

KM: productivity and competitiveness perspective

January was knowledge management (KM) month for APO member countries as it featured two international meetings on KM in the APO region. The first was in New Delhi, India, where the National Productivity Council (NPC) of India hosted the International Conference on Knowledge Management for Productivity and Competitiveness, 11–12 January. The second was the APO-Thailand Productivity Institute (FTPI) International Productivity Conference on Knowledge Management—From Brain to Business, Bangkok, Thailand, 18–19 January (front page). In both events, the APO sponsored delegates from member countries to attend as well as deputed resource persons to make presentations and lead discussions. Both conferences had the common, underlying objective of preparing APO member countries to cope with and be competitive in the knowledge economy, characterized by knowledge-led development for wealth creation and distribution.

The KM conference in India was prompted by a national project of the Indian government to develop a framework for collaborative linkages among stakeholders to meet the challenges of enhancing its national competitiveness in the emerging Indian knowledge economy. The international conference was one of two planned to facilitate the exchange of information on various facets of the project. The second is slated for early 2008 as part of the NPC's Golden Jubilee commemorative events. The objectives of this year's conference were to review KM initiatives in India; identify themes and subjects relevant to KM for further in-depth study and development; and prepare guidelines for concrete actions in the areas identified by stakeholders.

The conference had 150 delegates representing different sectors: industry, academia, research bodies, governmental institutions, and NGOs. In addition, there were 60 international delegates from Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the USA sponsored by the APO and the International Society for Promotion of Innovation Management. The APO deputed three experts to speak at the conference: Prof. Tan Wee-Liang, Singapore Management University; Prof. Ravinder K. Zutshi, Long Island University, USA; and Dr. Arie Pier Nagel, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.


Dr. Ajay Dua, Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Government of India, and Chairman of the Governing Bodies of the NPC and APO, inaugurated the meeting. In his address, he highlighted some major issues that need to be addressed as India makes the transition to a knowledge economy, including the sluggish and below-par growth of the agriculture sector, where more than half of the population is employed, and the less than satisfactory improvement in the employment level in the service sector, despite its higher rate of growth. He underlined the need to utilize existing and evolving tools of KM in these areas of concern.

The conference featured presentations by about 35 eminent national and international experts on various aspects of KM. They covered the entire spectrum of global, national, sectoral, and enterprise perspectives. The first day's deliberations were devoted to fundamental issues relating to the knowledge economy and knowledge society, change management, and knowledge networks and knowledge institutions. The concurrent sessions on the second day focused on applications of KM in different fields and functions, for example, human resources management, innovation, SMEs, e-governance, intellectual property rights, infrastructure, and rural development. On the evening of the first day, delegates enjoyed a cultural presentation of Indian classical music and dance as a prelude to the official dinner reception.



Dr. Dua delivering the inaugural address

Among the specific issues identified for further study during the deliberations were: the need for a coherent theory to integrate the philosophical, economic, and technological perspectives; developing innovative organizations; the human factor in KM; converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge; establishing university-industry-government alliances to develop national innovation systems; enabling rural people to use the rural knowledge centers established for their skill building and information empowerment; deploying GIS-based data collection for rural policy planning; incorporating KM in governmental processes and in project-based organizations; harnessing knowledge for innovation; establishing an Internet portal on KM; publishing a KM journal; training knowledge officers; creating enabling ambiances for knowledge generation and protection; and intellectual property rights protection.

The conference concluded with a panel discussion and an address by Member-Secretary R.R. Shah, Planning Commission of India. He outlined the strategic options being considered by the government in its long-term planning for economic growth. Shah indicated that high-speed connectivity was being planned to give people in local communities affordable access to knowledge-based services. He also spoke on technologies of the future, like nanotechnology and bioinformatics. 

Erratum

In the photo caption on page 1, December 2006 issue, Png Cheong Boon was wrongly identified as SPRING CE. Png is the Deputy CE of SPRING.