



## Heads of NPOs attend APO annual planning meeting

**T**he heads of the national productivity organizations (NPOs) of 18 APO member countries, together with their agriculture delegates and advisers numbering 44, met in Manila, the Philippines, 18–20 February 2003, to participate in the annual program and strategic planning meeting of the APO. The occasion was the APO 43rd Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM). In addition to the delegates and advisers, there were seven observers from Cambodia, Myanmar, UBI France, Asian Development Bank, Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers, and International Labour Organization.

The WSM was inaugurated by Dr. Eduardo T. Gonzalez, President, Development Academy of the Philippines. A keynote address by Secretary Elisea G. Gozun, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Philippines, was presented by DENR Undersecretary Renato A. de Rueda. Another speaker at the inaugural session was APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima, who presented his annual statement to the delegates (see page 2 for more coverage of the statement). The closing session of the WSM was graced by Secretary Emilia T. Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management who also addressed the gathering.



*WSM delegates*

The heads of NPOs also received a special presentation on “Sustainable Rural/Community Development” by Dr. Cielito F. Habito, Professor of Economics, Ateneo de Manila University. During the meeting, Secretary-General Tajima presented a certificate of appreciation to Jo-Na’s International Philippines, Inc., a leading manufacturer and exporter of snacks and dehydrated and preserved fruits, in recognition of its strong support for and commitment to the Green Productivity Demonstration Program.

### *Inaugural Address*

Dr. Eduardo T. Gonzalez, in his inaugural address, noted the different sizes, levels of development, and governance systems in Asian countries and that some transitional economies still had much to learn in terms of productivity and quality. The APO member countries as a group were an increasingly important force in the world economy and this col-

*(Continued on page 6)*

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**“The biggest mistake anyone can make is to focus on the competitor. You focus on the consumer and you will get it right.”**

*K. B. Dadiseth*

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**Asian Productivity Organization**  
Hirakawa-cho Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg. 2F  
1-2-10 Hirakawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku  
Tokyo 102-0093, Japan  
Tel: (81-3) 5226-3920  
Fax: (81-3) 5226-3950  
E-mail: apo@apo-tokyo.org  
Web site: www.apo-tokyo.org



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# APO Secretary-General's statement to the Heads of NPOs

**A**PO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima began his statement to the Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs with the reaffirmation that the ultimate objective of productivity improvement was to realize a better quality of life for all people. Competitiveness, environmental protection, and social fairness constitute the three pillars of the present productivity movement in the region. He noted that these were taken into account in the designing of APO activities.

Secretary-General Tajima went on to state that the major components of corporate assets had been shifting from tangible to intangible ones, such as knowledge, experience, ideas, and know-how, as a key source of competitive advantage. This has prompted governments and organizations to accord top priority to the generation and application of knowledge. He cited the Republic of China as an example where the government had sought to establish a nationwide knowledge management (KM) infrastructure.

Mr. Tajima pointed out that KM is a thrust area of the APO. Under this program, the promotional efforts have advanced from concept introduction to concept application. The APO is also actively assisting the NPOs to propagate the KM concept in their respective countries. The success of the Vietnam Productivity Center in this regard was highlighted.

The APO Strengthening of SMEs program, Mr. Tajima said, has also made a fundamental change in its focus, i.e., from nurturing and strengthening SMEs in general to catering to the specific needs of the weaker ones.

On the APO Green Productivity (GP) program, Mr. Tajima referred to the APO's participation in the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the inclusion of the APO proposed partnership initiative on GP-Integrated Community Development (ICD) was in the official WSSD documentation. Following the WSSD, the APO 2nd GP World Conference was held in Manila in December 2002 to review the



*Mr. Tajima delivering his annual statement*

progress of the GP program and to determine its future directions in light of the WSSD outcome. The conference's "Statement on Green Productivity" will form the basis for future GP activities. Mr. Tajima announced that the APO would conduct a survey on green procurement practices among its member countries.

