



APO NEWS

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Potential economic drivers: entrepreneurs

The APO began the new year of 2010 with the Forum for Promoting Entrepreneurship in Asia at the Secretariat in Tokyo, 13–15 January. Twenty potential young entrepreneurs and business starters from 15 member countries attended. “The main purpose of the forum was to discuss the very basics of entrepreneurship, the various options and opportunities for entrepreneurial initiatives, and the keys to successful entrepreneurship to guide participants in setting up thriving new businesses,” explained Secretariat Research and Planning Program Officer Yasuko Asano. In 2008, the APO organized a large-scale conference on the same subject with similar objectives, which received positive feedback. Asano added, “This forum was a follow-up to the conference but organized on a smaller scale.” However, the line-up of expert speakers and level of enthusiasm and passion among participants were comparable.

The APO invited three successful entrepreneurs and four venture capitalists to share their principles and experiences of business management. Chief resource speaker Professor Nobuhiko Hibara of Ritsumeikan University, Japan, facilitated the overall program. The speakers’ true stories from their lives and business endeavors were well received, with rounds of applause followed by numerous questions and comments.

The first entrepreneur who spoke was Founder & CEO William Saito, Intecur, Inc. Saito, the winner of the US 1998 Entrepreneur of the Year Award, compared the understanding and practices of entrepreneurship in the USA and Japan. When describing successful entrepreneurs, Saito emphasized that there are eight important attributes: “perseverance, confidence, optimism, vision, creativity, leadership, integrity, and the ability to inspire others.” CEO Natsuko Shiraki, of jewelry manufacturer and exporter Hasuna Co. Ltd., introduced the concept of “ethical jewelry” made of environmentally and socially friendly materials and her mission of creating a society that brings “brilliant smiles to all through jewelry.” The story of Kouta Matsuda, founder of Tully’s Coffee International Pte. Ltd., received rapt audience attention, reflecting the renown of Japan’s third-largest coffee chain. Matsuda, a Japanese brought up in the USA, explained that his initial impetus for starting the business originated from cultural differences he had experienced in childhood and his conviction that the food industry could bridge them. His determination and charisma have won the trust of investors, employees, and partners, resulting in Tully’s enormous success.

After the entrepreneurs shared their groundbreaking business adventures, four venture capitalists explained how they view business opportunities in Asia from an investor’s point of view. President and CEO Naoki Nick Kondo of Aunt Stella’s K.K. said that although Japan had imported business models from other developed countries, this model is now reversed, and Japan now exported its models. He marries capital to business management, i.e., uses capital to change business behavior and in turn the economy’s behavior. He emphasized the changing economic paradigm and potential awaiting in the Asian market for entrepreneurship and business innovation. (Continued on page 5)



Matsuda speaking on his business start-up experience



Forum participants applauding speakers



Low-carbon productivity

The 2009 European Productivity Conference (EPC2009) was organized by the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education and the associated British Productivity Centre in late October. It provided a unique opportunity to assess the current productivity thrusts in the Atlantic area. Its successful formula followed the traditional advice to the bride that she wear “something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue”...well, green.

A substantial proportion of productivity actions, now boosted by recession, are the well-honed tools of the past. This was brought out by enterprise cases in the two local industry clusters which, in addition to public services, were the focus of presentations: food processing and chemicals. Collectively termed “efficient effectiveness” or “how to get more with less,” techniques such as predetermined time systems following in the work study tradition are currently available in software. Nowadays, they pay as much attention to quality and cost as to productivity as such. Pinched for funds, governments at all levels are particularly active in this area and developing networks to share best practices. More generally, enterprises emphasize that “what gets measured gets done,” not just in the more traditional aspects of productivity—social and economic—but also in the green or ecological. “SEE productivity,” referring to combined social, environmental, and economic productivity, was an EPC2009 buzzword.

