

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. ☺