



A·P·O news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

Gene Yamada, doyen of the APO, retires

He was the “midwife” who helped those who conceptualized the APO to transform their idea into reality and who stayed on for the next 42 years to nurture and help it mature into what it is today—an organization that spans 19 countries in Asia and the Pacific, with a combined population of one-third of the world’s total, and with activities that have grown to a scope and volume that can only be described as breathtaking. He is Yuji Yamada, Special Adviser to the APO Secretary-General. In June this year, Gene—as he is known to many—will retire from active service in the APO Secretariat.

Gene has been variously and fondly described by those who know him as “wise,” “very knowledgeable,” “diplomatic,” “reflective,” “a walking encyclopedia on the APO,” and “a workaholic.” Almost his entire adult life was devoted to establishing and building the APO. In this, he is clearly focused and single-minded. Although the APO was not conceived by him, once established, Gene adopted it and looked after it as if it were his very own. The day he “dreads” has come to let go of his charge and watch it grow and develop further from a distance. For him who has given so much to the organization, the parting will not be easy. It will also be difficult for those who have worked closely with him in the Secretariat and in the national productivity organizations, benefited from his wisdom and counsel, and come to respect him for his devotion and diligence in his work, despite the fact that his health in recent years has not always been in top form.

Although Gene joined the newly established APO Secretariat as a staff member when the APO was formed in May 1961, his involvement with the APO dated back to 1959 when the preparatory work was set in motion. He was then an officer in the Japan Productivity Center, now the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development, which provided secretarial support for the birth of the APO.

Gene’s first assignment in the APO Secretariat was as its Administration Officer. In 1972, he was transferred to the Industry Division, where he rose to become its head as well as Special Assistant to the Secretary-General in 1980. He relinquished his leadership of the Industry Division in 1995, but continued to serve as Special Assistant (designated Special Adviser in 1999) to the Secretary-General.

The dedication and commitment of Gene to the mission and activities of the APO are without parallel. His long service will also be difficult to match. He was honored with the Award for Special Contribution to International Economic Cooperation by the Government of Japan in 1993. This was followed by his appointment as a Commandeur de l’Ordre



Mr. Yuji Yamada

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June 2003

**“Think like a man
of action, act like a
man of thought.”**

Henri Louis Bergson

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Anatomy of the American worker

A writer compared the US economy of the late 1990s to a “royal flush”—the best poker hand one can be dealt. In other words, all the heavenly stars were lined up to bring the US an unprecedented economic boom. Innovation, high productivity, risk taking, persistence, and luck gave the American worker a good shot at the “American Dream.” Employment opportunities for the young and minorities lowered the unemployment rate for these groups to historic lows. Employers and employees shared an understanding that maximizing one’s economic position was the smart way to embrace the national prosperity. Productivity offered a helping hand. From 1995 through 2000, productivity grew at an average 2.6% compared with 1.5% from 1973 to 1995. A 1% increase over 20 years would represent an approximately 30% increase in output per hour and raise living standards by an equal amount.

“Innovation, high productivity, risk taking, persistence, and luck gave the American workers a good shot at the ‘American Dream.’”

Changes in the nature of the American workforce reflected this grab for prosperity. More women entered the job market to avail of the multitude of opportunities. Forty-seven percent of the US workforce is now female, and women will account for 57% of the growth in the labor force through 2005. Women now fill nearly half of all managerial positions and 6.2 million women have moved into the ranks of business owners. A robust stock market and hefty pension benefits prompted older workers to retire early. In 1960, 78% of men 60 to 64 were in the labor force, as were 31% of workers over 65. In 2000, those figures were 55% and 18%, respectively.

When the curtain fell marking the end of this brief period of economic euphoria, Americans had to adjust. Workers and investors quickly discov-

ered that they had been hoodwinked by high-level management, banks, and brokerage firms. A volley of lawsuits was filed, and the more dishonest of the business elite are now facing civil and criminal charges. Although the sight of white-collar criminals heading off to jail offered the unemployed American worker a momentary sense of justice, it didn’t help put dinner on the table or pay the bills. A new reality had set in and workers had no choice but to adapt.

