

APO NEWS

Information to Make a Difference in Productivity



New Year message from APO Secretary-General Mari Amano

As we usher in 2014, I would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy, and productive New Year.

The year 2013 witnessed novel initiatives in APO activities. In March, the 8th Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) was successfully held with the participation of about 100 companies and organizations and the support of the Government of Singapore. The 2013 APO *Productivity Databook* offered new features including the computation of total factor productivity for Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We can also look forward to accessing productivity statistics through smartphone apps.

In June, APO Liaison Officers convened for a Strategic Planning Meeting to discuss program planning and implementation. In October, NPO heads attended more interactive group workshop sessions to discuss the APO's strategic directions during the Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs. On the Green Productivity (GP) front, the Center of Excellence (COE) on GP was launched simultaneously with the International Forum on Green Productivity to deliberate on current environmental issues and emerging trends. We expect to intensify GP activities based on the recommendations of a need assessment survey under the COE on GP.

The Asian Food and Agribusiness Conference was launched in Taipei with the theme Biotechnology and Global Competitiveness. This annual event for government and industry leaders will continue to contribute to advances in agriculture, agribusiness, and the food industry in the Asia-Pacific.


Broad-based engagement with the media to spread the message on productivity enhancement occurred during the Multicountry Observational Study Mission on Best Practices in Promoting Innovation and Productivity in Agriculture for Mass Media Practitioners. The resulting publicity is continuing, and similar projects involving the media will be carried out in 2014 as well.

The APO organized three projects funded by special cash grants from the Government of Japan. The Observational Study Mission on Photovoltaic and Solar Cell Technology and the Workshop on Labor-Management Relations with Special Focus on the Automobile Industry (*see page 3*) generated substantial media interest including newspaper and television coverage. The Special Program for Strengthening the Capacity for Food Supply Chain Management in Asian Least Developed Countries continued in 2013 to support in-country activities in Cambodia and Lao PDR, in addition to the Multicountry Observational Study Mission to Japan on Innovative Farm Management Practices to Enhance Agricultural Productivity under that program, which benefited food industries and communities in other member countries as well.

Collaborations with the International Energy Agency, Colombo Plan, Asian Development Bank, and Asian Development Bank Institute have added another sophisticated dimension to capacity building within the APO community. We are exploring new partnerships with Cornell University and other international organizations to expand our outreach and increase APO visibility.

In 2014, APO members can look forward to the 9th EPIF in the ROC, 13–16 March, with the strong support of the China Productivity Center and Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs. The 3rd World Conference on Green Productivity is another major anticipated event. Outreach beyond the immediate Asia-Pacific region is underway to expand the APO membership. This will be a win-win situation for all involved.

Let us continue the spirit of solidarity and unity to fulfill the APO's mission of contributing to the sustainable socioeconomic development of Asia and the Pacific through enhancing productivity.

With best wishes for a bright and productive New Year for all. 



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Horizontal learning: a new way to achieve sustainability

Horizontal Learning Program in Bangladesh

The Horizontal Learning Program (HLP) is a peer-to-peer learning initiative enabling local governments to identify, share, and replicate the good practices of their peers. This strengthens the accountability of local governments to their citizens. Local governments enjoy the freedom to prioritize the knowledge and skills they want to share as well as those they wish to acquire. This includes deciding what they want to learn, from whom, and how. The HLP is a tool for fostering collaborative networks as well as boosting confidence in governing bodies at the grassroots level. The program is based on the assumption that capacities already exist and that networking among peers around good practices can enable those capacities to be identified and replicated to guide policies. One of the key developments from appreciation-connection-adaptation/replication is a greater awareness of the benefits and behavioral change from the grassroots level.

The HLP was initiated in November 2007 as a one-year pilot program by the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Bangladesh Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives with support from six development partners (DPs). The HL process was designed by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank. As other local governments heard about these exchanges and showed interest in participating, the LGD, with support from the WSP and other DPs, has formalized the program.

