



## Comment board



*Deputy Director **Thilaka Jayasundara**, National Productivity Secretariat (NPS), Sri Lanka.*

Team leader, observational study mission on Productivity Improvement and Quality Control from Sri Lanka, Japan, 15–21 February, 2009.

This observational study mission (OSM) was conducted as part of the APO's Member Country Support Program (MCSP). One big achievement of the MCSP is that the NPS has built strong partnerships with private companies

while conducting a demonstration program with SMEs. In addition, the NPS developed a group of high-quality consultants as a result of their functioning as understudies to experts deputed by the APO to provide the necessary training and consulting services for NPS staff. This OSM also gave us an opportunity to learn practical knowledge and skills from Japanese SMEs. They demonstrated that small, simple improvements can bring about big changes in productivity. All the mission members absorbed not only knowledge of productivity tools and methods but also the Japanese attitude toward continuous improvement. We are now planning to organize a seminar to share our knowledge and experience with other SMEs in Sri Lanka. Two SME leaders who joined this OSM also told me that they were willing to share their knowledge with other SMEs. I really appreciate the efforts of the APO and Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development, which made all the necessary arrangements and provided support for us.

*Deputy Director **Thai Vantha**, EUROTECH Import Export Co., Ltd. Cambodia.*

Participant, multicountry observational study mission on SME Development in the Mekong Region, Japan, 2–7 February 2009.

EUROTECH is an SME producer of bottled water in Cambodia with around 100 employees. In 2007, EUROTECH was selected by the National

Productivity Center of Cambodia as a model company to demonstrate how to implement 5S and kaizen. However, although we have been practicing these two productivity tools I was not sure how well we were doing. By attending this study mission, I could see the gaps between what we were doing and what Japanese companies have done, so that potential areas of improvement in terms of quality and productivity were identified. I am now certain that we will be able to achieve more through more effective 5S and kaizen efforts. This study mission confirmed the usefulness of these tools in helping to enhance quality and productivity. It also inspired me as a manager of EUROTECH. Some management methods of Japanese SMEs that I visited would be applicable to my company. Therefore, I will do my best to practice them to achieve higher levels of productivity.

*Shift Manager **Mahesh Shanker Mutthusamy**, Ceylon Cold Stores PLC, Sri Lanka.*

Participant, training course on the Food Safety Management System (FSMS) for Auditors/Lead Auditors, Malaysia, 14–20 January 2009.

The training course was a face-to-face follow-up to a 2008 e-learning course, which gave me a very clear overview of the ISO22000 standard and its application. The lessons of the e-learning course encouraged me to look at the routine of food-processing operations within my company from a number of different perspectives. The follow-up course conducted in January was a natural extension. The course content included abundant interactive expert presentations, group work, role-playing, and field visits, making it both informative and interesting. In addition, the final examination kept participants focused. I will use my upgraded competence within my company to improve the existing food safety management system. At the same time, I will work with the National Productivity Secretariat to disseminate the knowledge and skills acquired from the project in Sri Lanka, including the development of publications on food safety management written in simple local language for SMEs.