American workers adapted by working harder for less pay and benefits. The airlines industry has been one yardstick used to judge the economy’s health. After leading the way in increased wages and benefits, airline workers are giving up gains earned over the past decade. Over 115,000 airline workers have lost their jobs in the past two years, including 7,800 pilots. One major airline closed all of its 1,700 city ticketing offices. Four of the largest airlines have been in or flirted with bankruptcy over the past year and have beseeched their employees to approve hundreds of millions of dollars in wage and benefit concessions. Employees agreed to the unprecedented cuts, realizing a reduced salary was better than no salary. Wage concessions have hit practically all sectors. Union contract negotiations now focus on reducing wage and benefit losses rather than fighting for salary increases.

The new economic reality confronts workers of all ages and skills. So far in 2003, over 535,000 jobs have been lost, and the average hours worked are the lowest in 40 years at 34.0 per week. Corporate hiring of new college graduates is down 23% from 2001. Fifty-three percent of graduates do not expect to receive a single job offer and 60% plan to move back to their parents’ home. Dad, however, might be among the 9.4 million unemployed.

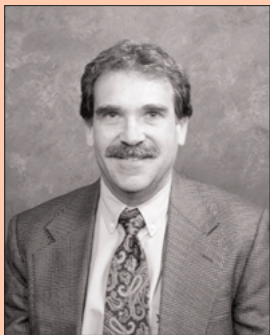
All these misfortunes are stressful. Men produce 70% of family income in the USA and nearly 30%

of husbands who have faced unemployment suffer significant mental health problems. The National Mental Health Association estimates that depression costs the economy nearly US\$44 billion annually in absenteeism, lost productivity, and direct treatment costs. In one study, 70% of surveyed workers reported that current economic conditions have increased their overall stress and made them insecure about the future. Only 10% reported to be unaffected by the current economic downturn.


“The phrase that best describes today’s work climate is ‘24/7.’ One commentator describes the US as a nation obsessed with competitiveness, which helps explain why American workers clock more work hours per week than any other industrialized nation.”

Whatever happened to worker expectations of less work and more leisure time with loved ones? Such expectations were fueled by earlier progressive labor “experiments.” The breakfast food specialist Kellogg Company, for example, instituted a 30-hour workweek in 1930 to contend with the Depression and help realize the dream that machines would create sufficient value through higher productivity to create a workers’ utopia. (The experiment ended in 1985.) The US Senate passed a bill mandating a 30-hour workweek in 1933, but the bill lacked the votes to pass in the House of Representatives. Unions were also committed to reducing time on the job, but today only 15% of American workers belong to a union, as opposed to 35% in the 1950s and 20% in 1983.

The phrase that best describes today’s work climate is “24/7.” One commentator describes the US as a nation obsessed with competitiveness, which helps explain why American workers clock more work hours per week than any other industrialized nation. The impact on American families is



reflected in the fact that two-thirds of married women with children under six are in the work-force today compared with 18% in the mid-1950s. The term “split-shift parents” has come into greater use to describe the 15 million couples (representing one-third of working couples) who work different shifts to cut childcare costs or have no other option if they wish to remain employed. These couples are six times more likely to divorce or separate. Still American workers are committed to the value of work, with 84% saying they would work even though they were independently wealthy and 89% work because it helps people and contributes to the welfare of the community.

What will the future bring to the American worker? We are already seeing signs that worker demand for more leisure and family time is eroding the 24/7 mentality. The current focus on quality of life issues will temper America’s work-obsessive behavior. A 2001 Families and Work Institute study indicated that American workers would prefer to work 11 hours fewer per week. The fear of unemployment, however, remains pervasive and this will delay worker demands for that elusive 30-hour workweek. 

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

May 2003

13 May

APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima received a delegation from Sri Lanka, led by Mr. P. Liyanarachchi, Secretary, Ministry of Rural Economy, who was visiting the APO Secretariat. The other members were Mr. Mahinda de Silva, Consultant, Development Program, Sewalanka Foundation, and Mr. Terrence Abeysekera, Senior Agriculture Economist, the World Bank (Sri Lanka Office).