Today, the HLP in Bangladesh continues to be facilitated by the LGD with support from 32 DPs. By December 2012, the HLP had expanded from the original 66 Union Parishads (UPs) in six subdistricts to 383 UPs in 37 subdistricts in 24 districts, covering almost 10.2 million people. The HL process is now either being integrated or initiated in: national basic capacity building framework for UPs; community clinics under the Ministry of Health; community radio networks by the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication; and primary education under the Ministry of Primary Education.

Expanding the HL process to IR Iran via the APO

Attracted by reports of the success of the HLP in Bangladesh, in 2012 the National Iranian Productivity Organization (NIPO) requested Technical Expert Services of the APO to replicate the efforts in IR Iran. Subsequently, the Network for Learning Good Practices was launched by the Rural Women's Affairs Bureau (RWAB), Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture (MJA), in November 2012. A four-day workshop was organized to discuss and design the HLP of the RWAB with support from the APO in collaboration with NIPO. The HLP started in three districts in IR Iran under the RWAB, with assistance from the MJA and NIPO.

HL initiative in India and plans for expansion

The Local Governance Initiative South Asia of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation has supported the Resource and Support Centre for Development and Mahila Rajsatta Andolan in Maharashtra, India, to launch a similar HL process. It commenced in early 2013 among elected

women representatives in 25 districts of Maharashtra. Another process also started in December 2013 in the Kutch district of Gujarat. The Centre on Rural Development for Asian and the Pacific (CIRDAP) is also in dialogue with the Government of India for an HL initiative focusing on youth in the country. By forging HL links, CIRDAP is also planning to expand HL in its 15 member countries to create local platforms for south-south learning.

So far, HL efforts in Maharashtra have involved a women's health anemia campaign, village natural resource audits, making banking services available to women, education on welcoming the birth of girls, participatory water allocation schemes, schools for sugarcane cutters' children, a seed bank, and 22 other topics. The diversity of these schemes, all of which directly or indirectly benefit women and children, indicate that the HL process is sufficiently flexible and practical to apply in almost every field of community development.

Value added and limitations of HL

HL complements top-down capacity building by reinforcing the confidence of local practitioners collectively as teachers and learners build on the good practices of their peers. The replication of good practices encourages the reform of policies and rebuilding of institutions of governance from the bottom up. The key limitation of horizontal learning is that external agents cannot impose anything (that is, best practices are determined by peers and policies are formulated by the peer-to-peer collective).

Replication of the HL process

The HLP is considered to be an effective, relevant tool in helping communities to capitalize on their own expertise to devise solutions customized to their specific needs. Bangladesh was the pioneer in HL, with remarkable results. Countries like India (Maharashtra and Gujarat) and IR Iran have started their own HL programs with assistance from the HLP in Bangladesh, with support from DP agencies. Other countries such as Pakistan, the Philippines, Lao PDR, and Honduras are now consulting with HLP partners in Bangladesh to implement similar programs for their own target groups (for example, elected women representatives, local rural and urban government institutions, youth, etc.). The adaptations those other countries bring to the HL process will in turn help programs already in place to become even more relevant as knowledge and innovations accumulate.

By simply facilitating tacit knowledge-sharing and peer connections on a larger scale, the HLP has the potential to scale up good practices rapidly. This can be done across local government institutions, NGOs, the private sector, or any other organization wishing to address issues of efficiency and effectiveness. Apart from the direct development outcomes, through the replication of good local practices the HLP has the potential to build a groundswell movement for governance reform.

Sustainability of HL

One of the most important features of HLP is that participants allocate their

own resources for replicating good practices. If they lack funds, they tend to select low-cost options. This develops greater reactivity. In Bangladesh in the past five years, local governments have allocated more than US\$7 million to replicate 57 good practices. This is a major paradigm shift away from externally funded service improvement programs. The HLP therefore has vast potential to be applied, adopted, and replicated for the spread and sustainability of good practices in a wide range of contexts. 🌀



M. Eng. Santanu Lahiri is an Indian citizen with over 25 years of development experience in Asia. He currently serves as Senior Decentralization Specialist (International Consultant) for the WSP of the World Bank, while consulting for the APO and other organizations. His work focuses on decentralization approaches, institutional strengthening, capacity building (including HL), improving services, and learning institutionalization.

