Information to Make a Difference in Productivity

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A·P·O news

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UNDP and APO to increase ICT capability in SMEs

In this age of intensifying globalization and rapid trade deregulation, SMEs are in a particularly vulnerable situation, primarily because of their lack of resources, know-how, and manpower. They constitute an important sector in most Asia-Pacific countries as the biggest employers and an essential seed for economic progress. For this reason, enhancing SMEs' competitiveness and viability is a matter of urgency for most governments in the region.

As in other economic sectors, information and communication technology (ICT) is seen as an indispensable tool for SMEs as it will enable them to increase productivity, improve product quality, gain knowledge and information, engage in export business, and extend their business outreach. The efficient and effective utilization of ICT can result in breakthrough improvements in all corporate activities of SMEs.

Brainstorming on ICT in SMEs

Recognizing the importance of ICT to SMEs, the APO has been organizing a number of projects specifically designed to enhance their capabilities in this area. The latest initiative was collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to organize two regional workshops on SMEs and ICT, to be followed by small national capacity-building projects in the nine selected participating countries: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The first workshop on "ICT as Productivity Tools for SMEs" was held in Malaysia, 22–26 November 2004. The second workshop on "Improved Usage of Internet Technology for SMEs" is scheduled for 20–24 December 2004, in Thailand.

By mutual agreement, the APO will coordinate the organizing of the workshops with the NPOs of the participating countries, while the UNDP will be responsible for the international portion of the project, covering such activities as participation of the national participants in the workshops and fielding of technical experts. The host countries will bear the local implementation costs.

Seventeen participants from the nine targeted countries attended the workshop in Malaysia. They heard presentations by experts on ICT, competitive advantage, and globalization; knowledge-based entrepreneurship for competitiveness; measuring ICT contributions to productivity; application of ICT for advanced product quality planning perspectives; strategies for leveraging ICT for productivity improvement; and integrated ICT approach to productivity enhancement. The participants also visited the Multimedia Development Corporation where they were briefed on a technopreneur development program and a village for firsthand observation of using the Internet to penetrate the global market.

At the end of the workshop, participants identified the following constraints faced by SMEs in utilizing ICT: 1) ignorance of the benefits of ICT; 2) lack of funds; 3) lack of technical capability; 4) limited infrastructure; 5) traditional way of doing business; 6) inadequate governmental support, including legal framework; and 7) absence of role models.

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"You can close more business in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you."

Dale Carnegie

INSIDE

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Will Rice Be Life?

Rationale for the International Year of Rice

If there is a single crop that can truly define the life and culture of Asian nations it is rice. Rice has been cultivated for centuries in the region and has played a central role not only in supplying the staple food but also in shaping the social life and economic progress of those nations. Thus, for millions of people in the region, life without rice is simply unthinkable. It is in this simple sense that "Rice Is Life," which is the theme chosen for the observance of the United Nations International Year of Rice (IYR) in 2004.

The dedication of an entire UN year to a single crop is unprecedented in the history of the organization, but it rightly recognizes the importance of rice as the primary source of food for many countries. It is estimated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), for example, that one of two people in the world depends on rice as the staple food. More than two billion people in Asia alone obtain 60% to 70% of their caloric intake from rice and its products.

Aside from being the principal source of food for millions of people in Asia, however, rice farming also has nonfood functions. Those functions include contributing to sustainable livelihoods; maintaining rural amenities; preserving the natural environment by contributing to water resource management, soil conservation, and biological diversity; achieving rural viability; and preserving traditional culture. This concept of multifunctionality has been promoted by a number of countries for consideration, particularly in trade-related forums, in recent years.

Rice productivity trends

The increase in rice productivity in the 1960s to 1980s was influenced to a large extent by the introduction of Green Revolution technologies which resulted in annual rice output increases of more than 3% (based on FAO estimates) during

the period. This growth has dropped to around 1.25% since 1990, with productivity increases declining notably in a number of favorable rice-growing areas. The decline has been attributed in part to the long-term degradation of rice paddies.

