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p. 5, Study meeting, Singapore



p. 6, Study mission, Japan



p. 8, Conference, ROC

CONTENTS

- 2....p-Watch—USA
- 3....Comment board
- 4....Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques
- 5....SME eco-competitiveness for market access
- 6....Business excellence in Japanese SMEs
- 6....Self-e-learning on the balanced scorecard relaunched
- 7....Program calendar
- 7....Photo report
- 7....New officer at the Secretariat
- 8....Securing the safety of seafood in Asia
- 8....The global economic crisis and industrial restructuring in Asia



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Spreading the APO's productivity message

With the APO's Golden Jubilee approaching, interest in improving the visibility of the APO has increased. Greater recognition of the organization would ensure that the APO could deliver its productivity message more efficiently and advance the goal of driving socioeconomic development in the Asia-Pacific region. It is thus very encouraging that many NPOs have promoted APO projects hosted in their countries through the local media.

"It is extremely important to arrange for a press presence during projects," said Information Officer Shirley Singh, Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF). "Our public relations (PR) activities focus on working hand in hand with the media as they can significantly increase the visibility of the event and the organization and so magnify the impact of what we are trying to communicate." Thanks to her team's effective PR arrangements, the July APO training course on Value Addition to Agricultural Products held in Fiji was featured in three local newspapers and on TV and radio. "We highlighted the fact that the course could assist in the current economic situation by concentrating on the agriculture sector, which would in turn create more jobs," Singh said to explain how media attention had been attracted to the course.

PR activities require a great deal of preparation and coordination. The TPAF sent brochures and press advisory packs to the media a week prior to project commencement. Press releases were dispatched the day before and again during the course. Singh made interview arrangements with key media personnel and provided supplements upon request. "Based on our experience, we have been able to secure coverage. However, we are sometimes not able to control the message or find ways to pitch our ideas effectively."



Kalaw (R) interviewed on radio on the EPIF 2009 in the Philippines

APO Liaison Officer for Thailand Tassaneeya Attanon, Thailand Productivity Institute (FTPI), also related difficulties in securing information to be included in articles as well as coverage itself. "If we have well-known experts or VIPs in the project or if the project contents deal with current trends or major issues, it is relatively easy to attract media attention. We sometimes organize national seminars related to APO projects and invite the media to attend." Attanon attributed the successful media coverage of major events to the efficient coordination of staff in the FTPI's PR and Corporate Communications section.

The need for a professional PR unit was confirmed by the Korea Productivity Center (KPC). "All media relations are conducted by our PR team," stated APO Liaison Officer Jun-Ho Kim. The majority of APO projects hosted by the KPC have featured in the local media thanks to coordination with the PR team. Kim also emphasized that it was important for the text describing projects to be interesting and informative, or present new perspectives on current issues which appeal to the public or industry.

APO Liaison Officer for Bangladesh Abdul Baqui Chowdhury explained that drawing media attention to the social responsibility to convey the productivity message to the public is an important strategy in enlisting their support.

(Continued on page 5)

Chowdhury added that the NPO Bangladesh obtains more coverage thanks to assistance provided by the ministerial PR officer and the government's Press and Information Department. "If an NPO is a governmental organization, then governmental resources may be utilized."



GBM announcement published in a local newspaper in Sri Lanka

Examples of successful media promotion were the Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) 2009 held in Manila, the Philippines, in March and this year's Governing Body Meeting (GBM) held in Sri Lanka. From the first press conference in June 2008, the EPIF 2009 was featured more than 100 times by all major Philippine media organizations including TV, radio, newspapers and magazines, and Internet news sites. Japanese and Korean media also covered the event. "A crucial factor in the successful media coverage of this event was the leadership and commitment from senior and top managers," commented APO Secretariat Industry De-

partment Acting Director Setsuko Miyakawa. President Antonio D. Kalaw, Jr., Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) and many senior DAP

managers gave numerous interviews.

In promoting the GBM, APO Liaison Officer for Sri Lanka Upali Marasinghe stressed the importance of maintaining a good rap-

port with the media. The National Productivity Secretariat has conducted productivity programs for media representatives to raise their awareness of productivity and strengthen their relationship.

It is clear that media coverage is a very important, powerful tool for spreading the productivity message and improving the visibility of NPOs and the APO. However, working with the media to deliver the message to the target audience requires both effort and suitable PR strategies. The APO thanks those NPOs that are making continuous efforts to promote APO activities and hopes that more will do so, allowing as many stakeholders as possible to share the benefits. 🌐



A local TV reporter interviewing an APO study mission participant in Japan