Labor-management relations in the automobile industry

Twenty high-ranking officials from government, labor ministries, labor unions, and the automotive industry convened in Tokyo, 18–22 November 2013. Representing seven countries from across the Asia-Pacific region, they attended the workshop on Labor-Management Relations with Special Focus on the Automobile Industry funded by the Government of Japan and organized by the APO and Japan Productivity Center (JPC).

As more companies expand overseas, it is imperative to take a global approach to labor-management relations and manage country-specific risks. How companies develop and maintain a strong relationship between labor and management is an important process that they see as mutually beneficial. There are labor and legal risks specific to each country, and it is vital that companies proactively identify and manage these risks. They should focus on strengthening human resources management to increase employee satisfaction. In this context, participant from Pakistan Muhammad Khaliluddin pointed out that poor industrial relations may cause losses of man-hours due to lockouts/strikes, low productivity, and negative behavior of employees and employers. All these factors can affect the overall profitability of an organization which is normally considered to be a core consideration of domestic and foreign investors alike.

Experts from the Confederation of Japan Automobile Workers' Union, Honda Motor Workers' Union, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry led discussions on labor-management issues,



Workshop participants interacting with Happy Employee (robot) Asimo at Honda Motor. Photo courtesy of JPC.

labor's obligations to management, and role of governments and national productivity organizations in good labor management to identify best practices in these areas. The workshop included an optional visit to the 43rd Tokyo Motor Show 2013 courtesy of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers' Association.

The overall objective of the workshop was to familiarize participants with labor-management relations practices followed by trading partners, ultimately promoting higher productivity and economic growth throughout the interdependent automotive industry. The workshop was also a response to previous labor conflicts involving Japan's automotive partners in Southeast Asia and the Subcontinent by illustrating how similar labor-management issues had been addressed in the host country.



Participants summarizing current Japanese labor-management relations as noted in site visits. Photo courtesy of JPC.

The workshop discussions enhanced the participants' understanding of major challenges in fostering cordial labor-management relations and their correlation with sustainable productivity growth and helped them identify the roles of stakeholders in promoting such relations. On the final day, participants drafted action plans for improving labor-management relations in their organizations and suggested policy measures for enhancing overall awareness of this area and developing sound national strategies. 🌀



Opportunities in the growing world of e-commerce

Supply chains have always been a competitive advantage of companies. They are being put to the test with the rise of digital shopping. e-Commerce sales are estimated at more than US\$1.2 trillion globally, with the largest contribution stemming from Asia. From 2013 to 2016, business-to-consumer (B2C) sales within Asia-Pacific are expected to grow by 182% (Figure 1). This translates into an additional US\$318.85 billion resulting from emerged and emerging markets, and a significant portion of the spending will come from PR China (US\$439.72 billion) and Japan (US\$143.13 billion). By 2016, Asia's B2C e-commerce market is expected to reach US\$707.60 billion.

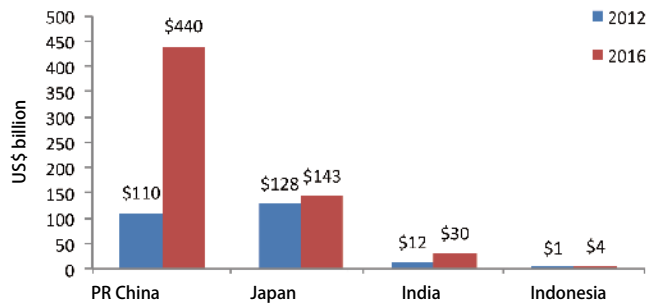


Figure 1. The Asia-Pacific will contribute the most new (US) dollars to B2C e-commerce sales. *Source:* eMarketer.

