



A·P·O *news*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

Productivity will always matter

An interview with the APO Secretary-General

In mid-September this year, Mr. Takashi Tajima will complete his second and final term as the APO Secretary-General. Throughout his six-year tenure, he has been actively involved in the work and development of the APO. In an interview with the APO News, he spoke about what he was able to achieve as Secretary-General (SG), future challenges to the organization as well as those of the NPOs in member countries, and the productivity movement in the region. Excerpts:

■ What do you regard as the major achievements of the APO during your term as SG?

In my annual report to the recent Governing Body Meeting in Yogyakarta, I mentioned some of the reforms and changes that I had initiated during my tenure as SG. As the July 2004 issue of the *APO News* carried a good summary of them, I will not repeat them. There are, however, a few other initiatives that I would like to highlight here. One was the relentless public relations efforts undertaken to make the APO better known in the region, particularly in Japan, and around the world, for example, the introduction of the Japanese edition of the *APO News* and the many news features about the APO in journals and newspapers. Our international profile was enhanced when we celebrated the 40th anniversary in 2001 with an International Productivity Conference in Singapore and when we participated in the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002. I believe that as the APO becomes better known and its mission more widely appreciated, it will help in propagating the productivity movement in the region as well as in generating support for NPOs in member countries as they drive their national productivity movements. The formation of the Green Productivity Advisory Committee, which involves Japanese private-sector corporations in the APO Environment Program, especially in greening supply chains in the region, is another example of APO activities which I believe will be an invaluable asset to the APO.



Mr. Takashi Tajima

■ What has given you the greatest personal satisfaction during that time?

At the top of the list must be the support and cooperation that member countries and Secretariat staff members have accorded me so generously, which enabled me to carry out those changes and reforms in the APO I thought necessary. The admission of Cambodia and Laos as new APO members was another high point in my tenure as it signifies the expansion of the productivity movement in Asia and the Pacific. For the region as a whole to be truly developed, all countries in it have to move together on the path to growth and prosperity.

■ Has your perception of the APO's mission and role changed since becoming SG?

The role of the APO is even more important today than when I first came onboard. It has expanded in scope and reach, as reflected in the three-pillared vision of strengthening of competitiveness, harmonization of productivity increases

(Continued on page 6)

Volume 34 Number 8
August 2004

"It is always easier to talk about change than to make it. It is easier to consult than to manage."

Alvin Toffler

INSIDE

- 2.... p-Guru
- 3.... The Secretary-General's schedule
- 4.... New APO publication
- 4.... Common Sense Talk
- 5.... New officer in the APO Secretariat
- 5.... Fiji launches CCB Program
- 7.... p-Experts
- 7.... APO/NPO update
- 7.... Program calendar
- 8.... NPO-watch—Malaysia

Published by
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



Printed on Recycled Paper



Macroeconomic policies for higher productivity in Asia

"How can we best frame economic policies to maximize the nation's productivity?" has been a key question for all governments in Asia, which have been trying hard to achieve meaningful economic growth. An immediate answer to this question may be that government policies should be able to induce and guarantee the maximum efficiency in both the private and public sectors. A significant implication of this statement is that the government should be able to maintain the economic and social systems of the country in such a way that the principles of the market can prevail through serious competition. Any corporation or branch of the government which fails to perform with high efficiency and productivity should be penalized by, for example, elimination from the market.

"Rapid globalization and speedy development of IT characterize the core trend of the current period."

The production function of a nation's economy suggests that economic growth can be achieved by increased inputs in investment and/or labor, or through increased factor productivities. Paul Krugman pointed out that the dynamic growth of East Asian economies since the early 1970s was, to a large extent, attributable to the increase in the inputs of production factors, rather than to productivity gains. Accordingly, he warned that the sustained high growth of East Asian economies may soon come to an end unless productivity gains can make up for the rapidly decelerating inputs of production factors. This deceleration may be a result of decreased population growth or a lack of new technological breakthroughs that will invite new heavy investments.

