



Asian Productivity Organization “The APO in the News”

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Japan feels lagging behind in digitization

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THE LATEST NEWS, TODAY'S BREAKING NEWS

TOKYO: Japan—a country that uses robots or electronic machines in factories, houses and offices—still considers itself lagging behind Germany, Singapore and even Estonia in digitization.

According to Prof. Atsushi Sunami, special adviser to the Cabinet on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is implementing reforms like equal pay for equal work, improvement of child care and nursing care environment, empowerment of women, accelerated infrastructure developments and establishment of national strategic economic zones.

“Germany has its Industry 4.0, while us in Japan has Society 5.0 which is geared toward empowering our citizens and preparing them for the future where digitalization is a key component,” Sunami told 18 journalists gathered by Asia Productivity Organization (APO) here.

He said digitization is now happening in Estonia, a former Soviet state, with its eEstonia wherein young children even before reaching school age are being introduced to simple computer programming, the so-called Smart Nation of Singapore and even the Industrial Internet in the United States.

In a bid to post 600 trillion yen (\$5.316) in gross domestic product, Japan aims to boost productivity, drive innovation and trade and energize corporate activities.

“To attain these, there is a need to increase the wages and income of Japanese people, initiate rise in consumption, create new demands, increase capital investment and improve corporate performance,” Sunami said.

During the five-day study mission of journalists from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mongolia and the Philippines, the participants were toured to small and medium enterprises that are not just top performers in sales but also recognized as world class and are now pursuing programs to go global by establishing outlets in different parts of the world.

Take for example Suntory Yamazeki, a Kyoto-based liquor maker that produces the No.1 whisky on earth.

It has blended not just mixtures of components of alcohol but blended new technologies to produce the “best” whisky in the world, defeating the premium whiskey of Scotland.

Another is a plant factory in Kyoto that produces lettuce that grow on water alone.

The company is the top supplier of lettuce here but next year it will open a new plant that will be fully mechanized and run by robots.

It is also studying putting plants abroad, saying all they need is water.

Sunami said Japan despite being one of the top trading countries is aiming to establish a ‘Smart Society’ where problems like aging population, pollution and natural disasters are anticipated and not just only to reduce but to get rid of the threats.

Here in Japan, companies are being helped not only for them to thrive but go abroad so other societies could savor their excellent products and services.

But all these changes are seen possible only through super smart information technology, a body of information that will deliver the message to its citizens and to the world, a task APO is helping initiate.

APO is regarded as the leading international organization on productivity enhancement, enabling economies to be more productive and competitive by 2020.

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