All about the Internet

The driving force behind such a phenomenal increase is the depth of Internet penetration, giving birth to digital communities and marketplaces. Some of the world's largest emerging markets have a relatively low level of digital commerce (Figure 2) but that also implies steep exponential positive growth in the short to medium term. Internet penetration levels in Asia reached 44.6% in 2013 and are expected to climb to 54.2% by 2017.

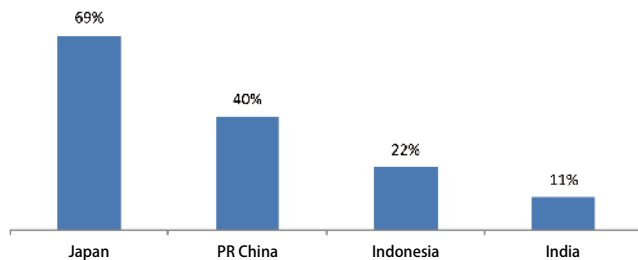


Figure 2. Internet penetration rates in large economies (% population, 2012). *Source:* Internet World Stats.

Digitization changes the way consumers interact with everything as smartphones, tablets, and high-speed connections become prevalent. The paradigm of consumer experience will undergo a dramatic shift, especially in the world of retailing. Retailing has entered a new age in which consumers are demanding and expecting all stores to offer an omni-channel shopping experience, delivered seamlessly across

mobile, online, and in-store merchandising platforms. Technology jargon aside, the omni-channel supply chain can be summarized succinctly as: 1) order from anywhere and 2) fulfill from anywhere (Figure 3).

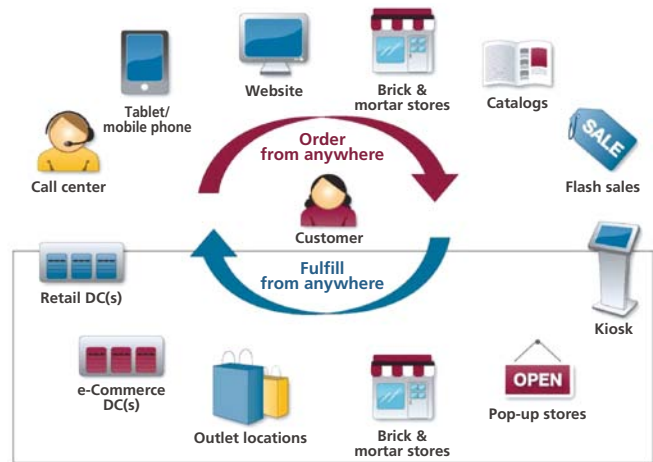


Figure 3. Managing omni-channels requires each node in the supply network to be responsive and have real-time visibility. *Source:* Image adapted from Fortna, 5 steps to designing omni-channel fulfillment operations.

The retail transformation

Connected consumers are transforming the retail experience and it is important to understand the connected consumer journey to serve them well. Retailers are realizing that to capture potential double-digit online gains (compound annual growth rate of 13% from 2006 to 2011), they must offer a seamless mobile and online strategy that integrates the shopping experience across portals, apps, and retail channels. Real-time visibility is a prerequisite to a supply network that must be agile. Each node within that network needs to optimize inventory for multiple channels and integrate purchasing information into a single operational plan.

With a new generation of consumers, convenience rather than price often lies behind the attractiveness of omni-channel operations, even though prices are generally more competitive than in brick-and-mortar stores. As a result, companies have begun to create better proximity to this upcoming wave of new customers. One of the early innovations that has piqued quite a bit of interest is the use of collection points. For example, Google's acquisition of BufferBox, a Canadian startup from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, leverages parcel kiosks to provide consumers the convenience of picking up their online purchases 24/7. Amazon Locker, a self-service parcel delivery kiosk, is now available in several US cities for certain items. KinexPoint, a network of drop-off points where consumers can ship their goods, is another recent innovation.