The Secretary-General informed the meeting that the APO ICD program is contributing to sustainable development and poverty alleviation through its dual approach of promoting GP demonstration projects at the community level and developing a core cadre to play a leading role in sustainable community development. This approach will be further strengthened with the inclusion of a new kaizen element in projects for rural life improvement.

Turning his attention to the APO agriculture program, Mr. Tajima said that the agriculture and food sector continues to be significant part of most member countries' economies. "Recent experience has shown that a nation's sustainable development cannot be ensured without the sound development of this sector." He further added that the APO, in seeking for areas of commonality between agriculture and its thrust areas of strengthening SMEs and GP, had selected the fol-

lowing for special focus: 1) strengthening the competitiveness of the agriculture and agribusiness sectors; and 2) promoting sustainable development of agriculture. Mr. Tajima called on the NPOs to be more vigorously involved in the agricultural sector and to strengthen their liaisons with agriculture-related ministries and agencies.


Mr. Tajima reported that the Development of NPOs (DON) program had expanded significantly both in the number of member countries participating in it and the variety of services it offered. Experts were assigned to help: 1) Sri Lanka formulate its national productivity policy for the public sector; 2) the NPO of Bangladesh to design a strategic action plan for productivity improvement; and 3) the Vietnam Productivity Center to upgrade its IT and KM capabilities. Multi-country DON projects continued to contribute to the institutional development and capacity building of NPOs.

Efforts at disseminating information about the APO and reference materials for productivity promotion and enhancement continued to be given special focus, said the Secretary-General. The electronic media are increasingly used for this purpose, particularly the APO Web site on the Internet and the APOnet that now serves as

the hub of information exchange and networking among member countries. The next information dissemination plan was to introduce e-books on the APO Web site. He announced the publication of the *APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis 2002* and said that all-out efforts would be made to improve further its usefulness to policymakers in government and business in planning regional, sub-regional, and country-wise strategies.

On the APO's financial situation, Mr. Tajima reported that the Secretariat had taken concrete steps to cope with the present financial constraints and to make the best possible use of available funds. He cited the use of discount air tickets by Secretariat staff members, participants, experts, and resource persons as an example. This attempt at cost saving could be effective only with NPOs' cooperation. He also requested the NPOs to meet the local implementing costs in full when hosting APO projects. He told the meeting that this was a decision the APO Governing Body made in 1998 based on the APO basic spirit of mutual cooperation among its member countries.

The APO has established extensive cooperative relationships with governmental agencies of non-member countries and with other regional and international organizations. Mr. Tajima said that the synergy derived from the pooling of resources and capabilities from within and beyond Asia and the Pacific has been mutually beneficial to all concerned and it must be sustained. He thanked the many organizations that had been collaborating with the APO and expressed the desire for more collaborative relationships with them in the future.

The Secretary-General wrapped up his statement by asserting that future productivity promotion challenges would not be less intense than those in the past four decades. To deal with them effectively will require innovative and creative minds to develop new and different perspectives and strategies, both region-wise and country-wise. Their first priority in the meeting, he told the delegates, was to determine the future direction of their respective productivity movements. 

## From the SECRETARY-GENERAL'S schedule

February 2003

*6–7 February*

APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima attended the 41st “Kansai Zaikai Seminar” in Kyoto. It was a joint annual event of the Kansai Economic Federation and Kansai Association of Corporate Executives, and supported by the Kansai Productivity Center. The theme of the seminar this year focused on the efforts of the Kansai region to revitalize the Japanese economy through the enhancement of good governance and competitiveness.

*10–11 February*

Official visit to Sri Lanka, at the invitation of the Sri Lankan Government, to attend the National Productivity Award and National Quality Award Presentation Ceremony in Colombo. As a guest of honor, Mr. Tajima delivered a special address and presented awards to winners in the school sector.