16 May

Attended a symposium on “Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation” in Tokyo. It was jointly organized by the Government of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) and the APEC Business Advisory Council Japan.

20 May

Received Mr. Kosuke Nakahira, Vice Chairman, Institute for International Economic Studies, and the newly appointed APO Director for Japan, who paid a courtesy visit to the APO Secretariat.



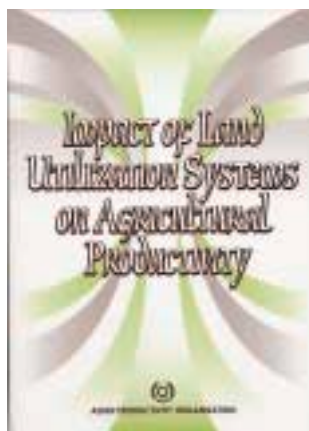
Mr. Tajima (left) and Mr. Nakahira

26 May

Received Dr. Steve Alexander Halls, Director of the Japan-based International Environmental Technology Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme, who visited the APO Secretariat for discussions with officials of the Environment Department.

30 May

Attended the RIETI-Keio conference on “Japanese Economy: Leading East Asia in the 21st Century?” in Tokyo. RIETI is the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, while Keio refers to Keio University.



IMPACT OF LAND UTILIZATION SYSTEMS ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

APO 294 pp. February 2003 ISBN 92-833-2340-8

In many APO member countries, land and other natural resources are intensively used for development, the result of rapid population growth and the push to eradicate poverty. The industrialization and urbanization programs that follow are threatening the land and water resources of these countries. As most cannot conveniently expand their cultivated areas, the alternative is to seek ways to intensify production and increase farmers' income with the existing available land for cultivation. Heavy investments are being made to improve irrigation systems, and land utilization systems are being developed to optimize land and water resource use. Land-use planning, however, must be based on reliable data and the application of scientific knowledge to conserve land resources and improve agricultural productivity.

To review the current status of land utilization systems in its member countries and to identify issues and strategies for improving such systems to enhance agricultural productivity, the APO organized a seminar on "Impact of Land Utilization Systems on Agricultural Productivity" in the Islamic Republic of Iran in November 2000. This publication is a report on the proceedings of the seminar.

The contents comprise the findings of the seminar and the text of the seven resource papers and 11 country reports presented at the meeting. The resource papers dealt with the following subjects: Planning support systems to enhance sustainable land utilization; Issues and problems in improving land utilization systems for sustainable agricultural production; Current land utilization systems and their contribution to agricultural productivity; Land consolidation and productivity improvement; New approaches to land-use planning; and Reforming farming systems in Iran.

The country papers revealed that APO member countries are striving to maximize agricultural productivity to ensure national food security. These countries are also ready and willing to adopt land utilization systems that promote sustainable agricultural production. Strategic agricultural planning to identify and address pressing issues is a generally recognized need. The reports also noted that future sustainable and productive use of agricultural land would hinge on the formulation and enforcement of sound policies and regulations. This publication should prove useful to those engaged in devising land utilization systems and promoting agricultural productivity.

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

COMMON SENSE TALK



"Know how to ask. There is nothing more difficult for some people, nor for others, easier."

Baltasar Gracian

"The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger—but recognize the opportunity."

Richard M. Nixon

"It does not matter how slowly you go, so long as you do not stop."

Confucius

"Think like a man of action, act like a man of thought."

Henri Louis Bergson

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Most everything I've done I've copied from someone else."

Sam Walton

"I've not seen an effective manager or leader who can't spend some fraction of time down in the trenches. If they don't do that, they get out of touch with reality, and their whole thought and management process becomes abstract and disconnected."

Jeff Bezos

"The passion to get ahead is sometimes born of the fear lest we are left behind."

Eric Hoffer

"Have three people do five jobs but pay them like four."