Rapid globalization and speedy development of IT characterize the core trend of the current period. Therefore, economic policies aiming at

inducing high productivity gains should be formulated to stimulate the maximum utilization of these historic trend changes.

The Asian financial crisis in 1997 provided a golden opportunity to overhaul and shape up most Asian economies. Restructuring in not only those crisis-hit economies but also in other economies in Asia gave good momentum that led to drastic improvement in the efficiency and productivity of those economies. In particular, restructuring in the financial, corporate, and government sectors contributed to a significant upgrading of national productivity. To keep the momentum for high efficiency and productivity, governments in Asia should not cease to restructure their economies in the future as well.

One delicate and difficult area of common policy concern for all governments these days is related to the introduction of various labor-saving high-technology devices in production, transport, and marketing. While these devices will help productivity gains and thus help achieve high economic growth, they may cause a reduction in employment opportunities and thus may lead to an increase in unemployment rates over the long term.

The adoption of major labor-saving high-technology devices where possible is likely to lead to improved corporate profits due to significantly increased labor productivity per worker. Under normal circumstances, corporations are then likely to make additional investments, creating more new jobs, financed by cumulative profits earned largely from improved labor productivity. However, it is often observed that corporations do not make additional investments for various reasons. It is desirable, therefore, that government policies be framed in such a way that will encourage maximum investments of the improved profit earnings of corporations. Additional investments will produce more employment opportunities, and thus the introduction and adoption of the high-productivity labor-saving devices will tend to increase, rather than reduce, employment.

Unfortunately, in many countries governments fail to convert improved profits into additional investments and more job opportunities.

"While productivity in industrial sectors attracts much government attention in most countries, productivity in the service sector tends to attract only a little."

Government should therefore keep the corporate environment as favorable as possible, so that business firms can be encouraged to pursue profits vigorously via new investments. Governments should also aggressively remove obstacles discouraging investments. Thus, the activities of militant and ever-more demanding labor unions, for example, should be contained to a reasonable extent. Also, harsh government regulations on business activities should be removed so that economic activities including investment can be revitalized.

While productivity in industrial sectors attracts much government attention in most countries, productivity in the service sector tends to attract only a little. Productivity in the service sector deserves more attention than that in manufacturing for two reasons. First, the share of the service sector in GDP significantly outweighs that of the industry sector in almost all national economies. Second, the production, transport, and marketing of industrial outputs cannot be carried out without the active support of service industries such as logistics, financing, insurance, communication, advertising, and sales. Many policymakers and scholars blamed the poor performance of the US economy during the 1970s through the late 1980s on the low productivity of American service enterprises, which was far lower than the productivity of manufacturing industries then.



Governments in Asia can institute two vital policy decisions in this regard. For the significant enhancement of productivity in the service sector, governments in Asia should first aggressively lay down the basic infrastructure (hardware, software, and manpower) necessary for the upgrading and development of IT industries, since the reliance of today's service enterprises on IT is overwhelming. Second, government regulations on service industries should be kept flexible enough to stimulate the active introduction and adoption of advanced technologies available in the service sector in industrialized countries. For this, two conditions must be satisfied. First, serious competition in the service-sector market should be ensured. Second, intellectual property rights should be fully protected in line with the World Trade Organization regime and the Doha Development Agenda agreements. 🌀

Dr. Hiwhoa Moon, renowned economist and academic, has held key appointments in organizations under the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy and Ministry of Economy and Finance, Republic of Korea. Among other portfolios he held were: country economist, World Bank; Adjunct Professor, Columbia University, New York; Chairman and CEO, Korea Productivity Center; and APO Chairman. He is now Adjunct Professor, Yonsei University, and advisor to UGCom Co. Ltd., after retiring as Professor/Dean, School of Economics and International Trade, Kyung Hee University, Republic of Korea.