Many experts believe that simply maintaining the current levels of productivity will not be sufficient to meet the food needs of Asia's burgeoning population. Accordingly, given the growing pressures on land and water availability, the sensible strategy would be to intensify production. Recent R&D efforts have therefore focused on the introduction of hybrid rice and what is called the "new plant-type" or "super rice." Hybrid rice yields are estimated to be up to 20% higher than those of conventional high-yield varieties. Widely adopted in China, hybrid rice is now spreading to other parts of Asia through both government and private-sector efforts. Meanwhile, super rice, which is being developed at the International Rice Research Institute, has the potential to increase yields to up to 15 tons/ha, with the seed being endowed with improved disease and insect pest resistance.

Rice policy

Since rice plays an important role in ensuring food security it has been the subject of much government intervention. In developing countries, support to farmers has come mainly in the form of irrigation investments, credit, R&D, and the supply of improved seed. Public-sector involvement in rice has generally been reduced in recent years. A few countries, however, are still involved directly in rice distribution and marketing. Trade measures have also been widely used to protect domestic rice markets. Thus, while there has been considerable liberalization of the rice market in recent years, largely due to initiatives under the World Trade Organization regime, governments are still often unwilling to relax their control over the rice sector. This is because for many developing countries, particularly in Asia, rice still plays a critical role in terms of food security, generating income in rural areas, and maintaining political stability, among others.

Issues and measures

One of the important issues facing the rice sector is the continuing decline in the amount of resources available for rice production, particularly land and water, due to population growth and unsustainable farming practices. To address this problem, governments need to promote better cropping techniques and higher-yielding varieties and plant types that use less water to obtain more benefit from the present irrigated fields. In addition to hybrid rice and super rice, plants developed through biotechnology have provided a potentially formidable option for raising the productivity of the rice sector. Specifically, the production of transgenic plants, with resistance to major pests and diseases, and gene transfers to rice from wild and unrelated species should significantly increase the yield ceilings in the long run and thereby help stabilize production. For most developing countries, biotechnology also affords them the opportunity to enhance the nutritional value of food such as rice (i.e., in terms of higher protein, mineral, and vitamin content) and therefore improve the health of many people in low-income communities.

Another critical issue for many developing countries is the excessive use of pesticides and other agrochemicals in rice farming, which has polluted water and created health hazards. One important strategy to counter this is the promotion of more sustainable agricultural systems such as those based on integrated pest management. Biotechnology-derived solutions can also help reduce the use of agrochemicals and water, promoting sustainable production. Thus, biotechnology, in particular genetically modified (GM) crops, represents a promising tool not only for addressing food security issues but also environmental problems. However, to be able to derive the maximum benefits from the technology, there is an urgent need to deal with a number of concerns, foremost of which is the perception among consumers that GM products pose potential risks to human health and environmental safety in the long term. Another is whether GM crops will really benefit the farmers. The answers to these will depend heavily on the extent to which individual countries are able to involve farmers in the genetic modification process.

A third issue is the declining profit margins in rice farming which have compelled some farmers to shift their production to other higher-value crops. Some factors contributing to this declining profit trend include the transfer of labor from agriculture to nonagricultural sectors, the diversion of land from rice farming to other agricultural and nonagricultural activities, increased competition for water, and withdrawal of input subsidies, all of which have pushed up production costs. As a way around these problems, it has been suggested that the productivity of rice-based systems could be enhanced through appropriate investments in infrastructure, science and technology, and institutional and human resources capacities. The resultant increase in productivity would then release resources that farmers could use to diversify their economy. By investing in off-farm/nonfarm business activities, for example, the farmers could augment their income from rice farming.