Collection and drop-off points are handy and open up different opportunities for consumers, companies, and third-party logistics (3PL) companies. They provide

consumers with a “pick-up-anywhere” option. Companies have access to consumer locations without the need for expensive retail fronts, meaning that retail expansion is increasingly occurring through online channels as a way to tap growth markets, build brands, and learn about consumers while investing less capital than required for traditional formats. For 3PLs, high-density areas to work with mean greater operational efficiency.

Becoming omni

Becoming genuinely omni-channel, however, is challenging. It requires investments in technology and logistics. Nimbler online rivals have an immediate advantage. In terms of first-movers, Alibaba and Amazon have grabbed the headlines. They continuously improve and expand their dominance in the B2C space. Rakuten Ichiba (largest e-commerce site in Japan and among the world’s largest in sales) and 360buy (largest B2C online retailer in PR China) are two more examples. For companies joining an online shopping network, understanding technological needs and modes of operation is key.

e-Commerce allows developing countries to compete in international trade but the full potential of its benefits can be realized only when governments create business environments that harness the power of the Internet. It also creates opportunities in services such as micro-work and freelance marketplaces, which will enable entrepreneurs in developing countries to bid for job assignments they could not access before. Some suggestions to take advantage of new Internet-based businesses are:

- 1) Identify your company’s core competency, think in terms of a supply chain or network, and bring value either online or to a company with an online presence.
- 2) Be a channel. Physical stores are becoming an extension of the supply chain in which purchases may be made but are researched through other means of communication.
- 3) If you are a segment of a distribution network, invest in technology and make sure you know what stock is available where.

As we are hurled into the trajectory of rapidly evolving e-commerce dominance, there will be a blurring of warehouses and retail fronts requiring a fully integrated system that makes a retailer’s inventory transparent so that it forms a single “pool” wherever it is located. The shopping experience and supply chain modus operandi will be excitingly different. 🌀



Dr. Koh Niak Wu is an entrepreneur and part of a team at Cosmiqo International Pte Ltd that analyzes supply chains and the management of operations. He has worked in both the public and private sectors to raise productivity through technological innovation. Dr. Koh is an avid believer in algorithms and how they change the way the world works. He can be reached at kohnw@cosmiqo.com.

Seoul hosts the Top Management Forum

For the first time, the Republic of Korea (ROK) hosted the Top Management Forum of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO). The 28th annual forum in 2013 was jointly organized by the APO and Korea Productivity Center (KPC). Twenty-two high-ranking government officials in charge of SME policies and top SME executives met in Seoul, 17–19 December, to focus on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in SMEs for accelerated productivity growth and improved quality and cost of services.

The ROK was ranked first in information and technology development in 2012 by the International Telecommunication Union. The forum covered state-of-the-art ICT applications adopted by leading Korean SMEs. Experts making presentations included Seok Koo Ji from the National IT Industry Promotion Agency, Associate Professor Minkyun Kim of Sogang University, and Dr. Ju-Young Park from Soongsil University; Frank Lin from AsusTek Computer Inc. of the Republic of China and Professor Arup Mitra of Delhi University Enclave also shared best practices in this area.

Professor Mitra commented, “This forum enables participants to understand how ICT and productivity in SMEs are interconnected and which components of the production process can utilize ICT to a greater extent.” Associate Professor Kim advised attendees first to identify the benefits of ICT to SMEs: “IT is an investment that must go hand-in-hand with sound strategies so that the benefits are greater than the investment made.”

Participants were introduced to the current level of ICT use by SMEs in this region and how the technologies can contribute to continuous innovation and overall produc-



Chairman and CEO of the KPC Hong Jin delivering remarks during the opening ceremony of the 28th Top Management Forum. Photo courtesy of KPC.

tivity growth of SMEs. They also visited home automation company Commax to view how ICT innovations are devised and helped an SME to be globally competitive.