From the SECRETARY-GENERAL'S schedule

July 2004

6 July

APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima visited Seoul, Republic of Korea, to officiate at the opening session of the APO symposium on "Impact of Corporate Governance on Productivity." During the visit, he met with Mr. Jae-Hyun Kim, Chairman and CEO of the Korea Productivity Center, and toured the Suwon Factory of Samsung Electronics.

12 July

Received Dr. Koh Se-Kai, the newly appointed Representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan, who paid a courtesy visit to the APO Secretariat. Dr. Koh was accompanied by his Liaison Division Director Tsai Ming Yaw and Special Assistant Bruce Cheng.



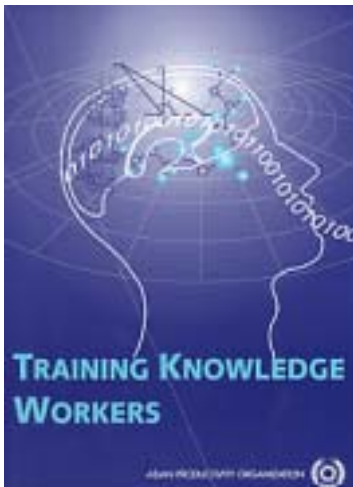
(L-R) Mr. Tajima with Dr. Koh

19–21 July

Visited Singapore to attend the opening session of the APO symposium on "Industry Cost Structure: Competitiveness of the Retail Sector." He also paid courtesy calls on Mr. Lim Boon Heng, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, and former APO Director for Singapore; Mr. Loh Khum Yean, APO Alternate Director for Singapore and Chief Executive, SPRING Singapore; Mr. Lee Suan Hiang, former Chief Executive of SPRING Singapore and currently Chief Executive, National Arts Council; Mr. Freddy Soon, former Deputy Chief Executive of SPRING Singapore; and the APEC Secretariat. Mr. Tajima also visited Changi Hospital, site of a GP demonstration project.

22–23 July

Visited Sri Lanka where he delivered the keynote speech at the National Productivity Awards and National Quality Awards 2003 presentation ceremony, which was jointly organized by the National Productivity Secretariat and the Sri Lanka Standards Institution. The chief guest at the ceremony was Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.



TRAINING KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

APO 205 pp. May 2004 ISBN 92-833-2352-1

Knowledge workers are assuming an increasingly important role in today's economy. They now constitute an important part of a firm's intangible assets. This intellectual capital can make a significant difference in its competitive advantage. Key concerns are how to attract and retain knowledge workers and develop an appropriate training and education program to maximize their performance. Against this backdrop, the APO launched a survey on "In-company Training Strategies for Knowledge Workers" in 2002 to identify best practices in the training strategies of companies in the Asia-Pacific region and to define the critical success and hindering factors.

This publication is a compilation of the integrated survey report and reports of the countries that participated in the survey: India, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. These countries are seeing a rapid increase in the number of knowledge workers as well as in their contributions to corporate excellence and competitiveness. Each country report provides an overview of the national economy, an analysis of its preparedness for joining the knowledge-based economy, best practices in training knowledge workers, and training programs of selected companies. *Training Knowledge Workers* is also available as an e-book on the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org.

Broadly defined, a knowledge worker is someone who makes a living out of creating, manipulating, or disseminating knowledge. By this definition, everyone in the workplace will eventually be considered a knowledge worker as the amount of information and data that people use to perform their jobs is steadily increasing. As knowledge is embodied in people, a recommendation of the survey was for organizations to deploy their employees as resource persons, trainers, and mentors. This will promote knowledge sharing for resolving business problems. It was also noted that knowledge workers value professional freedom, integrity, innovativeness, and opportunities to learn. For this reason, e-learning should become an integral part of the training strategy of an organization as it enables knowledge workers to self-manage their own learning as well as ensure their lifetime employability. These and other findings of the survey offer many practical insights for those responsible for developing and managing knowledge workers.

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



"You are more likely to overcome challenges if you have learned, in advance, what to expect and how to respond. That is why training, at all levels, is critical to the success of any organization."

