24 March 2004.

*Kindly contact your NPO for details of the above activities, including eligibility for participation. If you need the address of your NPO, it is available from the APO Web site at [www.apo-tokyo.org](http://www.apo-tokyo.org).*

Directorate of Extension, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, India, was deputed to provide technical expert services on Establishment of Agriculture Information Network, 8–12 December 2003.

## THAILAND

**Dr. Saburo Yamada**, Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo, and Executive Director for Training, International Development Center of Japan, Japan, was deputed to serve as resource person in the symposium on the Agricultural Productivity Index, 15–17 December 2003.



Visit the APO Web site

<http://www.apo-tokyo.org>

For updated information on APO activities.

# Laos hosts debut seminar

Since becoming a member of the APO in June 2002, Laos has been actively participating in its programs and activities, eager to learn all there is to know about improving productivity. By joining the APO, it has teamed up with 18 other countries in proclaiming productivity enhancement as a key strategy in socio-economic development and in improving the quality of life of the people. As a newcomer, there is much catching up for Laos to do. At the same time, being a part of the APO is also about sharing with others your know-how and experience. It is this spirit of mutual cooperation that binds this organization together and propels it forward. In response to this obligation, Laos hosted its first seminar for the organization last December 1–5. The subject was “Development of Small Cottage Industry and the Informal Sector.” Eighteen participants from 12 APO member countries took part, with an additional eight deputed by the host country.

The Lao government has set as its vision the alleviation of poverty in the country through economic reforms and sustainable development, said Dr. Nam Viyaketh, Vice Minister for Industry and Handicrafts and APO Director for Laos, at the opening session of the seminar. He pointed out that the agriculture, forestry, industry, and service sectors in Laos need to grow and improve their efficiency. He stressed the importance of social services like education and public health care and the need to strengthen the small and medium enterprises, including the small cottage industry (SCI) and the informal sector (IS), as they account for a large share of production and employment. Dr. Viyaketh expressed the hope that the seminar will bring about a closer understanding among APO member countries and contribute to greater productivity and efficiency in the creation of wealth and employment for society.

In keeping with its objective of deliberating on the new approaches for the promotion, development, and marketing of SCI and IS, the seminar dealt with the following topics: Role and importance of the SCI and IS in national economic development; Major constraints and challenges facing the SCI and IS; Supportive governmental measures; New trends in the promotion and development of the SCI and IS; Requirements of the SCI and IS in the 21st century: logistic management, networking and partnerships, and IT and e-commerce; Role of agencies, associations, and promotional bodies in SCI and IS development; Entrepreneurial skills development; and Enhancing productivity, quality, and customer service.



Dr. Viyaketh (seated fourth from left) joins seminar participants for group picture

A highlight of the seminar was the discussion on the cluster approach in developing the SCI and IS as exemplified by Thailand’s “One Tambon One Product” campaign, which in turn was based on a successful Japanese model. The country paper presentations on the status of the SCI and IS in the participating countries and the innovative approaches used for their development were greatly appreciated by seminar attendees.

In small-group syndicates, the participants deliberated on the impact of globalization on the SCI and IS, and recommended the following proactive measures:

1. Train SCI and IS operators in the skills of entrepreneurship, management, and marketing to enhance their potential for success.
2. The government, NGOs, and other concerned agencies in each country should work together to provide integrated logistical support to the

SCI and IS, including skill training, credit facilities, marketing infrastructure, technological development, process improvement, product development, and linkages/partnerships with larger SMEs along the lines of cluster development.

3. NGOs with local offices and a philanthropic outlook should be encouraged to help foster the development of traditional handicraft activities.
4. The APO and NPOs should promote the exchange of experience in cluster development among member countries.

The closing ceremony of the seminar was graced by Vice-Minister Somboun Rasantombath, also from the Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts. He presented certificates of attendance to the participants. 🌀