Arno W. Donald

"Just-in-time is the reason everyone is late"

Shiro Fujita

"Workers don't hang their brains on the door when they come to work anymore."

Bill O'Gara

"What you are must always displease you, if you would attain to that which you are not."

St. Augustine

The APO's response to SARS

Since the outbreak of the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Asia earlier this year and its subsequent spread to countries outside the region, much has been said and written about it. Affected countries have introduced emergency measures to treat and eliminate it. When the SARS epidemic was at its height in Asia, the APO decided that it too should take steps to help contain the spread of SARS. To begin with, all its projects slated for implementation in April and May were postponed, including the APO Governing Body Meeting which was to have been in Fiji on 10–12 June. Most of the postponed projects have since been rescheduled (please see page 7 for details).

As the spread of SARS seemed to have been brought under control in most affected countries by the end of May, implementation of projects planned for June and July is being considered on a case-by-case basis. Their status will depend on the outcome of consultations by the APO Secretariat with the host countries concerned and the external technical experts to be dispatched to these projects. The APO has also issued a set of guidelines on precautionary measures for participants and technical experts attending APO projects. They are meant to supplement the advice and recommendations of the WHO and national health authorities. The gist of these guidelines is given below.

Pre-departure arrangements

- * Participants are requested to consult a physician within three days prior to departure for the APO project they are attending and to obtain medical certification that they are in good physical condition.
- * They are also advised to prepare and bring a medical kit with them which should include face masks, thermometer, disinfectant, and vitamin C supplements.

- * They should also check their temperature prior to their departure. If they have SARS-like symptoms, such as high fever of more than 38°C, dry cough, and shortness of breath or breathing difficulties, they must immediately withdraw their participation in the project and inform the NPO concerned and the APO Secretariat.

During project implementation

- * Participants should check their temperature daily and if any SARS-like symptoms occur, they should immediately inform the hotel management and project organizers by telephone and refrain from attending the project. They should wear a surgical mask and restrict their movements to minimize contact with others. In such a situation, arrangements will be made to provide appropriate medical facilities for testing and treatment.
- * During the project period, participants should refrain from private travel within the host country without prior consultation with the organizers.
- * They are also advised to abide by the health instructions of the host country and the organizers during the period of project implementation.
- * Deputing NPOs are requested to ensure that their participants comply fully with the APO guidelines. The host NPO is requested to extend the fullest assistance possible to participants in case they are quarantined.
- * Participants are also advised to travel by the most direct route to the host country of the project they are attending and to avoid transiting at the airports of countries for which the WHO has issued travel advisories.



p-TIPS

The staff of Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle, WA, decided some years ago to become “world famous.” They succeeded, and the market is now a “must-see” tourist attraction. The results of the Pike Place Fish Market productivity effort have inspired two management books (*Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results* and *Fish! Tales*) and two corporate training videos translated into 15 languages. The “Fish!” philosophy” has been adopted by enterprises as diverse as the US Army and Air Force, Ford Motor, Universal Studios, St. Jude Children’s Hospital, Dupont, and many more. It is relevant to most issues facing business today: productivity, teamwork, quality improvement, customer service, creativity and innovation, employee turnover, and job satisfaction. *Fish!* involves simple lessons on energizing staff, raising productivity, and generally improving the workplace.

According to the first book in the series, the bare bones of the *Fish!* philosophy are:

1. **Choose your attitude** (without this, all the rest is a waste of time). There is always a choice about the way you do your work, even if there is not a choice about the

work itself. Remember, about half of your waking hours are spent at work. Spend them positively.

2. **Play.** Your department probably won’t juggle crabs à la Pike Place Fish Market. However, employees can take their work seriously without taking themselves so seriously that all fun is excluded from the job. Respectfully involve internal and external customers in play and problem solving to cement relationships.
3. **Make their day.** Influence the way others experience life in a constructive way. Lend an ear, lend a hand, and improve the quality of life for as many as possible through your work.
4. **Be present.** Don’t let distractions destroy the quality of each moment. Practically, this can be as simple as not reading or answering e-mail messages while talking on the phone with a colleague or customer. Give each person and action the attention that they deserve.

