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## Creating productivity synergies via mutual collaboration

**T**he spirit of mutual cooperation embodied in the network of national productivity organizations (NPOs) has been a crucial factor in the success of the APO. APO member countries have shared knowledge, information, and experience of productivity endeavors to achieve the common goal of ensuring the socioeconomic development of the Asia-Pacific region by enhancing productivity. The APO, in its role as catalyst, has continually promoted bilateral and multilateral alliances among member countries for mutual benefit and productive synergy. One example of that catalyst role is the Bilateral Cooperation Between NPOs (BCBN) Program.



TPAF Manager Waqalaivi (Center) visiting a Malaysian company during his BCBN visit to Malaysia

“All APO projects, especially multicountry projects, have as their foundation the concept of mutual learning and co-operation among participating countries. The BCBN Program focuses on catering to the specific needs of member countries and NPOs by creating a space where members can learn from each other,” explained Acting Director Setsuko Miyakwa of the APO Secretariat Industry Department, which manages the BCBN Program. It facilitates the dispatch of productivity practitioners from an NPO or similar organization in one member country to another. The BCBN Program also sponsors visits of high-level officials, policymakers, and opinion leaders from one member country to another to observe and study firsthand proven productivity policies and programs. This year, the APO expanded the scope of the BCBN to support the visits of APO Directors and other high-level officials to the Secretariat. This enables exchanges of information and views on productivity issues and enhances mutual understanding of the direction of the APO.

Under the expanded scope of the BCBN, three delegates from the Korea Productivity Center (KPC) visited Japan in January this year. The delegation was led by the APO Director for the Republic of Korea and KPC Chairman and CEO Dr. Dong Kyu Choi, who assumed his current position in December 2008. The group visited the Japan Productivity Center (JPC) and the APO Secretariat. During his visit to the Secretariat, Dr. Choi received departmental briefings on the details of major APO programs.

The BCBN Program also supported two delegates from the JPC led by APO Director for Japan and JPC President Tsuneaki Taniguchi on a visit to the Republic of Korea, 12–14 May. The objective of the visit was to discuss cooperation between the JPC and KPC and future collaboration on labor-management activities. President Taniguchi also gave a presentation on the productivity movement in Japan at a seminar organized by the Korea Labor Foundation and at a KPC-hosted CEO Forum. On 13 May, the JPC and KPC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on their collaborative partnership. “This MOU will contribute to the development of the productivity movement, not only in Ko-



KPC's Dr. Choi (L) and JPC's Taniguchi (R) concluding their MOU (photo courtesy of KPC)



rea and Japan, but also in the other countries in the Asia and Pacific region,” said Dr. Choi in a press release.

One important function of the BCBN Program is facilitating the exchange of NPO professionals and those from relevant organizations. Two such BCBN missions occurred in May, one from Fiji to Malaysia, and the other from Japan to Thailand. “The three days were packed with insightful presentations, useful discussions and eye-opening experiences,” said Productivity Promotion Manager Viliame Waqalaivi, Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF), who was one of three who traveled to Malaysia, 19–21 May, to study benchmarking and productivity measurement. APO Liaison Officer for Malaysia Josffa Ismail listed some difficulties associated with hosting a BCBN delegation: contacting the appropriate people and resource persons and arranging site visits. However, he said, “From the perspective of the host country, a BCBN mission strengthens networks and partnerships with other NPOs. We can also learn and share information on current initiatives.”

Commenting on his recent BCBN trip to Thailand, 28–29 May, JPC Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Department Takeshi Fujita also cited discussions on further bilateral cooperation and mutual learning as strong points of the BCBN Program. Fujita attended the program with Director Naoyuki Yanagimoto, Japan Quality Award Promotion Department of the



(L-R) Yanagimoto, FTPI Executive-Director Dr. Phanit Laosirirat, Fujita

JPC. The BCBN mission was a follow-up to the APO regional collaborative platform for Advancing National Quality Awards, which was held in Tokyo, 1–3 October 2008. During the mission, the JPC and Thailand Productivity Institute (FTPI) drafted a roadmap for developing an internal assessors’ training program on Management Excellence for Thai companies and Japanese-Thai Companies. They also agreed to collaborate on a study mission from Japan to Thailand on Management Excellence Programs in the Healthcare Sector.

The needs and requirements of NPOs are continuously evolving in a rapidly changing socioeconomic situation. Given this, there is ample scope for NPOs to learn from each other. Therefore, the APO will continue efforts to facilitate mutually beneficial collaboration in productivity-related areas. 