Similarly, borrowed and adapted continuous improvement techniques such as Lean Six Sigma, kaizen, and their derivatives that originated outside Europe are often utilized by enterprises. A common theme running through presentations on such lean approaches was the importance of teamwork and continuous employee development practices: project teams at operational and strategic levels have “evidence-based” approaches; and “think tanks” within companies use substantiated tools (UNIDO’s Produce Plus was described) to determine the root causes of issues and to facilitate knowledge transfer from consultants to employees and beyond into supply chains.

Partnership was another common thread. People



and organizations must work together in partnerships to get things done by listening to each other, respecting each other, and building a climate of trust, which are much more easily said than done. Where the contrary happens, particularly in traditional industries, the productivity future is bleak indeed, and participants were reminded that the correlation between productivity and pay is 0.99.

“SEE productivity,’ referring to combined social, environmental, and economic productivity, was an EPC2009 buzzword.”

Some new concepts are being developed to meet not just global competition but also environmental challenges. For example, national and European laws as well as international agreements increasingly require enterprises to examine and improve their carbon footprints. Reducing carbon emissions is a key challenge for raising Europe’s agricultural productivity. A new tool here is the use of inexpensive satellite-surveillance systems. These are so precise that farmers can decide which fertilizers to use and in what quantities on which parts of a single field as well as what measures they should take in the light of changing weather conditions. Not only

can such precision farming increase yields by 10%, but greenhouse gas production and pollution from fertilizer runoffs are significantly reduced. Thus was born the concept of “low-carbon productivity.” One of the EPC sponsors, CO₂ Sense Yorkshire, works in partnership with local organizations to find ways of using and generating energy more productively to reduce carbon emissions in the region by 25% by 2016.

But new techniques need backing from the old. Thus, food availability can be significantly increased, at minimal cost, simply by reducing agricultural waste in such areas as storage, distribution, and supermarket quality selection, although somewhat perversely the continuously growing size of supermarket chains has been a major driving force in productivity improvement. Change is, as ever, needed not just in people’s skills but above all in their attitudes and behavior to modify Western consumers’ habit of throwing away up to half of the food they purchase, which is both morally and ecologically wrong.

Europe borrows from wherever it can, although a presentation from the head of China’s 500-odd productivity centers created neither awe nor stimuli. An innovative approach introduced in one EPC2009 presentation was the “smart grid,” i.e., installing closed loops between energy utilities, modes of transport, and buildings since all three both produce and consume energy at different times (Austin, Texas, provides a striking example). Experience shows that it is not only the technical innovations that are important here, but also the involvement of the whole community in such approaches so that the productivity and conservation awareness of all citizens is vastly enhanced.

Getting the most out of a process is all about understanding and reducing variability. To overcome the problem of enterprises being “data rich and information poor,” approaches, some of which used sophisticated mathematics, were presented for turning data into an asset by transforming them into knowledge. Finnish research on absenteeism pointed out the importance of investing in the smooth flow of work and continuous development to increase well-being and productivity.

Productivity cannot be enhanced at the corporate level without supportive governmental action. Thus, although the scale of the current recession has meant that virtually all companies have resorted to considering and often implementing major staff cutbacks (raising traditional labor productivity), several European governments have introduced large-scale “short-time working” schemes. These enable a company to maintain its labor force on virtually full pay for periods of up to a year, with the government financing substantial skill training to enhance the company’s innovative capacities after making it through the hard times. Thus enterprises do not impair their long-term prospects for the sake of immediate survival.