Employee motivation (Nothing fishy about it)

Introducing the APO Secretariat (I)

The APO News has been reporting on the programs and activities of the APO and NPOs. However, little has been written about the APO Secretariat. Beginning with this issue, we are featuring a six-part series on the work of the Secretariat to give readers a brief oversight of what it does.

The Secretariat is the executive arm of the APO. Headed by the Secretary-General, it carries out the policy directives of the Governing Body; formulates the rolling plan and implements the annual programs in collaboration with the NPOs of member countries; and seeks and secures cooperative relationships with other international organizations and governmental and private institutions.

Apart from the office of the Secretary-General, the APO Secretariat has six functional departments: Administration and Finance (A&F); Research and Planning; Industry; Agriculture; Environment; and Information and Public Relations. In this first report, we would like to introduce the A&F Department.

Administration and Finance Department

This is the administrative hub of the Secretariat. Departmental Director N.G. Kularatne, who hails from Sri Lanka, probably has the most varied work portfolio. Apart from the administrative, financial, and personnel functions, his department is also tasked with organizing the annual Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs and the Governing Body Meeting; overseeing membership matters; coordinating the APO's participation in various international conferences and meetings; and administering the Bilateral Cooperation Between NPOs Program. Under this program, the APO sponsors visits by high-level officials, policy makers, and opinion leaders from one member country to one or two others, either to participate in training programs or conferences or for consultation on productivity-related issues.



A&F staff members (L-R) Matsuyama, Nojima, Kularatne, Kusumi, Kuroki, Tomizawa, Yamamoto, and Kawashima.

In recent years, worsening economies in member countries—the result of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA—have led to falling membership contributions (which are based on GNP/GDP performance) and special funding grants. The recent Iraqi war and the SARS outbreak have added to the difficulties. The financial constraints faced by the APO will likely continue for a few more years. A major challenge of the A&F Department is to find ways to reduce operating and project implementation costs and devote as much of the APO's financial resources as possible to organizing projects that will directly benefit member countries, and to seek more international collaboration to support the work of the APO.

In addition to the departmental director, the A&F Department staff comprises two officers, Naoto Yamamoto and Norimasa Matsuyama, and five general support staff: Toshiko Kuroki, Mutsumi Nojima, Naoko Kusumi, Hironori Kawashima, and Asako Tomizawa. ☺

Gene Yamada, doyen of the APO, retires.... *(Continued from page 1)*

des Palmes Académiques by the Government of France in 1995 for his role in promoting closer relations between France and Asian countries.

When asked for his perception of the future role of the APO Secretariat in supporting the productivity movement in the Asia-Pacific region, Gene had the following to say: "This may sound paradoxical, perhaps even absurd to some, but my picture of the APO being truly successful in its mission is when it has worked itself out of a job. To be sure, the productivity concept it champions will always be essential to create more national wealth with the ultimate aim of achieving a better quality of life for all people, keeping in mind that we have to make incessant efforts for the above objective because we can

never increase productivity too much. What I mean is that if the APO could persuade every country in the Asia-Pacific region to put in place productivity enhancement as a national strategy for development; enable them to establish vibrant, effective, and self-sustaining productivity movements; and encourage the establishment of cooperative alliances within and beyond the country to achieve greater mutual productivity gains, then the APO as a regional institution will no longer be necessary. To me, this will be the best testimony that the APO has fulfilled its mission. While this is already happening, it will take a while longer before the mission is completed. In the meantime, it is most important not to lose sight of this vision." ☺



FIJI

Mr. Burt Lum, President, Mindwind Labs, USA, was deputed to conduct training programs on e-Commerce, 3–6 June 2003.

MALAYSIA

Mr. Cho Han Kyu, Chairman, and **Mr. Yoon Sung-seo**, Officer, both from Korean Natural Farming, Rep. of Korea, were deputed to provide technical advisory services in the ongoing Green Productivity–Integrated Community Demonstration Project, 27 May–4 June 2003.