*Mr. Tajima delivering his special address in Sri Lanka*

During his visit, he paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Employment and Labour, Mahinda Samarasinghe; visited Ceylon Cold Stores Limited, 1st runner-up in the National Productivity Award (manufacturing sector); and toured the productivity exhibition held in conjunction with the award presentation (see p. 5 for full report).

*11 February*

On his return from Colombo to Tokyo, the Secretary-General made a one-day stopover in Singapore to meet with Lim Boon Heng, APO Director for Singapore and Chairman, SPRING Singapore, and the following senior executives of SPRING Singapore: Deputy Chairman Cedric Foo, Chief Executive Lee Suan Hiang, who is also the APO Alternate Director for Singapore, and Deputy Chief Executive Freddy Soon.

*18–20 February*

Attended the APO 43rd Workshop Meeting of Heads of National Productivity Organizations in Manila, the Philippines.





Productivity Series 31

# NEW CURRENTS IN PRODUCTIVITY ANALYSIS

## *Where to Now?*

by **Renuka Mahadevan**

APO 94 pp. December 2002 ISBN 92-833-1721-0

This book attempts to highlight some developments in the expanding field of productivity growth analysis. First, the various total factor productivity (TFP) growth measurement methods are categorized under the frontier and non-frontier approaches. By way of illustration, a survey of TFP growth studies of Singapore and Malaysia is used for discussion. Skepticism regarding the usefulness of TFP growth measures and their interpretation is also addressed.

Second, a more focused approach to understanding the determinants of TFP growth is explained. One important feature of the book is the preliminary empirical investigation based on data from the publication *APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis 2001*. This was used to draw policy implications and lessons from various countries for improving productivity growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

As the emergence of the new or knowledge-based economy is already evident in some Asia-Pacific countries, the debate and evidence surrounding the information technology-productivity nexus as well as the challenges in adopting information technology are reviewed. Finally, to raise the APO's profile and spearhead its efforts in productivity research, suggestions are provided on what and how more can be done in this area.

Chapter One introduces TFP growth measurement, including types of productivity growth measures, approaches to TFP growth measures, and problems and prospects underlying their use. Chapter Two deals with sources of output growth and TFP growth, with the emphasis on a more focused approach to determinants of productivity growth. Empirical analysis of productivity growth performance is the focus of Chapter Three. Here the author provides extensive coverage of the factors affecting productivity growth. Chapter Four expounds on productivity growth and the new economy, especially the impact of IT on productivity. In the concluding Chapter Five the author makes a number of proposals for future directions in productivity research.

The author is Dr. Renuka Mahadevan, a lecturer in the Department of Economics, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. She received her Master's and PhD in economics from the Australian National University and has published extensively in the area of productivity growth analysis in the Asia-Pacific region. Her forthcoming book entitled *The Economics of Productivity in Asia and Australia* will be published by Edward Elgar later this year.

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



"A dull business run by a good businessman is far better than a glamorous business with mediocre management."

*Ralph Wanger*

"The reward for conformity was that everyone liked you except yourself."

*Rita Mae Brown*

"I think a lot of people initially thought that the 'e' in e-business is more important than the business."

*Michael Dell*

"There are two ways to get to the top of an oak tree. One way is to sit on an acorn and wait; the other is to climb it."

*Kemmons Wilson*

"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

*Mahatma Gandhi*

"If you go through life convinced that your way is always best, all the new ideas in the world will pass you by."

*Akio Morita*

"Jade is useless until it's polished. A man is useless until he's educated."

*Chinese Proverb*

"We can't simply rely on a long-established reputation. We have to offer exactly what our customers require, even if we have to give up some."

*Ichiro Inumaru*

"The biggest mistake anyone can make is to focus on the competitor. You focus on the consumer and you will get it right."