Future challenges

The apparent decline in the importance of rice as a major source of dietary energy supply and other nutrients may become more pronounced, particularly in East Asia and wealthier countries in Southeast Asia, as improved incomes lead to changes in people's dietary habits. Decreasing per capita consumption of rice has been noted in those countries as a result of consumers' substitution of rice for other cereals and other foodstuffs, notably livestock products. Other factors that will influence demand are the widening choice of available foods due to the development of the food industry, especially the processing sector; increasing exposure to various dietary patterns from abroad; and continuing urbanization and changing lifestyles, which are putting a premium on fast food and food that requires less time to prepare or is easily consumed.

Another development is changing production methods resulting from the application of modern technologies (e.g., Green Revolution technologies) that are not in any way related to or rooted in local culture. This is cited as the cause of the gradual disappearance of variation in farming techniques which previously characterized the broad spectrum of rice culture in the region. Some social scientists have expressed concerns about the long-term impact of this trend.

Rice in numbers

- *Rice is cultivated in 113 countries and is the staple food for over half the world's population.*
- *Rice provides 27% of dietary energy supply and 20% of dietary protein intake in the developing world.*
- *Rice cultivation is the principal activity and source of income for about 100 million households in Asia and Africa.*
- *Of the 840 million people suffering from chronic hunger, over 50% live in areas dependent on rice production for food, income, and employment.*
- *About four-fifths of the world's rice is produced by small-scale farmers and is consumed locally.*

(FAO News Stories, 12 February 2004)

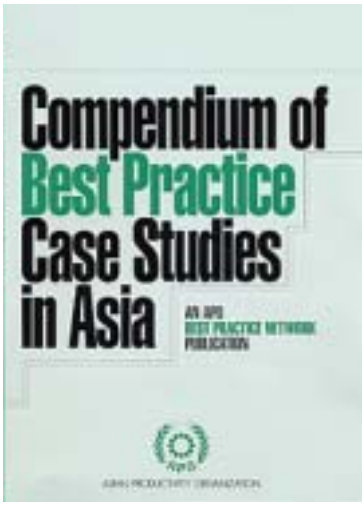
The continuing decline of profit margins in rice farming which has affected the livelihoods of millions of small farmers in the region needs to be checked. As asserted by some experts, the more daunting challenge in the rice sector is the eradication of poverty and hunger. Thus, appropriate incentives to rice farmers must be maintained to improve their living conditions as well as to enhance each country's ability to produce rice to meet future national requirements.

Without doubt, rice is still life in much of Asia since it continues to be the primary source of food in the region. The concern for the future for some countries, however, is whether the role of rice in the life and culture of their people will continue to be the same considering the future challenges outlined above. Thus, at the recent APO Seminar entitled "Rice Is Life: Various Aspects of Rice-based Agricultural Systems," one of the programs that was held in Tokyo in October in observance of the IYR, the unanswered question left at the end was: Will rice be life?

The author wishes to acknowledge various documents of the FAO and APO as sources of data and analysis in writing the present article.

Manuel S.J. de Leon is a former Senior Program Officer in the Agriculture Department of the APO Secretariat. During his 18 years with the organization, he was instrumental in developing many agricultural productivity improvement programs. Dr. de Leon holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of the Philippines at Los Baños. He is presently based in Davao City, the Philippines, and occasionally helps implement APO projects as an external consultant.

New APO publication



COMPENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDIES IN ASIA

APO 83 pp. November 2004
ISBN: 93-833-2305-X

The APO Best Practice Network (APO-BPN) was established to enable industries in the Asia-Pacific region to generate, share, and transfer knowledge on best practices for improving their productivity and competitive edge in world export markets. More specifically, it is to help them: 1) identify sources of global best practices; 2) learn benchmarking techniques; 3) gain useful knowledge for achieving superior performance; and 4) augment their own best practice networks.