Allen Sheppard

"It is always easier to talk about change than to make it. It is easier to consult than to manage."

Alvin Toffler

"A horse never runs so fast as when he has other horses to catch up and outpace."

Ovid

"Anything worth doing is worth doing to excess."

Edwin Land

"The key is not to make quick decisions, but to make timely decisions."

Colin Powell

"Seize today, and put as little trust as you can in tomorrow."

Horace

"Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or to lose."

Lyndon B. Johnson

"Just as our eyes need light in order to see, our minds need ideas in order to conceive."

Nicolas Malebranche

"The way to increase our productivity is to make people more creative, resourceful, and innovative in the things they do."

John Sculley

New officer in the APO Secretariat

Mr. Fumitaka Katsuta joined the APO Secretariat Administration and Finance Department as an Administration & Finance Officer from 5 July 2004. Mr. Katsuta was educated in Tokyo and received a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Nihon University. He later also qualified as a Certified Public Accountant in the USA. Bringing many years of accounting experience to his new position, Mr. Katsuta describes himself as a “self-starter, and highly motivated and adaptable team player.” His off-the-job interests include mountain climbing and “culinary tourism” in Asia. Mr. Katsuta is single.



Fiji launches CCB Program

The Fijian Ministry of Fijian Affairs, Culture and Heritage, and Regional Development has adopted community capacity building (CCB) as its strategy to promote productivity in rural areas. CCB is to help communities in two areas: 1) enhancing their capabilities in vision building, community planning, leadership, organizational skills, and resource identification; and 2) establishing a comprehensive network of partnerships among rural communities, governmental agencies, civil society, NGOs, and private-sector enterprises to accelerate rural development. The CCB Program was launched with a training of trainers’ course on “Participatory Project Cycle Management,” 4–14 May 2004. The APO deputed two experts to conduct the course, which had 31 participants, including community workers and representatives from the following governmental ministries: Health; Education; Agriculture; and Fijian Affairs, Culture and Heritage, and Regional Development. More such training programs are being planned to create a pool of local resource persons to support and give impetus to the CCB Program.



Participants in the CCB Program during a group exercise

NPO-watch—Malaysia (Continued from page 8)

11) *Interactive e-benchmark.* This is a Web-based tool for COP members to generate real-time benchmarks and rankings.


The e-benchmarking system is a Web-based tool that facilitates organizations in “bench-measuring.” e-Benchmarking COPs involving over 500 enterprises in the service (construction, ports, hotels, power producers, financial institutions, retail, and the public sector) and manufacturing (electronics, plastic, automotive, textiles, apparel, oleo-chemical, and industrial energy efficiency) sectors are using this system. Hands-on training is given to members of COPs, with the e-benchmark guidebook as a reference.

e-Benchmarking involves six simple steps. First, a COP agrees on the scope, key performance measures, and definitions to benchmark. Then a password is issued to each member of the COP, members key in and edit data at their own convenience, the data are processed in the e-benchmarking hub, and a real-time benchmark report is generated. Finally, members view their rankings and conduct self-evaluation for continuous improvement. Data confidentiality is ensured because each member has a password and names of organizations are coded. Members can interact on-line with others in a COP through the Best Practices Net, a supplementary tool to enhance more effective sharing of best practices.

As specified in the award criteria, BOND has had measurable results. The system has reduced the cycle time needed to collect benchmarks and generate key performance indicators from 10 to 12 weeks to real time. It has also reduced the cost of the first phase of a benchmarking project by an enterprise by 98%.

NPC Director-General Ir. Mah Lok Abdullah received the Innovation in the Public Service Award from UN General Assembly President R. Hunte in New York City on Public Service Day, 23 June. In thanking the UN for the honor, the Director-General said that the prestigious award was recognition of the NPC’s efforts to improve the quality of service in both the public and private sectors. The use of IT-based e-benchmarking is encouraging more enterprises to measure and make benchmark comparisons, both within the Malaysian economy and on a global scale, he noted.