*K.B. Dadiseth*

# Sri Lanka confers productivity and quality awards

**10** February 2003 was a red-letter day for 23 governmental ministries, private-sector business enterprises, and schools in Sri Lanka as they received the National Productivity Award from the Ministry of Employment and Labour. Three other business corporations were recipients of the National Quality Award. The presentation ceremony was a grand event attended by Minister of Power and Energy Deshabandu Karu Jayasuriya as the Chief Guest and Ashley Wills, US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, and APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima as the Guests of Honor. Other dignitaries present were Minister of Public Administration and Management Reforms Vajira Abeywardene and Minister of Employment and Labour Mahinda Samarasinghe.

The Sri Lankan National Productivity Award was introduced in 1993 and the National Quality Award in 1996. Both schemes were the brainchild of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe when he was the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs. The National Productivity Award is divided into four competitions for the Government Ministry Sector, Manufacturing Sector, School

Sector, and Service Sector. As explained by Minister Samarasinghe in his message in a newspaper supplement published to commemorate the award presentation, "This award scheme is to encourage and guide companies to become world class and identify models for others to emulate. The competition for government ministries is aimed at recognizing those with high productivity, while the school awards are meant to inculcate a productivity and quality orientation so that school leavers will find it easier to fit into the new business environment."

The Minister also announced that to give direction to the productivity movement, a National Productivity Policy covering both the private and public sectors has been adopted by the government. Minister Samarasinghe contends that fostering a good macro-economic environment conducive to productivity alone is insufficient for wealth creation. "It is at the micro-economic level that wealth is created." For this reason, he called on Sri Lankan corporations to be productive by adopting more sophisticated business strategies, developing the



Mr. Tajima presenting an award

skills of their employees, installing better information systems, and competing for the higher quality segments of the global markets.

As a guest of honor, APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima gave a special address in which he said that with rapid economic globalization and the development of the IT revolution, "products and services have to be globally competitive in price, quality, and delivery in order to survive and grow," and issues like environmental protection and poverty alleviation must be dealt with. Strengthening the productivity drive is a basic requirement to achieve rapid economic growth, he added. 🌀

## Announcing the 2002 quiz contest winners

The *APO News* Quiz featured in the December 2002 issue attracted 152 entries, of which 97 had perfect scores. As there were only 10 cash prizes of US\$50.00 each to be won, the winners were decided by lucky draw. For this purpose, we invited two staff members in the APO Secretariat who are not involved in the production of the *APO News* to help us pick the winning entries.

The 2002 *APO News* Quiz also had a supplementary contest under which we invited readers to submit their suggestions for improving the monthly newsletter. Five cash awards of US\$50.00 each

were offered, and we received 118 entries. To pick the winners, a progressive shortlisting process was used. Again, APO Secretariat staff members were asked to help. Two criteria were used to shortlist and select the final winners: The ideas must be implementable and they should not have already been thought of by the *APO News* staff.

We would like to thank all those who took part in the quiz and the supplementary contest and to extend our heartiest congratulations to all the prize winners. You should be hearing from us very shortly.



Dr. S. Ahmad, Industry Department, and Ms. S. Kusumoto, SG's Office, picking winners of the quiz

### Quiz winners

Mr. Debasish Bhattacharyya	India	Mr. Rajaumbang Saragih	Indonesia
Mr. G. Subramanyam	India	Mr. Siamak Nattagh	Iran
Mr. Sanjaya Singh Gaur	India	Mr. Sayasith Uhamphasith	Laos
Mr. S. Shanmugam	India	Ms. Ayurzana Odonzaya	Mongolia
Mr. Ram Girish Dwivedi	India	Ms. Dashnyam Urnaa	Mongolia

### Suggestion contest winners

Mr. K.A. Krishnan	India
Ms. S. Tamilarasi	India
Mr. Alam Zeb Khan	Pakistan
Mr. Cyrel C. San Gabriel	Philippines
Mr. Premalal Ranawila	Sri Lanka



Dr. Gonzalez delivering the inaugural address

lective weight had been rising, he noted. Many had embraced trade liberalization as a means to progress. However, at the same time, many parts of Asia were being carefully watched because of their exposed weaknesses in the areas of financial stability, protection of environment commons, and movement of capital. Moreover, an increasing reliance on exports, at a time of contracting global trade and stagnant domestic demand, made Asia highly vulnerable to a global economic downturn.

