

New NPO and productivity policy for Sri Lanka

On 15-19 July 2002, Sri Lanka hosted the APO seminar on “Knowledge Management for Corporate Decision-making.” Nineteen participants from 11 APO member countries took part. The chief guest at the inaugural session was the Sri Lankan Minister for Employment and Labour, Mr. Mahinda Samarasinghe. Among other dignitaries present were APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima and Mr. Bradman Weerakoon, Secretary to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The Minister, in his address to seminar participants and guests, made two key announcements: the establishment of a new national productivity organization (NPO) and the introduction of a gain-sharing productivity policy.

Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe told the meeting that the productivity portfolio had been transferred from the Ministry of Industries to the Ministry of Employment and Labour. The reason for the change was the Labour Ministry’s close working relationships with employees, employers, and the government, important stakeholders in a national productivity program. “We have specific responsibility not only to the government but also to the employees and the employers of this country. So it is in this context that the Prime Minister thought that this ministry should handle the subject of productivity.”

With this change, a National Productivity Secretariat was established in the Ministry of Employment and Labour to replace the National Institute of Business Management as the NPO of Sri Lanka.

Minister Samarasinghe also announced that a national productivity policy will be introduced, with expert input provided by USAID. It will be one that is acceptable to all players, he added. To achieve this, the government embarked on a consultation process with the people, which, according to the Minister, was a very novel approach

in shaping national policy. It takes the form of a specially created Internet Web site on the subject, which was presented in the three national languages, to solicit the views of the people. This was communicated to schools, industry groups, trade unions, and civil societies through newspapers, electronic media, and the print media. Sri Lankan communities overseas were informed by their diplomatic missions. “More than 1000 people have visited the Web site and shared their views. Academia, trade unions, and civil societies have responded,” the Minister said.



Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe addressing the APO seminar

Minister Samarasinghe added that Sri Lanka cannot achieve high economic growth unless productivity is enhanced. However, productivity improvement can only be sustained if the gains made are shared by all concerned. For this reason, the Minister pointed out, this gain-sharing principle will be embodied in the national productivity policy. 🌀