

Lending a helping hand to venture entrepreneurs

The APO understands the potential of small venture businesses for national economic development, and many projects provide support for venture businesses and SMEs. One such example was the eighth annual Asian Forum on Venture Business held concomitantly with Venture Kansai, 14–16 November, in collaboration with the Osaka Prefectural Government, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc., Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development, Kansai Council, and others. The forum provides a platform for the exchange of expertise and information among Asia's creative, risk-taking entrepreneurial leaders.

The forum was attended by 36 venture business entrepreneurs and top managers from 17 member countries, who also participated in Venture Kansai's Venture EXPO activities. One highlight was the symposium entitled A New Industrial Map of Asia—Women Entrepreneurs Are Gaining Momentum featuring three outstanding women entrepreneurs. Executive Vice Chairman Dato' Dr. Jannie Tay, The Hour Glass Limited, a Singaporean global watch retailer, stressed competence, flexibility, ability to adapt constantly, and responsiveness to change as important leadership attributes of successful women entrepreneurs. President Dr. Naline Paiboon, Giffarine Skyline Unity Company, Ltd., and Giffarine Skyline Laboratory & Health Care Co., Ltd., Thailand, emphasized the importance of brand differentiation and strategy and strong networks with customers. Chairperson, Representative Director, and CEO Junko Fukada, Stella Chemifa Corporation, Japan, spoke on difficulties overcome in making her company the market leader in chemical cleaners for semiconductors and liquid crystals.

In addition, Senior Investment Officer Susana Garcia-Robles, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), USA, gave a presentation on "The Current State of and the Issues Regarding SMEs in Latin America." Sales Director Angelia Tan, IDLink Systems Pte Ltd., Singapore, and Managing Director Matthew Tan Kim Chuan, SIF Technologies Pte Ltd., Singapore, gave business plan presentations at Venture EXPO and had meetings with local counterparts.



Invited women entrepreneur speakers (L-R: Tay, Paiboon, Fukada)

The joint discussions between the participants in the forum and the APO study meeting on Venture Business Support attended by venture capitalists and business incubators as well as government officials involved in venture business support programs were well received by participants in both projects. They shared views on the development of venture business and exchanged perspectives as recipients and support providers. Participants composed a wish list for a venture support system and emphasized the importance of mentoring for start-ups and flexible loan schemes that support eco-friendly products and women entrepreneurs.

In collaboration with the OCCI, the forum offered a matchmaking program of Virtual Business Talks, an on-line directory for SME matching, and face-to-face meetings. Participants also observed the entrepreneurial expertise and multifaceted support offered SMEs in Osaka during visits made to the Entrepreneurial Museum of Challenge and Innovation, OCCI, and Creation Core Higashi Osaka. 🌐