Dr. Gonzalez said that as most Asian nations were part of a broader set of middle-income countries that had become important suppliers of global public goods, their involvement in any collective action to address market failures in the production of such goods was crucial. In most of Asia, progress in productivity and quality improvements was necessary to recover the momentum for broad-based and equitable growth and to forestall another financial crisis. He told the delegates that their task at the workshop was to strengthen the supply of global public goods in the Asian region by reviewing and evaluating recent productivity movement efforts and formulating plans that would enable government, firms, and civil society organizations to cope with the rapid socio-economic changes taking place in Asia and around the globe.

Each country, Dr. Gonzalez commented, would be faced with many external and internal issues. For the Philippines, the external challenge was to keep up with the fluctuations in the global market, while the internal challenge was to win the confi-

dence of investors to raise the current low volume of investments. The Philippine government had recently shifted its focus in economic planning from the macroeconomic and demand side to the microeconomic and supply side, thus putting productivity-enhancing measures at center stage. In light of this, the challenge for the NPO of the Philippines was to promote productivity-driven growth with the following thrust areas: sustainable human development, knowledge management, transparency and accountability in governance, democratic reforms, and education for excellence.

In concluding his address, Dr. Gonzalez told the delegates that their goal was “to make sure that no country is left behind and no country is barred from moving ahead.” He then declared the 43rd Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs open.

#### Keynote Address

Secretary Gozun commenced her address by making reference to the 2nd APO Green Productivity (GP) World Conference held recently in Manila as an immediate response to the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD). She said that Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, in her message to that 2nd GP World Conference, emphasized that her administration’s development programs and related initiatives were anchored on the two paramount concerns of the need to achieve economic development and the need to conserve the environment. She added that the APO GP program of harmonizing productivity improvement with environmental protection for sustainable development matched these concerns perfectly.

With reference to the WSSD, Secretary Gozun said that it had reaffirmed sustainable development as a central element on the international agenda and gave new impetus to global action to fight against poverty and protect the environment. She then went on to reiterate some of the commitments that were made, particularly those pertaining to poverty eradication, water resources management,

restoration of depleted fish stocks, establishment of a marine protected network, reduction in rate of biodiversity loss, and reduction in the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. She commended the APO for its participation in the WSSD, particularly the successful launching of its partnership initiative on poverty alleviation and environmental protection.

As the Philippine Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Gozun had maintained an agenda for development that was responsive to both the needs of the population and the requirements of ecological integrity. She informed the delegates of the following initiatives undertaken by her ministry: 1) opening the upland areas to agricultural investments and production, especially joint ventures between private investors and upland communities, that would provide the needed vegetative cover, create jobs, augment the income of upland communities, and allow the government to use its limited resources to maintain and protect existing forests; 2) revitalizing the forestry and mining industries and promoting responsible forestry and mining operations, including the clean-up and rehabilitation of abandoned mines; 3) rationalizing and streamlining the land titling system; 4) facilitating the distribution of public lands to qualified informal settlers; 5) implementing the Clean Air Act as a top national priority activity; 6) promoting the use of alternative fuels such as natural gas, bio-diesel, and other environmentally friendly fuels; 7) encouraging industries to shift to cleaner production; 8) providing support to local governments in establishing recovery facilities for waste recycling and converting open dump sites into sanitary landfills; and 9) conducting regular reviews and streamlining of rules, regulations, and procedures to ensure their responsiveness to the needs of clientele and investors, especially on the environmental impact assessment system and its particular application to small and medium enterprises.