In his congratulatory letter to NPC Chairman Tan Sri Dato Azman Hashim, APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima said that “It is a proud moment for all in the APO membership to know that an NPO has achieved such recognition for excellence by the United Nations.”

To learn more about BOND and register with a COP, go to <http://www.npc.org.my> and double-click on the BOND icon. 

with environmental protection, and maintenance of social fairness. The thrust areas were expanded and updated during my tenure to respond better to the changing needs of member countries. We have become a global player, although on a very modest scale, having participated in and actively supported the follow-up activities of, for example, the WSSD and World Water Forum, among others.

■ **What was the biggest difficulty faced by the organization during your tenure?**

The combined impact of a series of events over the past few years has shrunk the national economies of some of our member countries. Others were affected more indirectly. I am referring to the persistent Japanese economic recession, Asian financial crisis of 1997, the outbreak of SARS in 2002, and the recent avian flu epidemic, which seems to be making a comeback. All this has undermined member countries' contributions to the APO, especially in the hosting of APO projects, as funds become scarcer. With productivity enhancement as a major strategy in resolving the above-mentioned crises, it was difficult to know the amount of work that needed to be done while not having enough resources to do it all. Happily, the countries worst affected have recovered and are well on the growth path again. It is my hope that before long member countries will be able to do more for the APO for the greater benefit of everyone.

■ **Do you think that the APO should reinvent itself to stay viable and useful to member countries?**

One consequence of globalization and liberalization is a widening of disparity in development between countries and between economic sectors in the same country. To help the affected countries deal with the situation, more country-wise strategies will have to be established. The publication *APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis* should be used more extensively for this purpose.

■ **Do you think that the APO should expand its role to include helping nurture productivity movements in other regions?**

The work of the APO has become known outside



Mr. Tajima with APO participants on a field visit in Japan

the Asia-Pacific region, like Africa and Latin America. We have received many requests for information and assistance from countries in these regions. As far as we can, we should share our experience and know-how with them. Having said this, within the Asia-Pacific region itself, there are still many countries that we should bring into the APO family so that we can support their developmental efforts. Myanmar, Brunei, and Central Asian countries are some examples.

■ **You have always had a special concern for the NPOs of member countries. What is your perception of them now?**

The NPOs in general have become stronger since my first acquaintance with them six years ago. Despite this, however, some will still require substantial support, particularly from their governments, to strengthen further their capabilities and capacities. We must understand that the productivity movement of a country will only be as strong as its NPO. During my visits to member countries, I always tried my best to solicit the support of senior governmental leaders for the NPOs. We have seen some very encouraging results. In the Secretariat, we have also increased the number of projects under the Development of NPOs Program, including helping member countries facilitate national roundtable conferences (RTCs) to generate support for the productivity movement in general and the NPO in particular from government agencies, employer organizations, trade unions, and academia. To mention only recent cases,

both Indonesia and Laos have held very successful RTCs.

■ **What do you envision will be the major socioeconomic and productivity issues facing APO member countries in the near future?**

Productivity will always form the basis for socioeconomic development. As an economy grows and develops, there will be new problems, issues, and challenges to deal with. The important thing is to grasp what they are quickly so that appropriate and timely responses can be made. Environmental issues will continue to need attention. IT should be further harnessed to improve work operations and productivity. There is an absolute need to increase the productivity of the agriculture and public sectors, as the focus in the past and even the present has largely been on the manufacturing sector. Free trade agreements and economic partnership agreements are current trends at the macroeconomic level in this region. The micro-level activities of the APO should also reflect this situation to remain relevant and useful.

■ **What are your plans after leaving the APO?**

My service in the APO has greatly increased my understanding and knowledge of countries in the Asia-Pacific region. I want to continue to build on this valuable insight. I hope to be able to do more to promote and sustain international cooperation and friendship—politically, economically, and culturally.



REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Rory Chase, Managing Director, Teleos, UK, was deputed to make a presentation in the International Knowledge Management Forum and provide technical expert services on Knowledge Management Task Force, 11–12 August 2004.

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the study meeting on the Internet and New Business Frontiers, 20–23 July 2004: **Dr. Cheol Ho Oh**, Professor, Department of Public Administration, Soongsil University, Republic of Korea; **Ms. May Yee Fione Tan**, President & CEO, eOneNet.com Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia; and **Dr. H. Michael Chung**, Director & Professor, Center for Information Strategies and Technologies, College of Business Administration, California State University, USA.

INDONESIA

Mr. Mah Lok Abdullah, Director-General, National Productivity Corporation, Malaysia, was deputed to serve as a resource person in the Follow-up Roundtable Conference Planning Meeting, 26–27 July 2004.

MALAYSIA

Prof. Takeo Yoshikawa, Dean and Professor, Graduate School of Business Administration, Yokohama National University, Japan, and **Mr. Edgar J. Ridley**, President and Chairman, Edgar J. Ridley & Associates, Inc., USA, were deputed to provide technical expert services in the International Conference on Quality, 17–20 August 2004.

Prof. Tay Joo Hwa, Head, Division of Environmental and Water Resources Engineering, School of Civil and Structural Engineering, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, was deputed to serve as a

resource person in the steering committee meeting on GDPD Implementation, 20 July 2004.

MONGOLIA

Mr. Yoshitane Ide, Consultant, Japan, was deputed to provide training on Business Process Management, 5–16 July 2004.

Mr. Richard Barton, Consultant, Australia, was deputed to provide technical expert services in the seminar on Improving Competitiveness and Productivity, 19–23 July 2004.

NEPAL

Dr. William K. Shireman, President and CEO, Global Futures/Future 500, USA, was deputed to serve as a resource person in a Green Productivity Promotion Mission, 8–10 July 2004.

PHILIPPINES

Dr. Alexander G. Flor, Dean and Professor, Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, University of the Philippines, Philippines, was deputed to serve as a resource person in the seminar on Information Networking for Enhancing Agricultural Productivity and Competitiveness, 19–23 July 2004.

Mr. Hamdi bin Othman, Manager, HRD, National Productivity Corporation, Malaysia, and **Mr. Kelvin Chan**, Director and Principal Consultant, Teian Consulting International Pte. Ltd., Singapore, were deputed to serve as resource persons in the program on Development of Productivity Specialists, 9–27 August 2004.

SINGAPORE

Prof. Masaru Tanaka, Division of Environmental Evaluation, Department of Environmental and Civil Engineering, Faculty of Environmental Science and Technology, Okayama University, Japan, and **Mr. An Hyunsoo**, Chief, International Corporation Team, Korea Resources Recovery and Reutilization Corporation, Republic of Korea, were deputed to serve as resource persons in the coordination meeting on the Survey on Solid Waste Management, 12–13 July 2004.

Mr. Raymond Sui-wai Yu, Managing Director, Talents Consulting Limited, Hong Kong, was deputed to serve as a resource person in the symposium on Industry Cost Structure: Competitiveness of the Retail Sector, 20–22 July 2004.

VIETNAM

Mr. Kenji Kohga, Principal Consultant, IBM Japan, was deputed to provide consultancy services on Information Technology, 2–6 August 2004.

Program calendar

Fiji

Forum on Development of National Productivity Organizations, 29 November–1 December 2004.

Indonesia

Workshop on Green and Productive Tourism, 29 November–3 December 2004.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Training Course on the Application of Information and Communication Technologies for Farmers' Associations/Agricultural Cooperatives, 11–20 December 2004.

Japan

Symposium on International Network on Water Ecosystems and Paddy Fields, 1–6 November 2004.

Seminar on Productivity Promotion, 8–12 November 2004.

Venture 2004: Asian Forum on Venture Business, 9–11 November 2004.