Launched in 2001, the APO-BPN was given shape and substance in a number of workshops held over two years, culminating in the fourth workshop in 2003 where selected organizations in Asia presented their best practices in three areas: the balanced scorecard; frontline customer service; and people performance evaluation. The balanced scorecard was selected as it is a key tool in strategic management for achieving business excellence. Frontline customer service, on the other hand, was considered for its importance in helping organizations to increase productivity, improve service quality, and boost customer satisfaction and loyalty. People performance evaluation was included because it measures employees' contributions to the quality and quantity of work produced.

This publication is a compilation of the 17 case studies presented at the workshop from Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Each case study covers the following broad areas: Organizational profile; Rationale and objectives; Overall description; Leading practices adopted; Benefits gained; Lessons learned; Recent improvements; and Next steps for continuous improvement. They are published for knowledge sharing among APO member countries and for possible replication by others to improve organizational performance. The organizations featured in the presentations were not identified for reasons of confidentiality. The added advantage of this is that attention is focused on the merits of the best practices featured rather than the image or status of the organizations involved.

A companion volume, *Benchmarking Training Manual,* is in preparation.

Compendium of Best Practice Case Studies in Asia is available in both the print edition and e-edition. The latter is available on the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org.

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

"Discovery is seeing what everybody else has seen and thinking what nobody else has thought."

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

"What one relishes, nourishes."

Benjamin Franklin

"Excellence encourages one about life generally; it shows the spiritual wealth of the world."

T.S. Eliot

"The effectiveness of work increases according to geometric progression if there are no interruptions."

André Maurois

"One of the tests of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency."

Arnold Glasgow

"Even when the experts all agree, they may well be mistaken."

Bertrand Russell

"I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody."

Bill Cosby

"Great things are not accomplished by those who yield to trends and fads and popular opinion."

Charles Kuralt

"You can close more business in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you."

Dale Carnegie

Regulating GMOs

Farmers and agribusiness operators worldwide are struggling with issues of productivity, health and safety, environmental degradation, and diverse nutritional needs. Genetically modified (GM) food crops originally appeared to offer opportunities for increased agricultural output with fewer inputs. However, approval of GM food crops has been slow and regulatory, biosafety, trade, and political concerns over GM crops are growing. The APO held the seminar on "Prospects and Regulatory Framework of Biotechnology, with Special Focus on Genetically Modified Crops," 3–11 November, in Japan, to discuss those opportunities and concerns.

The seminar, which was attended by 20 participants from 17 APO member countries, was timed to allow attendance at the World Rice Research Conference and associated field visits sponsored by the International Rice Research Institute, Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and APO, 4–7 November. The four resource papers presented at the APO seminar are summarized below.

Senior Research Fellow Joel I. Cohen of the International Food Policy Research Institute spoke on "World trends in regulation and control of genetically modified crops for food safety and environmental protection," focusing on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB). Now ratified by 110 countries, among which 11 are APO members, the protocol is intended to ensure that countries have mechanisms to determine the environmental safety of living modified organisms (LMOs) proposed for import. The advance informed consent element gives time to review each LMO. If not satisfied with scientific evidence of safety, the imports can be refused. Information can be shared among countries in the review process, as in the EU, but Cohen pointed out that in the developing world in many cases no regulatory systems are in place and exchange of information is rare.

Consumer anxieties about GM food have put the brakes on testing events. Public GM crop research integrating biotechnology with agricultural research may hold the key to allaying public fears. Cohen noted that Asia has the most countries engaged in public GM crop research and the highest percentages of events in testing.

Cohen concluded that functional national biosafety systems under the framework of the CPB will require working externally to address political, trade, and environmental concerns and internally to determine policy and implementation issues. In Asia, regional trading patterns, emerging population needs, water and land use, and distance from seed suppliers are special considerations.

GMO Committee member Ken-ichi Hayashi, MAFF, Japan, gave an overview of "Impact assessment on biodiversity of GM crops in Japan." Japan has a long history of international cooperation in biotechnology-related forums and is a signatory to the CPB. After CPB ratification, a country must meet three domestic conditions: 1) integrate the CPB into national law; 2) establish a national biosafety clearinghouse; and 3) formulate guidelines/reguations to supplement the laws. Only Japan and Switzerland have so far completed all three national conditions.