Grimsby was a highly appropriate location for a productivity conference. It is a work-in-progress showcase of a region that 40 years ago depended on the single industry of fishing. This was decimated by a political decision: to conserve fish, Iceland extended its marine territorial exclusion area to 200 miles. While once Grimsby was home port for 1700 trawlers, only four

remain today. To create a new identity, Grimsby has positioned itself at the pinnacle of value-added chains such as fish and food processing, chemicals, and port facilities, adding wind-farm maintenance and tourism over time. An educational, research, consulting, and catalyzing driving force (setting up new bodies for and with enterprises in these clusters) has been provided by the Grimsby Institute. In the process, it has become a major local employer (1500 staff, which doubled in a decade, and 20,000 students) and set new standards in productivity education, such as its Master of Science in Productivity and Innovation degree. ☺

Anthony C. Hubert is President of EuroJobs, an organization he established to promote efforts to raise the quality of working life and productivity in Europe. He was formerly Secretary-General of the European Association of National Productivity Organizations. He writes regularly for this column.



Comment board



*Bureau Director **Chita De Gracia Cilindro**, Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns, Department of Labor and Employment, the Philippines.*

Participant, study meeting on Participation of Women and Retirees in the Workforce, 7–10 December 2009.

“The study meeting was very informative and interesting, as it dealt with an emerging issue not only in the West but also in most parts of Asia. The APO is being proactive by anticipating problems before they can seriously affect productivity. Compared

with the Republic of China, Singapore, and most European countries with aging populations, the Philippines has a relatively young population. That does not mean, however, that the knowledge and information that I gained from the meeting were of little use to me. On the contrary, the novelty of the issue motivated me to learn more. I have recently been designated to head the newly created Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC) within the Department of Labor and Employment. The BWSC will handle issues connected with female workers, young workers, and workers in the informal economy. Thus, all the topics discussed by the resource speakers will be useful in my work, especially the actual programs and services mentioned, all of which I can replicate with some modifications.”

*President **Dr. Jose L. Bacusmo**, Visayas State University, the Philippines.*

Participant, multicountry observational study mission on Controlled-environment Agricultural Production Systems, 30 November–4 December 2009.

“I participated in the project to learn more about protecting vegetables and other crops from excessive rain and strong wind. These two environmental conditions are the main constraints on achieving a reliable, year-round supply of vegetables in the Eastern Visayas region of the Philippines. I learned a lot from the project, including greenhouse designs, ways to protect crops and greenhouses from strong

winds, controlling the temperature inside the greenhouse, materials used in greenhouses, the benefits of growing crops in controlled environments, and the concept of the plant factory in Japan. After returning to the Philippines, I attended the APO grantee meeting. I hope that I can make some contribution to productivity improvement in the Philippines. I am now planning to reassess the greenhouse/screenhouse facility at my university based on what I learned from the project. I also want to invite the local speaker Dr. Chiachung Chen of National Chung Hsing University to Visayas State University to hold a seminar for our students and provide us recommendations on the rehabilitation of our greenhouses.”

*Assistant Manager **Jhia Sheng Khoo**, Business Development Division, SME Corporation Malaysia.*

Participant, study meeting on SME Financing in the Aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, Indonesia, 23–27 November 2009.

“Like all the other participants, I greatly benefited from the work of the organizers, speakers, and fellow participants at the study meeting. The speakers’ lectures were very focused on delivering the main points of interest as well as the broad perspectives, while the participants’ presentations were useful for exchanging ideas and best practices in each respective country. The meeting discussed the need to increase collaboration between the government and private banks in developing risk-sharing systems for delivering microloans to SMEs facing difficulties in securing collateral. Some other suggestions on how to assist SMEs in managing their financial challenges were also discussed. They included the establishment of equity investment devices for innovative SMEs and the adaptation of a cluster approach for SMEs to improve economy of scale, optimize operating costs, lower capital investments, and improve technology innovation. The site visits to local companies and agencies during the project were also valuable because they allowed us to acquire a practical understanding of the processes and implementation of microfinancing.”



Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques

Just-in-time

The term “just-in-time (JIT)” was created by Kiichiro Toyoda, founder of Toyota Motor Company, and is one of the most important guiding principles in the Toyota Production System. It implies that only the required products or parts should be made and supplied at the required time and in the required amount, which can reduce production lead times with high flexibility and avoid overproduction and unnecessary inventory of products or work in progress. In other words, JIT is “customer pull”-based manufacturing and therefore can achieve higher service levels to customers in terms of quality, cost, and delivery. JIT is also an important guiding principle for lean manufacturing implementation in various manufacturing industries.