Multi-country Study Mission on Lean Production Systems, 6–10 December 2004.

Republic of Korea

Training Course on Six Sigma, 2–5 November 2004.

Malaysia

Symposium on the Balanced Scorecard, 29 November–2 December 2004.

Nepal

Workshop on Green Productivity: Consultancy Development for SMEs and Cottage Industries, 17–20 January 2005.

Philippines

Seminar on Productivity Infusion in School Curricula, 15–19 November 2004.

Singapore

Multi-country Study Mission on Quality Management for SMEs, 2–4 November 2004.

UK

Multi-country Study Mission to the UK on Practice of Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility, 8–12 November 2004.

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

APO/NPO update

New A&F Officer in APO Secretariat

Mr. Fumitaka Katsuta has been appointed as the new Administration and Finance Officer, APO Secretariat, w.e.f. 5 July 2004.

New Designation for APO Director for Fiji

The job designation of Mr. Brian Singh, APO Director for Fiji, has been changed from Permanent Secretary to Chief Executive Officer, Labour, Industrial Relations and Productivity.



NPC Malaysia receives UN Award for Innovations in Public Service

The General Assembly of the United Nations established Public Service Day in 2002 to recognize and encourage exemplary public service. In the belief that public service must be made visible to attract more to the field, a series of institutional awards was established in the four categories of improvement of public service results, improvement of the quality of the public service process, innovations in public service, and application of information and communication technology in local government: local e-government. The values of teamwork, innovation, and responsiveness to the public are reflected in the selection of award winners, which must have contributed to enhancing the role, prestige, and visibility of public service.

The National Productivity Corporation (NPC), Malaysia, was the recipient of the 2004 UN Award for Innovations in Public Service. The UN Division for Public Administration and Development Management emphasizes that this award is for “radical departures,” not simply for incremental improvements in existing public service mechanisms. Winners must have developed innovative methods, tools, and techniques that have had a major, long-term impact on citizens’ lives, and furthermore that impact must be qualitatively and quantitatively measurable. The final criterion is that the innovation must have reduced the cost of public service delivery while maintaining or increasing its quality.

The NPC was recognized for its Benchmarking On-line Networking Database (BOND), an interactive, real-time e-benchmarking system. Benchmarking is an important tool for enterprises seeking to remain competitive in the era of globalization. Many world-class organizations have found that by searching for best practices and processes and then benchmarking against them they can achieve significant enhancements in productivity, quality, cost, and delivery. The NPC therefore set up a database of best practices and performance measurements to assist organizations wishing to undertake benchmarking.

The BOND Web page has 11 crucial links:

- 1) *What is benchmarking?* This link spells out the basics of benchmarking and the code of conduct for community of practice (COP) members and provides links to international benchmarking organizations.
- 2) *The NPC benchmarking model.* The three



NPC staff members rejoicing as they pose with the UN award

phases of the benchmarking model (establishing benchmarks, learning best practices, and implementing best practices in one’s own organization) are detailed.

- 3) *Benchmarks.* Benchmarks are listed by process, industry, and sector, including productivity indicators.
- 4) *Best practices.* Excellent local and foreign organizations share success stories on best practice implementation on this link.
- 5) *Benchmarking case studies.* The members are taken through the complete benchmarking cycle in comprehensive international as well as local case studies.
- 6) *Best Practices Public Centre.* This link is a referral point for public-sector agencies

wishing to offer more efficient public service delivery.

- 7) *Best management practices.* The self-assessment tool in this link enables enterprises to measure performance and learn best practices in 21 TQM areas.
- 8) *BP Net.* The Best Practices Net is a collaborative tool to enhance learning, knowledge management, and sharing of best practices among COP members.
- 9) *HR Suite.* This provides information, benchmarks, and best practices on human resources.
- 10) *e-BP Digest.* Online abstracts and synopses of the half-yearly *Best Practices Digest* publication can be accessed.

(Continued on page 5)