Japan's Law Concerning the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity through Regulations on the Use of LMOs and supplementary regulations and guidelines came into force in February 2004. All steps in the GMO development process from laboratory to greenhouse to isolated field to ordinary field are covered under the legal provisions. Events approved under previous MAFF guidelines must be reapproved by the new interministerial Committee for Impact Assessment on Biological Diversity. As of September 2004, 29 applications had been received, of which 10 had been approved including four for unconfined release. A broad consensus on field trials of GM crops is important in Japan, and strictly adhered to MAFF guidelines governing these were drafted to address public concerns. Hayashi concluded that while biotechnology applications can help to meet the increasing food demand and preserve biological resources, scientific assessments of GM crop safety based on international frameworks such as the CPB are critical.

GMO seminar participants on a field visit

The GM food safety assessment process under the Food Safety Basic Law (May 2003) was explained in layperson's terms by Japanese Food Safety Commission (FSC) Secretariat member Kenji Isshiki in his presentation "Safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant DNA techniques." The FSC has a three-fold mission: conducting risk assessment of food; communicating risks to consumers, food-related business operators, farmers, etc.; and responding to food-borne emergencies. The FSC, which adopts Codex Alimentarius standards, acknowledges that humans have always eaten food with accepted risks, i.e., some that are only safe after cooking or other processing, and have not examined each component for safety. With information on the type of modification introduced into GM food, it is possible to make a scientific assessment of the safety of the change in comparison with the natural food and the likely effects on human health and nutrition.

In its risk communication efforts, public disclosure and transparency are watchwords, said Isshiki. The FSC holds public meetings; updates its Web site with the minutes of weekly meetings, which are open to the public and media; and operates telephone hotlines.

Nobuyuki Kabaki of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific spoke on the project for "Capacity building in biosafety of GM crops in Asia."

(Continued on page 6)

Regulating GMOs

(Continued from page 5)

Biotechnology, specifically gene manipulation, offers opportunities to achieve food security with the creation of four GM crop groups. The first group raises pest tolerance, alleviating environmental burdens. The second endows tolerance to drought, salinity, and extreme temperatures, enabling increased production in unfavorable regions. The third raises yields and quality, increasing production and reducing malnutrition. The fourth adds value and diversifies crop uses, raising farmers' incomes and forming new agribusinesses.

Kabaki pointed out that, in addition to potential human and animal health risks and environmental consequences, another problem is the gap between users and suppliers. This can be seen as a north-south problem, in which patent holders in developed countries sell to poorer countries that are disadvantaged in applications. The tropical monsoon climate of Asia might also affect GM crops differently than the temperate zone.

With the ultimate aim of regional harmonization in biosafety, the FAO initiated the Capacity Building in Biosafety of GM Crops in Asia project in 2002 with Japan as a donor and 10 participating countries (all of which are APO members except for China). The specific objectives are to strengthen national capacities for ensuring GM crop biosafety, establish an Asian Network on Biotechnology, and promote R&D on GM crops. Kabaki stressed that strengthening of human resources for establishing and implementing regulatory mechanisms on biosafety should be a priority in each country.

Making a display for productivity

This year's APO seminar on "Productivity Promotion" held in Japan, 8–12 November, came with a difference. The 18 participants from 13 APO member countries, including one from Myanmar, brought productivity promotional materials from their respective countries for display at the venue of the meeting, the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development. The end result was a colorful and informative exhibition. The photo shows participants from Vietnam, Iran, and Pakistan posing proudly with the displays that they created.

p-TIPS

Armchair environmentalist (greening the office)

Daunted by the sheer immensity of environmental problems, UK activist Karen Christensen wrote *The Armchair Environmentalist: 3 Minute-a-Day Action Plan to Save the World* (MQ Publications Ltd., 2004). It contains a host of tips easily implemented by individuals of all ages and institutions of all sizes and types. We all know that a greener workplace means a greener planet, more productive employees with less absenteeism, and financial savings in the long term. The following tips are suitable for most enterprises, but particularly for Asian-Pacific SMEs.