Nguyen Thi Anh Thu of the Vietnam Productivity Centre noted that SMEs in her country were challenged “due to lack of resources, training, and methods. The government has had a productivity program for SMEs since 2010, but IT investment should be increased to assist them.” Representing the Planning Commission of Pakistan, Dr. Muhammad Afzal planned to share the benefits of attending the Top Management Forum with colleagues and superiors. In his opinion, “The survival of economies rests with IT-oriented businesses.” He added that Pakistan offered affordable ICT services to the public. 🌀

Innovative farm management practices to enhance agricultural productivity

Farm managers are pursuing various strategies and methods to make farms more productive and maximize profits on a sustainable basis. Constant adjustments are needed to stay abreast of changes in technologies, production methods, price variability, resource availability, and customer demand. The majority of farms in the Asia-Pacific region are small and generally characterized by low productivity, which could be attributed to less than ideal management. Most farmers and farm managers lack knowledge of modern management techniques due to limited opportunities and inadequate training in strategic planning, business plan preparation, business assessment, viability and sustainability analysis, and management of resources.

In response to these challenges, the APO organized the multicountry observational study mission on Innovative Farm Management Practices to Enhance Agricultural Productivity in Tokyo, 18–22 November 2013, under a special grant from the Government of Japan. The main objective of the mission was to enhance participants' knowledge and understanding of various innovative farm management practices available. Seventeen participants from 12 member countries, along with five resource persons, attended.

The resource persons representing the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, University of Kyoto, University of Chiba, Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, and National Agriculture and Food Research Organization gave wide-ranging presentations on advanced farming models and technologies to enhance agricultural productivity. Participants also explored the advantages of

precision agricultural management using information technology to obtain data for making decisions on production activities.

After intensive lectures and discussions on innovations in farming, participants made observational site visits to relevant facilities. Several participants commented that the plant factory within Chiba University was a source of ideas for adoption, as it showcased resource-saving, environment-friendly, stable, safer food production technology. Many participants were impressed by the biomass recycling center of Wagoen, an agricultural cooperative corporation, as a useful facility to add value to waste products and address global climate change. Other sites for the field visits include AEON Farm, Tsukuba factory of Kubota Agriculture Machinery Company, and a variety of research institutes under the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization, where participants observed Global GAP-certified farms, GPS-controlled tractors, and advanced irrigation management systems in the field. In the group discussions, participants debated how to apply the relevant knowledge and best practices learned from this mission and confirmed their commitment to disseminating them in their countries. 🌱



Demonstration of a GPS-controlled tractor at the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization.

Ecotourism planning and management

Ecotourism has great potential for generating revenue in countries endowed with natural attractions and at the same time preserving natural features for sustained benefits. Scenic landscapes, unique resource ecosystems and biodiversity, and indigenous cultural heritages are sure crowd pleasers. They can be harnessed to create job opportunities and stimulate the development of enterprises, particularly in rural areas.

The APO collaborated with the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) of Fiji National University (FNU) to organize a training course on Planning and Management of Ecotourism, 25–29 November 2013. Designed to develop or enhance the competencies of trainers and consultants in planning and managing ecotourism, 18 participants from 15 countries and three local participants attended the course.

Experts Rajendra Narsingh Suwal of the KGH Group of Hotels in Nepal; Dr. Alexandra Coghlan of the Gold Coast Campus of Griffith University, Australia; and Dr. David Preece of Brigham Young University, Hawaii, delved into important tools and techniques for developing, planning, managing, and financing ecotourism projects and successful ecotourism models in Nepal, Australia, Hawaii, and North America. Their presentations showed how communities benefited and governments generated revenues for community welfare improvement and natural resource conservation activities. However, it was pointed out that the development of ecotourism areas must be carefully planned to avoid damage to the natural

environment and local cultures. NTPC Deputy Director Satendra Nair explained the importance of ecotourism to Fiji and the issues faced by the sector. He specifically cited the need for appropriate infrastructure at those sites. The experts stressed that well-planned infrastructure development and on-the-ground training can improve eco-tourism sites.



Deputy Director of the NTPC-NFU Satendra Nai, seeking the village chief's permission for participants to visit the village during the kava ceremony.