MONGOLIA

Dr. Moon-Kyum Kim, Professor, School of Entrepreneurship and SME Management, Soongsil University, Rep. of Korea, was deputed to serve as a resource person in the training course on Strengthening Management Capabilities of Small Industries, 18–19 June 2003.

PHILIPPINES

Dr. Luis Ma. R. Calingo, Dean, California State University, USA, was deputed to conduct programs on Calibration of PQA Assessors and Judges on the updated Malcolm Baldrige criteria, 16–25 June 2003.

SINGAPORE

Mr. Ian Gaunt, CEO, Australian Portfolios, Australia, was deputed to participate in the site visits and post-site visit meeting of the Singapore Quality Award for Business Excellence Program, 3–9 June 2003.

APO/NPO update

New APO Director for Japan

Mr. Kosuke Nakahira, Vice Chairman, Institute for International Economic Studies, was designated as the new APO Director for Japan w.e.f. 20 May 2003.

JPC-SED new fax number

The fax number of JPC-SED has been changed to:

81-3-3409-4128

FNTC new name

The Fiji National Training Council has been repositioned as the Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji w.e.f. 26 May 2003.

Lao PDR new e-mail address

From 19 May 2003, the e-mail addresses of Lao PDR are:

mihlaoex@laotel.com

viyaketh@laotel.com

Program calendar

Republic of China

Symposium on Green Productivity and Eco-Design, 20–24 October 2003.

France

APO-UBIFRANCE Seminar on Building Better Fruit and Vegetable Chains: Safety and Quality, 29 September–7 October 2003.

India

Workshop on Partnership Development in the Automobile Industry, 14–17 October 2003.

Indonesia

Workshop on Green Productivity and Occupational, Environmental Health and Safety, 4–8 August 2003.

Workshop on Enhancing NPO's Core Competence: Training of Trainers, 1–5 September 2003.

Seminar on Information and Communications Technology for Improving Agricultural Productivity and Competitiveness, 8–12 September 2003.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Seminar on the Industrial Use of Biotechnology, 27 September–1 October 2003.

Seminar on National and Regional Support Systems for SMEs, 5–9 October 2003.

Japan

Seminar on Entrepreneurial Skills Development of Small Farmers/Farmers' Groups for Agribusiness, 1–8 October 2003.

Study Meeting on Regional Industrialization and Development, 26–31 October 2003.

Venture 2003: Asian Forum on Venture Business, 25–27 November 2003.

Training Course in Kaizen, 19–23 January 2004.

Nepal

Workshop on Corporate Governance Index, 2–4 December 2003.

Pakistan

Symposium on Features of Knowledge-based Business Corporations, 7–10 October 2003.

Vietnam

Forum on Development of National Productivity Organizations, 15–17 September 2003.

Workshop on Green Productivity and Solid Waste Management, 20–24 October 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.

Revised schedule of postponed projects

Project title	Venue	Original timing	New timing
Workshop on Green Productivity	Fiji	14–18 April	11–15 Aug.
Study Meeting on Enhancing Food Certification Systems for Better Marketing	Japan	16–23 April	21–28 Jan. 2004
Fourth Workshop on the APO Best Practice Network	Philippines	22–25 April	2–5 Sept.
International Symposium on Water Resource Management and Green Productivity	Singapore	22–24 April	7–9 Oct.
Coordination Meeting of National Experts, <i>APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis 2003</i>	Thailand	23–25 April	8–9 July
Training Course on Productivity Measurement at Enterprise Level	Malaysia	5–9 May	23–27 June
Seminar on Implementation of TQM in the Service Sector	Thailand	12–16 May	6–10 Oct.
Training Course on Safety and Risk Management	Sri Lanka	19–23 May	14–18 July
Multi-Country Study Mission on Rural Life Improvement for Community Development	Rep. of China	21–30 May	29 Oct.–7 Nov.
Workshop on Green Procurement for Green Supply Chains	Philippines	26–29 May	17–21 Nov.
Indigenous Case Writing/Building Workshop: Leading a Case Discussion	Mongolia	26–30 May	28 July–1 Aug.
Symposium on Technological Innovation in SMEs	Rep. of China	27–30 May	12–15 Aug.
Seminar on Development of Training Programs for Middle Management	Japan	9–13 June	19–23 Jan. 2004
The 45th Session of the APO Governing Body	Fiji	10–12 June	3–5 Sept.
Seminar on International Marketing of Agricultural Products	Philippines	23–27 June	4–8 Aug.
Study Meeting on Women and SOHO	Rep. of Korea	1–4 July	7–10 Oct.
Training Course in Kaizen	Japan	7–11 July	19–23 Jan. 2004
Seminar on Better Agricultural Practices for Environmental Sustainability	Japan	9–16 July	6–13 Aug.
Workshop on New Technologies for Die-Casting Processes	Rep. of China	21–25 July	25–29 Aug.