The practical implementation of JIT includes the following activities:

- 1) Establishment of flow manufacturing;
- 2) Quick changeover of the equipment and parts in case of multiple model production using the same manufacturing line; and
- 3) Implementation of a JIT parts supply system.

Flow manufacturing deals with actual manufacturing processes for the making of products or parts. In principle, products or parts go through the manufacturing process one by one (single-piece flow) from the first operation through the final one and are made ready for the customer, which minimizes the production lead time and work in progress in between the process steps. Flow manufacturing systems work based on the relationship between “takt time,” the pace of manufacturing according to the customer’s requirements, and “cycle time,” the unique time needed to process one piece at each step. Once the process steps for the production, takt time, and cycle time of each step are given, it is possible to define how the manufacturing system functions, including estimation of the required number of operators (Figure), assignment of tasks to each operator, and layout.

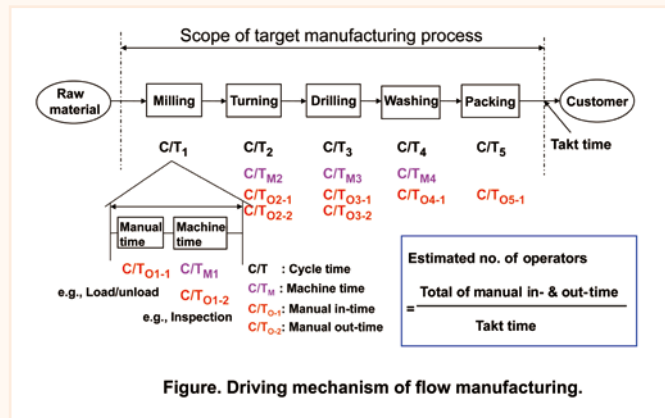


Figure. Driving mechanism of flow manufacturing.

When different models of parts or products are produced in the same manufacturing process, in order to reduce the lead time and inventory of parts or products and to cope flexibly with customer requirements,

production lot size must be reduced, which requires a quick changeover of the equipment, especially in part production using machine tools. The essence of changeover is to return the settings of machines to the identical position at which the same product was produced previously. Thus a method for remembering the identical position for every changeover and being able to set the machines to the correct positions are crucial. Also, categorizing changeover activities into “in-time activities” that must be done while machines are stopped and “out-time activities” that can be done while machines continue to turn out products (e.g., preparation of tools) is another important effort because changeover time is a period for in-time activities. The ability to reset machines accurately and the categorization of changeover activities contribute to rapid changeovers of 10 minutes or less.

A JIT parts supply system is especially effective in assembly operations in which varieties of in-house manufactured and/or outsourced parts are required. It allows workers to maintain neatness on the assembly line and in its surroundings, enhances assembly efficiency because of convenient handling of parts by operators, and ensures that the necessary parts are available while minimizing unnecessary inventory. Furthermore, through proper use of information technology, the administrative costs for part purchasing and logistics can be reduced.

Practical mechanisms applied in JIT parts supply typically include the kanban system, two-bin system, sequence supply, and kit parts supply. The kanban system is for medium- to high-cost parts that need to be supplied frequently with a short supply lead time. The two-bin system is for low-cost parts that need to be supplied frequently with a short supply lead time. Sequence supply is for bulky and heavy parts to be provided according to the sequence in which they are used on the assembly line. Kit parts supply involves providing a kit of parts for assembly as a set for each product in a parts box or on a trolley that moves with the products along the assembly line. It is important to keep in mind that these mechanisms assume stable parts requirements with small fluctuation. In addition, the parts supplied using the above JIT mechanisms must be defect free.