Visits were hosted by Sigatoka Sand Dunes and Biasevu Waterfall to demonstrate the importance of managing natural resources for sustainable tourism and how communities can be involved in managing natural resource endowments to benefit from ecotourism.

NTPC Director Kamlesh Prakash lauded this initiative of the APO and emphasized the importance of educating and enhancing the knowledge of government planners and stakeholders on ecotourism, especially in countries like Fiji where tourism is a major source of national revenue and income for communities. He pledged that Fiji would be willing to cooperate with the APO and other APO members in future initiatives on this important topic. 🌱

APO/NPO update

India

New APO Alternate Director

Name: D.V. Prasad

Designation: Joint Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India

Effective date: 18 November 2013

New NPO Head

Name: Harbhajan Singh

Designation: Director General, National Productivity Council

Effective date: 1 December 2013

Islamic Republic of Iran

New APO Director and NPO Head

Name: Dr. Roya Tabatabaei Yazdi

Designation: Head, National Iranian Productivity Organization

Effective date: 30 November 2013

Singapore

New APO Alternate Director

Name: Leung Wai Ling

Designation: Group Director, SPRING Singapore

Effective date: 1 November 2013

New APO Liaison Officer

Name: Rajeshpal Singh

Designation: Senior Manager, SPRING Singapore

Effective date: 1 November 2013

e-Mail: Rajeshpal_Singh@spring.gov.sg

Phone: 65-6279-3690

Thailand

New APO Alternate Director and NPO Head

Name: Dr. Veerachai Khuprasert

Designation: Executive Director, Thailand Productivity Institute

Effective date: 1 October 2013

New APO Liaison Officer

Name: Ratchada Asisonthisakul

Designation: Acting International Relations Department Manager, Thailand Productivity Institute

Effective date: 1 October 2013

e-Mail: ratchanda@ftpi.or.th

Phone: 662-619-5500 (ext. 121)

New officer at the Secretariat

Effective 2 December 2013, Yumiko Minami joined the Secretariat as an Administration and Finance Officer. She is a certified public accountant and was educated in Japan and the USA, where she received a BS in Business/Accountancy from San Diego State University in California. Her previous employers included public accounting firms in Cologne, Germany, and Tokyo. She has enjoyed traveling since she was a flight attendant early in her career. She also likes playing sports and doing yoga in her free time. She describes herself as a mix of “conservative, liberal, and international” and looks forward to having good communication and sharing ideas while working at the Secretariat.



Photo news



APO Secretary-General Mari Amano (C) and Thailand Productivity Institute Executive Director and APO Alternate Director for Thailand Dr. Veerachai Khuprasert (L) meeting with the Board of Governors of the Stock Exchange of Thailand Chairman Dr. Sathit Limpongphan, 27 November 2013, in Bangkokok.



APO Secretary-General Mari Amano (C) welcomed Yumiko Murakami, Head (R), and Naoko Kawaguchi, Media & Public Affairs Officer, OECD Tokyo Center, on 19 November 2013.



NPO Bangladesh

The hard-working staff of the National Productivity Organization (NPO) of Bangladesh were even busier than usual at the end of 2013, overseeing two national events to spread the productivity message among the country's more than 157 million citizens.

Bangladesh National Productivity Day

The NPO of Bangladesh was responsible for organizing the second National Productivity Day, themed Productivity Leads to Prosperity, on 2 October 2013. The day was celebrated with a rally, seminar, and many more activities. Industries Minister Dilip Barua led the colorful rally from Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka which was joined by Industries Secretary M. Moinuddin Abdullah, representatives from the business community and labor unions, and officials of the ministry and NPO. Similar rallies and seminars were organized in other districts across the country with enthusiastic attendance.