TQA: Thailand's strategy to enhance competitiveness

On 12 February this year, at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center in Bangkok, Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra presented the Thailand Quality Award (TQA) to the first-ever winner, Thai Acrylic Fibre Co., Ltd. This glittering ceremony, attended by several cabinet ministers, signaled to the world Thailand's resolve to enable its industries to reach world-class standards in quality and productivity to compete effectively in the global marketplace. The TQA, as a national strategy, is enshrined in the Thai 9th Social and Economic Development Plan.

The TQA was launched early last year to recognize organizations that have attained world-class quality standards and performance excellence. Prime Minister Thaksin sees it as a strong incentive for Thai industries in all sectors to improve, "ready for competition from outside, and ready to compete in the outside world." In his address at the award presentation ceremony, he urged Thai industries to build a corporate culture that will inspire employees to produce quality work and products. People are at the heart of quality, the Prime Minister pointed out. Next in importance to people is technology. However, the bottom line is to be customer-centered. As customers form part of society, to care for customers is to care for people in the society, declared Prime Minister Thaksin.

Any organization in either the public or private sector can apply for consideration for the TQA, and it can be from manufacturing, commerce, service industry, or an institution or governmental agency. Twenty organizations applied in 2002. Although there was only one winner in the TQA debut year, in actuality there is no cap on the number of possible winners.

The TQA framework—criteria, management system, process, and practices—is based on the US Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, widely recognized as the standard for quality awards. The TQA has 11 core values that are grouped into seven categories. The core values include visionary leadership, customer-driven excellence, organizational and personal learning, valuing employees and partners, agility, focus on the future, managing for innovation, management by fact, public responsibility and citizenship, focus on results and creating value, and system perspective. The seven categories are Leadership, Strategic planning, Customer and market focus, Information and analysis, Human resource focus, Process management, and Business results.

Participating organizations are evaluated against these criteria in three respects: the methodology used; its deployment in terms of breadth and depth of application; and the results achieved. The applicants who achieve 700 points or more will receive the TQA. Those who score less than 700 points but more



Prime Minister Thaksin (fourth from left) with TQA and TQC winners

than 400 points are eligible for the Thailand Quality Class (TQC) commendation. The TQC was conferred on six organizations: Dana Spicer, Thai Carbon Black, Siam Cement, Thai Paper, Chulalongkorn University Continuing Education Center, and Thai Containers.

TQA winners have exclusive use of the TQA logo in their corporate materials to reflect their attainment of world-class excellence. To serve as a model for others, they are obliged to share their experience in preparing for winning the TQA at a winners' conference. The first such conference was held a fortnight after the award presentation on 26 February. More than 300 executives attended the day-long affair.

It has been said that once an organization applies to be considered for the TQA, it is already a winner. This is because in vying for the award, it must examine critically its operational processes against the TQA criteria and make plans for improvement. In addition, it will receive a written report on the organization's strengths, level of competitiveness, and opportunities for improvement. This is compiled by a team of experts from within and outside the applicant's industry who will visit the organization to conduct assessments. The participation is worthwhile just for this report alone. Of course, the right to display the TQA logo means much more. 