Contributed by Managing Director Takao Kasahara, Streamline Strategy Japan, Inc., resource speaker for the APO training course on the Development of Productivity Practitioners: Advanced. As a consultant in the field of manufacturing systems and business process reengineering, he has been working with more than 100 factories and 50 companies in 20 countries.

p-Glossary



To provide easy reference to productivity-related terms including methodologies, tools, and techniques, the APO developed the p-Glossary, available on its Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org).

Definitions and explanations of just-in-time are given in the p-Glossary.

Mental health and productivity

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) of the USA defines a healthy work organization as “a competitive organization that can realize profit with satisfied and productive workers and fewer stress patients.” A 1999 NIOSH report claimed that, “Stressful labor conditions actually increase the ratio of absenteeism, delays in work, and the ratio of leaving the workforce.” While many disregard this warning, according to Deputy Director Shinichiro Iida, Mental Health Research Institute (MHRI), Japan Productivity Center (JPC), the issue of mental health in the workplace has never been as important and is critical to securing the competitiveness of enterprises and even entire nations.

Mental health and productivity was the topic of an APO multicountry observational study mission in Japan, 18–22 January. Increasingly pressing concerns over mental health in the workplace were discussed by 19 participants from 11 member countries who work in this field. They observed the measures implemented by the government and in both public and private sectors in Japan to enhance workers’ mental health.

The JPC, the mission’s implementing organization, is a leading player in the struggle to improve mental health in the workplace. In 1980, it introduced the Japan Mental Health Inventory (JMI), a tool for surveying the mental health status of workers in four topic areas: body; mind; personality; and workplace. Using the JMI, the MHRI has processed data from 2.8 million workers in 2,800 enterprises. The results are analyzed and reported in two formats: an individual report for the employee and an establishment report for the employer. The reports are followed by self-care and workplace improvement measures, respectively.

The Japanese government has also played a key role in promoting better



At the Mental Health Center for Workers, Yokohama Rosai Hospital

mental health. In 2000, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare released guidelines on ensuring mental health in the workplace. It instructed employers to establish mental health development plans organized around “four cares”: self-care by workers; line care by managers or supervisors; care by industrial health staff in the workplace; and care by external resources such as therapists.

“The program reminded us of the importance of mental health in connection with productivity improvement in organizations. It was also a great opportunity to learn the various preventive and management measures and a support program for employees who return to work after medical leave and healthcare,” commented Senior Researcher Ga Woon Ban, Korea Productivity Center. 🌐

Potential economic drivers: entrepreneurs (Continued from page 1)

Takaaki Hata, Partner, Globis Capital Partners, discussed general venture capital business models and key success factors in terms of teams and quality of entrepreneurs. He believed that there were three common themes among companies performing well: sticking to the basics; maintaining strong teams; and being strong individuals. Hata particularly emphasized the importance of good communication and the need for entrepreneurs to “run” as quickly as possible and be flexible when rethinking strategy if necessary.

Hitoshi Suga, a winner of the Small Business Agency Award for Nurturing Entrepreneurs at the Japan Venture Awards 2008 and Special Advisor to the President of Tully’s Coffee Japan Co., Ltd., spoke on meeting Matsuda and instantly deciding to invest based on Matsuda’s energy, personality, and background. “Instinct is pretty important for any venture capital start-up investment,” said Suga. Another unique enterprise, the University of Tokyo Edge Capital Co., Ltd. (UTEC), is



Suga emphasizing the importance of “instinct” when making investment decisions

the sole venture capital firm authorized by the University of Tokyo as its “technology transfer-related company.” UTEC is involved in the formation of new ventures and takes risks on innovative technologies, as well as making lead investments in the seed/early stages. UTEC was established in 2004, and Managing Director Tomotaka Goji, a founding partner, demonstrated how the advantage of proprietary access to a university can be maximized in areas like IT, biotechnology, clean technology, and physical science technology seeds.