1) Literally green up with live plants, which are good for the air and the spirit. In dry climates, stand the pots in trays of pebbles and water to increase humidity (employees who use computers will complain less of dry eyes).

2) Use bamboo, wood, and other natural materials for as much office furniture as possible (definitely a cost savings in tropical Asia and the Pacific).

3) Put low-energy light bulbs in ceiling and wall fixtures (save those high-powered bulbs for desk lamps).

4) Make the best use of natural light and ventilation (put desks by windows—and those windows should open).

5) Install ceiling fans to supplement air-conditioning. They'll bring down electricity bills (but you may need to invest in paperweights).

6) Check for unsuspected sources of air pollution, like carpets, photocopiers, art supplies, and cleansers. Put copy machines and laser printers as far away from employee desks as possible (they contain toners and solvents that no one should have to breathe).

7) Reuse, reuse, reuse (think of paper, envelopes, files, binders and folders, boxes and packing materials, string, etc.).

8) Use nontoxic, odor-free, water-based marking pens and water-based correction fluid (they'll do less damage at final disposal and make office air cleaner).

9) Avoid plastics when possible (for example, metal paper trays may cost more initially than their plastic counterparts but they last forever).

p-Experts deputed by the APO

REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the Global Best Practice Workshop, 20–21 October 2004: **Mr. Bruce Searles**, Managing Partner, Benchmarking Partnerships, Australia; **Ms. Shahuren Ismail**, Director, National Productivity Corporation, Malaysia; and **Mr. Ho Kok Wai**, Head & Vice President, Learning and Development, Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited, Singapore.

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the workshop on Green Supply Chains and Eco-design, 25–28 October 2004: **Dr. William Olson**, Director, International and Environmental Research and Development, Motorola Labs-PRRC, USA; **Mr. Hiroyuki Sato**, Secretary-General, Green Purchasing Network, Japan; and **Mr. Kean Chan**, Deputy Chairman, Environmental Management Technical Committee, SPRING Singapore.

FIJI

Mr. Swee Seang Goh, Director, Industry Research, National Productivity Corporation, Malaysia, was deputed to conduct a training course on the Balanced Scorecard, 25–29 October 2004.

Mr. Gurjeet Singh, Deputy Manager, Tinplate Company of India Limited, and **Mr. Sanjeev Kumar**, Senior Manager, Mecon Limited, India, were deputed to provide expert services in the workshop on ISO9000/ISO14000, 3–10 November 2004.

Dr. Janet Lim Beng Looi, Managing Director, Q-Brand Business Sdn. Bhd., Malaysia, was deputed to provide expert services in the training workshop for Women Entrepreneurs, 15–19 November 2004.

Dr. Jerome Agrusa Che, Professor, Travel Industry Management, College of Business Administration, Hawaii Pacific University, USA, was deputed to provide expert services in the workshop on Management for Service Operation, 23–26 November 2004.

Dr. James Chen, Associate Professor, Department of Industrial Engineering, Chung Yuan University, Republic of China, was deputed to serve as resource person in the Industrial Engineer Training, 22–26 November 2004.

Prof. Tan Wee Liang, Singapore Management University, and **Mr. John Parsons**, Principal, Resource Alternatives Australia and National Executive Business Strategy, Australian Productivity Council, were deputed to serve as resource persons in the forum on Development of National Productivity Organizations, 29 November–1 December 2004.

INDIA

Mr. Yasuhiko Iwaoka, Senior Consultant, Iwaoka R&C, Japan, was deputed to serve as an expert to conduct stage II of the APO project on Development of Demonstration Companies/Organizations, 15–19 November 2004.