In concluding her statement, Secretary Gozun expressed solidarity with the delegates as they sought ways to achieve increased productivity as soon as possible because of the many expectations and the urgency of time. 🌀





## BANGLADESH

**Mr. Gordon Mackie**, Consultant, Int Textile Consultants, UK, was deputed to provide technical expert services on Process Technology in the Jute Industry, 1–7 March 2003.

## INDONESIA

**Mr. Kunjung Masehaat**, Senior Trainer/Consultant, Directorate of Manpower Productivity Development, Indonesia, and **Mr. Rudiyanto**, Vice President, SBU-Sucofindo International Certification Services, Indonesia, were deputed to serve as moderators in the JICA-Net Seminar on TQM, 18–20 February 2003.

## JAPAN

**Prof. Elliot J. Schrage**, Adjunct Professor, Columbia University Business School, USA, was deputed to provide technical expert services on Corporate Governance & Compliance Management in the Global Economy, 5–6 March 2003.

**Mr. Albert Van Thienen**, CEO, Ethibel, Belgium, was deputed to provide technical expert services on Installing Human Resource Management Systems Linked to the Management Giving Priority to Shareholders' Value, 5–6 March 2003.

The following were deputed to serve as consultants in the symposium on the Impact of Trade Liberalization on Agricultural Producers and Rural Poor, 11–17 March 2003: **Dr. Anna Strutt**, Senior Lecturer, University of Waikato Management School, New Zealand; **Dr. Kym Anderson**, Associate Dean, School of Economics, University of Adelaide, Australia; and **Dr. Harmon C. Thomas**, Chief of Commodity Policy and Projections Service, FAO, Italy.

## MALAYSIA

The following were deputed to provide technical expert services in the Practicum Workshop on Green Productivity, 28 February–28 March 2003: **Mr. Teoh Cheng Hai**, Managing Consultant, JM Juran Sdn Bhd, Malaysia; **Mr. Lee Kiyau Loo**, Secretary-General, Green Productivity Association, Malaysia; and **Dr. Suporn Koottatep**, Associate Professor, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

**Mr. Sugumaran Muniretnam**, Consultant, and **Mr. Hamdi Othman**, Manager, Human Resources Development, both of the National Productivity Corporation, Malaysia, were deputed to serve as moderators in the JICA-Net Seminar on TQM, 18–20 February 2003.

## NEPAL

**Mr. Kiran N. Pyakuryal**, Chief of Rural Development Section, ESCAP, Thailand, and **Dr. Revathi Balakrishnan**, Regional Sociologist and Gender and Development Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Thailand, were deputed to serve as resource persons in the seminar on the Role of Women in Sustainable Rural Development, 3–7 March 2003.

## PHILIPPINES

**Ms. Magdalena L. Mendoza**, Vice President, and **Ms. Elena A. Cruz**, Assistant Vice President, both of the Development Academy of the Philippines, Philippines, were deputed to serve as moderators in the JICA-Net Seminar on TQM, 18–20 February 2003.

**Dr. Leong Yueh Kwong**, Director, Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Institute, Philippines, was deputed to provide technical expert services in the Integrated Community Development Demonstration Program, 26 February–5 March 2003.

## SINGAPORE

**Mr. Choi Jae Myeong**, Director, and **Mr. Kim Seong Doo**, Manager, both of the Korean Natural Farming Association, Republic of Korea, were deputed to provide technical expert services in the Green Productivity Demonstration Project on Energy Conservation and Waste Recycling at Changi General Hospital, 17–29 March 2003.

## SRI LANKA

**Mr. Noriyuki Murata**, Chief Operating Officer, RIIM Chu-San-Ren, Inc., Japan, was deputed to serve as a resource person in the seminar on Japanese-Style Management, 4–13 March 2003.

## Program calendar

### Republic of China

Workshop on New Technologies for Die-Casting Processes, 21–25 July 2003.