On the last day, participants visited the Entrepreneur Group for Growing Japan (EGG Japan) Incubation Offices. EGG Japan is operated by Mitsubishi Estate without any governmental support. Its business ecosystem connects all necessary support including providing low-rent office space and human networking through the Tokyo 21c Club to nurture entrepreneurs.

“The forum was a valuable opportunity to network with many of Asia’s brightest and best young entrepreneurs,” commented Director Woon Bock Ng, Socialico Pet. Ltd., Singapore. “This forum allowed me to look at Tokyo and its culture and see if I could bring some business concepts back home.” 🌐

A leadership platform for business excellence in Thailand

"A quality award program is an important driver or catalyst that can enhance the competitiveness of our region as well as that of individual nations through the creation of quality enterprises," stated APO Director for Thailand Dr. Vitoon Simachokdee, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, at a public seminar on 18 December 2009 as part of the APO conference on Quality Award Systems held in Bangkok, 15–18 December. The seminar, with the theme Sustainable Competitiveness Using the Business Excellence Model: Leadership and Innovation, also marked the 15th anniversary of the Thailand Productivity Institute (FTPI), the national productivity organization of the country.



APO Director for Thailand Simachokdee delivering remarks

former Global Business Excellence Leader Hans Van Beek, Philips Consumer Lifestyle, the Netherlands; former CEO Dr. David Spong, Boeing, USA; and Executive Director Thomas E. Schamberger, Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, Inc., USA.

The FTPI plans to cover new areas of productivity to play an effective role in the Thai economy. Its roles include administering the country's only business excellence framework and associated Thailand Quality Award, considered one of the key award systems in the region. Five APO experts from the Asia-Pacific, USA, and Europe shared their business excellence experience on the topic of leadership and innovation with over 200 seminar attendees including 23 APO participants. The key speakers included: CEO C.V. Jagadish, Systems on Silicon Manufacturing Co., Pte. Ltd. (a Singapore Quality Award winner), Singapore;

framework is viewed positively and directly contributes to the improvement of business results. Major findings of the survey were: 1) the benefits of adopting a business excellence framework are generally seen after five years; 2) leadership and culture are key challenges for most adopters; 3) innovation is a differentiator for future success for more advanced enterprises as well as new adopters; and 4) information sharing in the region on business excellence remains limited and should be developed to accelerate learning and raise the bar for business performance. Dr. Mann explained that the key findings of the report would be used as the basis for the 2010 and 2011 regional agenda.



Chief Expert Dr. Mann (standing) conducting the 2009 regional survey in Japan


The conference was also the venue for a series of workshops, special forums, and roundtable discussions where different stakeholders were able to describe their own agendas and exchange views on award programs. Participants also discussed how to address three main challenges and concerns of administrators, which were related to maintaining relevance, quality assurance, and funding support. The discussion was facilitated by Dr. Mann and cofacilitated by APO experts Hans Van Beek, Dr. David Spong, David E. Schamberger, and Surender Kakkar from India who provided professional inputs and guidance for participants.



Discussing how to improve award programs

Prior to the commemorative conference, the three-day second Quality Award Administrators' Meeting was held as part of the regional two-year (2010–2011) APO planning cycle focused on the development agenda for quality award programs in member countries. This was a follow-up to the first meeting in Mongolia in 2007 which developed the current platform for the advancement of award systems in APO member countries. The 2009 meeting was able to determine a common pathway and set goals for future quality awards.