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons for the study meeting on New Concepts of Top Management, 22–25 November 2004: **Dr. Jisoo Yu**, Dean, School of e-Business, College of Economics and Business, Kookmin University, Republic of Korea; **Mr. Shigenobu Ohara**, President, Project Research Corporation, Japan; **Dr. James Wang**, President, Besteam Management Consulting Inc., Republic of China; and **Prof. Mark Goh**, Associate Professor, NUS Business School, Singapore.

INDONESIA

Dr. Tetsuo Yamane, Director, Development Division, Nippon Bio-science Co., Ltd., Japan, was deputed to serve as resource person in the demonstration project on Green Productivity for Tourism and the Community, 28–30 October 2004.

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the workshop on Green and Productive Tourism, 29 November–3 December 2004: **Mr. L.V. Keshav**, Vice-President, R&D, Corporate Quality & Environment Mgt., Ion Exchange Ltd., India; **Prof. Tor Hundloe**, Director, Environmental Management Center, University of Queensland, Australia; and **Prof. Tay Joo Hwa**, Head, Division of Environmental and Water Resources Engineering, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

JAPAN

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the Venture 2004: Asian Forum on Venture Business, 9–11 November 2004: **Mr. Chivukula Sree Rama Prabhu**, Deputy Director-General, National Informatics Centre, India; **Mr. Myung-Hyun Chang**, CTO, Accede Solutions Co., Ltd., Japan; **Dato Mustafa Mansur**, President, Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers; and **Mrs. Tan Leng Leng**, Vice President, SembCorp Parks Management Pte. Ltd., Singapore.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Mr. Ian Gaunt, CEO, Australian Portfolios, Australia, was deputed to serve as resource speaker in the training course on Six Sigma, 2–5 November 2004.

LAOS

Mr. Shigetsugu Namiki, President, Namiki Management Consulting, Japan, and **Mr. Yasuhiko Iwaoka**, Senior Consultant, Iwaoka R&C, Japan, were deputed to provide training on New Model Company Building, 25–29 October 2004.

MALAYSIA

Mr. Rodney M. May, Consultant, Australia, was deputed to serve as resource person in the ongoing Integrated Community Development Project on Natural Farming, 21–25 November 2004.

MONGOLIA

Mr. Hsiu-Ching Yeh, Senior Consultant, China Productivity Center, Republic of China, was deputed to serve as an expert in stage II of the Development of Demonstration Companies/Organizations, 20–24 September 2004.

Mr. Ramachandran S. Mani, Technical Director, NIC, Ministry of Communication and IT, India, was deputed to provide consultancy services on Network Security, 25–29 October 2004.

PAKISTAN

Dr. Sang-Chan Park, Professor, Department of IE, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, Republic of Korea, was deputed to serve as resource person for the symposium on Strategic Alliances among SMEs through Technology Fusion, 30 November–3 December 2004.

PHILIPPINES

Mr. Mervin Hew Pang Wei, Management Consultant, Singapore, was deputed to conduct a training seminar on Infusing Knowledge Management and Innovation in Quality Circles, 11–20 October 2004.

Mr. Satin Morton, President, FoodAdviz LLC, USA, was deputed to provide expert services in the seminar-workshop on Enhancing Food Certification Systems, 21–22 October 2004.

SINGAPORE

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the study meeting on Enterprise Innovation and Value Creation for Higher Growth, 26–28 October 2004: **Dr. Hiwhoa Moon**, Standing Advisor, UGCom Co., Ltd., Republic of Korea; **Dr. Steven Hung-Chi Wu**, President, SMEHUB.NET, Republic of China; **Dr. Georges Haour**, Professor, International Institute for Management Development, Switzerland; and **Dr. Mutsuhiro Arinobu**, Corporate Vice-President and Director, Corporate Research & Development Center, Toshiba Corporation, Japan.

Mr. Hajime Inoue, Executive Officer, Advertising & Promotion, Parco Co. Ltd., Japan, was deputed to provide expert services in the Asian Shopping Centre Conference, 24–25 November 2004.