President Abdul Hamid commented in his message for this event that, "Productivity could be boosted through the highest utilization of resources combining technology and skilled human resources." He said the government had taken various steps to boost productivity in mills and factories. "The government is committed to turning Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021. In this perspective, National Productivity Day is very important."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's message pointed out that, "Apart from setting up new mills and factories as public and private initiatives, steps have also been taken to augment productivity through building skilled manpower and infusing new technology." She hoped that through observing National Productivity Day, the productivity concept would gain impetus among the people and help Bangladesh to become a prosperous nation within a short time. Prime Minister Hasina also noted that the government had been undertaking various programs to help the country's industrial sector flourish. "We've reopened a number of mills and factories shut down during the previous government," in reference to the well-known competitiveness of Bangladesh in world textile markets.

A seminar titled Productivity Leads to Prosperity took place at the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management, attended by Minister of Industries Barua, Industries Secretary Moinuddin Abdullah, and President Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed of the Bangladesh Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI). Bangladesh TV news channels aired programs on National Productivity Day, and national dailies joined in by publishing special supplements highlighting its significance. The NPO used an innovative way of engaging the public by employing mobile phone operators to send short messages to create a nationwide awareness among the general public of Bangladesh's second National Productivity Day.



Productivity awareness rally during National Productivity Day. Minister Barua, Secretary in Charge of the Ministry of Industries Moinuddin Abdullah, and representatives of trade bodies and labor unions lead the way.

Adapted, with permission, from "Productivity Day to be Celebrated Wednesday" by A.K. Mohammed Moinuddin, staff writer at UNB Connect.

National Productivity Award bestowed on 10 enterprises

On 11 November 2013, the NPO of Bangladesh, under the Ministry of Industries, honored 10 state-owned and private enterprises with the National Productivity and Quality Excellence Award 2013 for outstanding performance in increasing productivity. To reflect the diversity of the growing national economy, the award program has six categories: 1) large industry; 2) medium-sized industry; 3) small industry; 4) micro industry; 5) cottage industry; and 6) nationalized companies. Attending as the chief guest, Industry Minister Dilip Barua conferred the awards at a ceremony at the CIRDAP auditorium in the capital city of Dhaka. The ceremony was presided over by Industry Secretary and APO Director for Bangladesh Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, while President Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed of the FBCCI was the special guest. Among other dignitaries, the event was addressed by NPO Director Dr. Md. Nazrul Islam and NPO Joint Director and APO Liaison Officer Abdul Baqui Chowdhury. The award recipients were BRB Cable Industry Limited, Bengal Windsor, Thermoplastics Ltd., Prince Chemical Co. Ltd., Hifs Agro Food Industries, M/S Roni Agro Engineering, Rong Handicrafts, Spadix Ltd., Carew and Co. (Bangladesh) Ltd., Ashuganj Fertilizer Ltd., and Bangladesh Blade Factory Ltd. The jury panel for the award comprised officials from the Industries Ministry, Commerce Ministry, NPO, and the country's apex trade body the FBCCI. Winners in all categories received a commemorative trophy and certificate to mark this milestone on their productivity journey.

Speaking as the Chief Guest, Industries Minister Dilip Barua stated that increasing production cannot be the only goal of an entrepreneur. "One must focus on quality, price, and competitiveness," he added. He explained that the National Productivity and Quality Excellence Award had been established to encourage entrepreneurs in all sectors,



Proprietor of Rong Handicrafts Tanuja Rahman Maya receiving a certificate and trophy (First Prize, Micro Industries) from Industry Minister Barua.

boost productivity in industrial units throughout the country, and give prominence to the NPO as the award program administrator. FBCCI President Uddin Ahmed noted that Bangladesh had marked its position in global markets by delivering quality products at competitive rates. Despite various obstacles across the country during the past couple of years, Bangladesh had recorded 15% growth in exports during the period of July to September in fiscal year 2013–2014. This could be achieved due mainly to increased productivity levels in industrial units. Industry Secretary Moinuddin Abdullah congratulated the prize winners, while encouraging all those who participated in the award scheme to start preparations for the 2014 round. 🏆

Contributed by NPO Joint Director and APO Liaison Officer for Bangladesh Abdul Baqui Chowdhury.