The first day of the main conference included a session introducing APO activities related to quality award programs. Details of four major programs were reported including the 2007 Mongolian meeting, 2008 Tokyo expert meeting, center of excellence in business excellence initiative, and 2009 regional survey on the Impact of Business Excellence/Quality Awards on Enterprises. A highlight was the presentation of the preliminary results of the survey by Chief Expert Dr. Robin Mann, Director of the Centre for Organisational Excellence Research, New Zealand. The survey studied the performance implications of award systems in the Republic of China, India, Japan, Singapore, and Thailand from the perspectives of the senior management team and CEOs. The results confirmed that the business excellence

By the end of the meeting, the group of administrators realized that, as they continued to operate their award programs, their unique experiences during the journey toward business excellence were also important for the region. Therefore all members agreed to cooperate for continued progress. They also agreed with Dr. Spong's concluding remarks that, "The secret of success in business excellence is simply being consistent and persistent with passion." 

Program calendar

April

Pakistan

Workshop on Building Safe, Competitive Horticultural Chains in the Asia-Pacific Region: Fruit and Vegetable Chains, 12–17 April 2010.

► Objective: To enhance participants' understanding of the key principles and practices of building safe, competitive horticultural chains, analyze the performance of fresh fruit and vegetable chains in member countries, identify the issues and problems, and formulate action plans.

► Participants: Producers, processors, retailers, wholesalers, traders, government officers, academics, and consultants involved in fruit and vegetable supply chains.

Kindly contact your NPO for details of future activities, including eligibility for participation. The project details along with the address of your NPO are available from the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org.

New officer in the Secretariat

Hiroko Kosaka started as an Industry Department program officer in the APO Secretariat as of January 18. She brings a wealth of international and environmental experience to her duties, one of which is supporting the Eco-products International Fair in Jakarta in March. After receiving a BA in International Relations in Tokyo, she received an MA in the same subject and an MSc in Environmental Change and Management in the USA and UK, respectively. Her employment history involved both public- and private-sector experience, where she worked in numerous areas including economic cooperation through Japan's official development assistance, multilateral environmental cooperation, and business restructuring of large companies. Kosaka enjoys visiting hot springs in Japan and learning about other cultures in her spare time and looks forward to cooperating with member countries and NPOs to enhance the work of the APO in the region.



APO/NPO update

New APO Director for India

Mr. Rajinder Pal Singh, Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was appointed new APO Director for India, w.e.f. 1 January 2010.

New APO Alternate Director and Liaison Officer for Pakistan

Mr. Tahir Ali Shah, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Industries and Production, and Mr. Khawaja Muhammad Yousuf, Chief Executive Officer, National Productivity Organization, were appointed new APO Alternate Director for Pakistan, w.e.f. 9 December 2009, and APO Liaison Officer for Pakistan, w.e.f. 14 January 2009, respectively.

New phone/fax numbers for NPO of Pakistan

The phone/fax numbers of the NPO for Pakistan were changed to: tel: (92-51) 910-7091 to 7094; fax: (92-51) 910-7095.

Photo report



*Painting and ceramic villages in Bac Ninh Province
Workshop on the Evaluation of the Integrated Community Development Program:
One Village, One Product Movement Promotion in the Mekong Region, Vietnam, 9–13 November 2009*



*Visiting a demonstration organic farm in Uttar Pradesh
Workshop on the Development of Commercial Organic Farming, India, 9–15 December 2009*

Eco-products International Fair 2010



The APO Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) 2010 will be held in Indonesia at the Jakarta Convention Center, 4–7 March, with the theme Green Productivity to Enhance Competitiveness. This will be the sixth EPIF organized as part of APO efforts to promote Green Productivity (GP), a strategy for enhancing productivity and environmental performance simultaneously for overall socioeconomic development.

As the largest international environmental fair and conference in Asia, the EPIF brings key international players and executives from leading corporations under one roof for multifaceted business networking and promoting green branding strategies among the general public and consumers. It is also a venue to introduce and demonstrate the latest environmental technologies, manufactured goods, equipment, systems, and services, along with environmental initiatives of governments, public institutions, and NGOs.

The local organizers, the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, are expecting 100,000 visitors at this year's EPIF, given the increased concern and interest in environmental issues among the government, business community, and general public. Indonesia, which hosted the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference in Bali in 2007, is perfectly placed to receive the EPIF torch of eco-commitment and carry it to new levels of achievement.