SRI LANKA

The following were deputed to serve as resource persons in the study meeting on the Cluster Approach for Industrial Development, 25–28 October 2004: **Dr. Tai-Yang Hwang**, President, Century Development Corporation, Republic of China; **Dr. Somchai Chatratana**, Assistant to the President, National Science and Technology Development Agency, Thailand; and **Mr. Stephen Richard Wyatt**, Vice-President, Monitor Group, Singapore.

Mr. Arnel D. Abanto, Assistant Vice-President, Development Academy of the Philippines, was deputed to provide expert services in the training course on Business Excellence through Human Resources Management, Productivity Improvement, and Quality Improvement, 15–18 November 2004.

THAILAND

Dr. Arnat Tancho, Lecturer, Department of Soil Resources and Environment, Faculty of Agricultural Production, Maejo University, Thailand, was deputed to serve as resource person in the Integrated Community Development Demonstration Program Observational Study Mission on Natural Farming Systems, 22–26 November 2004.

USA

Mr. Robert J. Osterhoff, Director and Treasurer, Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, Inc., USA, was deputed to serve as chief resource person in the study mission on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, 27 September–1 October 2004.

Photo contest winners

This year's APO photo contest received a total of 527 entries submitted by 197 shutterbugs from 15 countries. We are very pleased with the response and the quality of the entries. As in most contests, the limited number of prizes available does not do justice to the generally high standard of the contest entries. By this token, the winning entries are particularly outstanding. For this reason, we have added three merit prizes. As in previous photo contests, Thailand and Vietnam led the field with the most entries. This year, they also walked away with all the prizes, except for one won by Malaysia. All the winning entries are posted on the APO Web site at www.apo-tokyo.org and featured in the 2005 APO Calendar.

The winners were selected by a panel of four distinguished judges who met on 18 November at the APO Secretariat. They were Indian Ambassador to Japan Mani Tripathi; professional photographer Sanae Numata; Shigeru Chatani, Director, Photographic Society of Japan; and APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all those who participated in the contest. Our warmest congratulations go to the winners, who more than deserve the prizes. We are also very grateful to Fujifilm for donating the cameras.

Judging in progress (L-R): Numata, Takenaka, Chatani, and Tripathi

And the winners are...

Gold Prize (Certificate, US$750.00, and digital camera)	Chawalit Pumpo (Thailand)
Silver Prize (Certificate, US$500.00, and digital camera)	Wasana Konghirun (Thailand)
	Lai Dien Dam (Vietnam)
Bronze Prize (Certificate, US$300.00, and digital camera)	Pennee Wangniwiatkul (Thailand)
	Dang Ngoc Thai (Vietnam)
	Huynh My Thuan (Vietnam)
Special Prize (Certificate and digital camera)	Lau Kui Kwong (Malaysia)
	Nguyen Duc Chinh (Vietnam)
	Tran Anh Khoi (Vietnam)
	Nguyen Luong Hieu (Vietnam)
	Tran Dinh Thuong (Vietnam)
	Pham Hoai An (Vietnam)
Merit Prize (Certificate and US$50.00)	Praseart Jaroen (Thailand)
	Chirasak Tolertmongkol (Thailand)
	Hoang Thanh Thuy (Vietnam)

Calling all cartoonists

The 2004 *APO News* year-end contest is for original, black-and-white, single-panel, English-captioned cartoons showing the humorous side of productivity-related themes. The contest is open to all nationals of APO member countries, with a limit of three entries per person. Send a B5-sized hard-copy original of your cartoon along with one clean photocopy to the Information and Public Relations Department, APO Secretariat, by 15 February 2005. Up to 10 prizes of US$100 are waiting to be won. Suitable winners will appear in the *APO News*.

If you have a way with words, an itch to sketch, and a productivity mindset, take a look at the accompanying sample cartoon for inspiration and start drawing.

New tools, higher productivity