### Japan

Seminar on Development of Training Programs for Middle Management, 9–13 June 2003.

Seminar on Better Agricultural Practices for Environmental Sustainability, 9–16 July 2003.

### Mongolia

Training Course on Strengthening Management Capabilities of Small Industries, 17–23 June 2003.

### Philippines

Workshop on Green Procurement for Greening Supply Chains, 26–29 May 2003.

Seminar on International Marketing of Agricultural Products, 23–27 June 2003.

*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).*

## VIETNAM

**Mr. Tan Kim Leng**, Managing Director, Knowledge Driver Asia Pte Ltd., Singapore, was deputed to serve as a consultant to the Vietnam Productivity Center on Developing Knowledge Management Schemes, 24–28 February 2003.

**Dato' Dr. Soh Chai Hock**, Expert, Malaysia, was deputed to serve as a resource person in the training course on Green Productivity with the Special Focus on Emergency Response Planning, 11 March–14 May 2003.

# — APO launches pilot e-learning project —

The APO, in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), launched a pilot e-learning project called “JICA-Net Seminar on Total Quality Management (TQM)” on 18–20 February 2003. This project was another endeavor by the APO to harness the information and communications technologies to provide better and more sophisticated services to its member countries.

The three-day e-learning project included the following: 1) A one-day presentation on the theme of the seminar was given by resource person Tadahiko Taguchi, who has extensive consultancy experience in TQM in Malaysia and Indonesia. His presentation was divided into six sessions of 35 minutes each, followed by Q&A for about 15 minutes. 2) The participants in each center were taken on a company visit on the second day to observe firsthand the actual application of the concepts and techniques expounded by Mr. Taguchi. 3) On the final day, a participant from each of the centers reported on the learning experiences his group had gained from the program. Mr. Taguchi concluded the seminar with his comments on the group reports.

As the timing of the JICA-Net seminar coincided with the APO 43rd Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs in Manila, APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima and some of the workshop delegates visited the videoconferencing center at the University of the Philippines to observe the seminar sessions. Mr. Tajima spoke live to the participants in all three centers. He mentioned that the seminar was the first collaborative effort between the APO and JICA and the first teleconferencing project to be organized by the APO.



*Mr. Taguchi delivering his lecture in Tokyo*

The JICA-Net TQM seminar was made possible by the network of videoconferencing centers that JICA has established recently in Jakarta (Indonesia), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Manila (the Philippines), Bangkok (Thailand), and Okinawa (Japan). Future centers are planned for Hanoi (Vietnam) and Vientiane (Laos). This facility is part of the Japanese Government’s attempt to bridge the digital divide between developing and developed countries to fulfill a pledge it made at the G-8 summit in Okinawa in 2001. JICA kindly allowed the APO not only to use its facility to organize the e-learning project but also to co-sponsor it. Three APO member countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, participated in this pioneering project.

There were 19 participants each in the videoconferencing centers in Indonesia and the Philippines, and 22 in Malaysia. They came from private-sector corporations, public-sector institutions, academia, and NPOs. In each center, two local technical experts served as moderators. That a single transmission can reach 60 people located in three different countries simultaneously is one of the compelling reasons for using e-learning as a training and information dissemination tool. It is cost-effective and has a great multiplier effect.



*Participants at the Malaysia videoconferencing center*

As a first attempt at organizing an e-learning project using the teleconferencing facility by both the APO and JICA, it went fairly well. The participants were generally happy with the experience. For the APO and JICA, this pilot project provided important insights on ways to improve future e-learning projects. Having a state-of-the-art facility like JICA-Net in itself is not enough. The effectiveness of a live e-learning project is also dependent on a whole host of other factors, such as good broadband connections in participating countries, data traffic congestion, good and interesting presenters, and a well-thought out program. Despite the initial teething problems, the APO is planning more e-learning projects for its member countries. 🌀