APO Alumni Association in Korea formed


The Republic of Korea (ROK) has become the 10th member country with an APO alumni association, a productivity network formed by participants in APO projects. These associations allow members to share knowledge and expertise. The APO Alumni Association of Korea was established by the Korea Productivity Center (KPC), the national productivity organization of the ROK, with the inaugural meeting held on 15 December 2009.

The KPC has received many requests to organize a gathering of experts which would allow them to share their experiences and practices. The groundwork for setting up the alumni body started in September in 2009. This small but pragmatic learning organization has been established with around 100 applications. KPC Vice Chairman Woo-Keon Park will lead the alumni association as the first chair. Dr. Sung Soo Kim, former President of the Asia-Pacific Association of Education in Agriculture and Environment, an international association that developed from an APO project, will act as an adviser.

The KPC played host to the inaugural meeting of the APO Alumni Association of Korea at the Best Western Premier Hotel Kukdo in Seoul. The meeting, which was attended by 45 participants, kicked off with welcoming remarks from First Chair Park, followed by a round of introductions by participants. Selected individuals were then invited to make short remarks. They then became better acquainted by talking about their experiences in APO projects and other productivity activities.



Participants at the inaugural meeting

The KPC is planning to organize regular meetings where association members strengthen their network for continuous learning and improvements in their productivity endeavors. These meetings will include an annual meeting for the entire membership and smaller-scale seminars on specific topics such as SME management, Green Productivity, and agriculture. "We are also planning to organize public seminars so that APO project participants can share their updated news, information, and advanced knowledge of productivity when they return to Korea," explained APO Liaison Officer for the ROK Jun-Ho Kim of the KPC, when asked about upcoming events of the association. He also expressed a desire to expand the network to the global level via close communication and information sharing with other APO alumni bodies. 

People behind the scenes: Dr. Muhammad Saeed

Problems both large and small can occur at any time. They could arise from a lack of preparation or despite the closest attention to detail imaginable. This is often the case in APO projects involving many different international parties. The officer in charge may receive an apologetic e-mail message or phone call from the main speaker at the last minute delivering the news that he or she cannot attend for some unforeseeable reason. Sometimes the host country requests project postponement due to security threats or natural disasters. This can even happen once a project has started. Someone, usually meaning the officer in charge, must therefore step up and take charge on the front line to decide the best course of action after intense communication with all involved.

"It is certainly true that all the officers in our department try their best to find an ideal solution for each situation. However, Dr. Muhammad Saeed stands out as one who explores every avenue and spares no effort to implement the project as scheduled or find a conclusion satisfying everyone. His sincere, earnest personality and capacity to exercise good judgment in a flexible manner make things work," said a Secretariat staff member in the Agriculture Department, in which Program Officer Dr. Saeed works. Dr. Saeed is also an example of how to find the balance between work and happy family life with his sincerity, earnestness, thoughtfulness, and cooperative attitude.



In recent years, numerous in-house activities have been conducted at the Secretariat: setting up taskforces, internal presentations in connection with program improvement and performance enhancement, etc. These are occasions when all staff members are invited to discuss factors determining the success or failure of APO projects and exchange ideas for their improvement. On such occasions, we can always rely on Dr. Saeed to encourage his colleagues by sharing his mistakes or difficulties, making honest comments, and dispensing good advice. Dr. Saeed is also quick to respond to e-mail messages from staff seeking assistance. The APO News team is one of the beneficiaries of his cooperative nature. Despite the demands of his projects, he never forgets to take photos of the most interesting and exciting moments for the benefit of APO News readers.

One more thing that should be mentioned is Dr. Saeed's loving family. "I heard that his children always miss him during his frequent trips overseas," said one colleague, and those who know the family can testify to their closeness. This is likely the main source of the positive energy and happiness in his life. 