

Vietnam PQ Forum enters its seventh year

This annual event started in 1996, the year the Socialist Republic of Vietnam joined the APO and a year after it became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Productivity and Quality (PQ) Forum was conceived by the Vietnam Productivity Centre (VPC) to introduce to Vietnamese businesses, governmental agencies, and communities the latest know-how and approaches for enhancing productivity, improving competitiveness, and protecting the environment. From 1994, an additional highlight of the PQ Forum is the presentation of ISO 9000 certification awards. This year's event, held in Hanoi on 12-13 September, was the seventh in the series.

The PQ Forum is considered as one of the key activities in promoting the national productivity and quality movement in Vietnam. Each year, it is held in a major city and with a new theme. In its debut year, the theme was "Quality Is the Key to Vietnam-ASEAN Rapprochement" and the venue was Hanoi. In 1997, with Hanoi as host city for the second successive year, the forum's focus was "ISO 9000—Your Partner towards the 21st Century." Hochiminh City was the venue for the 1998 meeting. The theme then was "For the Goods Made in Vietnam." Danang hosted the PQ Forum for the first time in 1999. The main focus of that meeting was "Sharpening Your Competitive Edge through Productivity and Quality." The meeting moved back to Hanoi the next year with the rallying cry "Make a Difference through Productivity and Quality." Hochiminh City was the host city in 2001, championing "Productivity and Quality in the Knowledge Age."

Attendance at each year's PQ Forum runs into the hundreds. For example, the 2002 forum had 253 senior management personnel from government agencies, socio-economic organizations, and both local and foreign enterprises attending. Many past years' participants have proceeded to introduce and implement productivity improvement programs in their workplaces. According to the VPC, hundreds of companies are putting into effect ISO 9000, ISO 14000, and SA 8000 management systems. A significant role of the PQ Forum is its facilitation of the sharing of information, knowledge, and experiences among the participants. This is helping to put the national productivity and quality movement in high gear.

The 2002 PQ Forum featured 31 speakers, out of which eight were from outside the country, with three from the national productivity organizations of other APO member countries deputed under the APO spirit of mutual cooperation. The forum com-



Vietnam PQ Forum 2002 in progress

prised one plenary session with presentations on the main theme "People, Creativity, and Innovation," and four concurrent sessions on the following sub-themes: 1) Reaching new markets through standards-based management systems; 2) Enriching enterprise knowledge assets in the new era; 3) Human capital: Investment for performance excellence; and 4) Sustainable development: Challenge in the changing business environment. This year, eight companies were presented with the ISO 9000:2000 certification and one with the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) award. The meeting ended with the adoption of a PQ declaration.

Forum participants were taken on field visits to three organizations for exchange of experiences and for benchmarking studies. The host organizations were: the Central Pharmaceutical Company No. 1; Toyota Automobile Company; and the VPC.

An exhibition of the products and services of the companies that sponsored the forum was also held

in conjunction with the meeting and in the same venue, the Hotel Sofitel Plaza Hanoi. They were: Vietnam Insurance Corporation, GTZ SME Promotion, Asia Commercial Bank, Veritas Vietnam Ltd., Vietnam Certification Services, Ngan Son Trade and Service Co. Ltd., Goldsun Group, and the VPC.

On the future of the PQ Forum, Ms Nguyen Thi Bich Hang, Managing Director of the VPC and APO Liaison Officer for Vietnam, had this to say: "We will continue to organize the PQ Forum annually as it has a very positive impact on Vietnam's national productivity and quality movement. However, we hope one day to be able to co-host such an event with other member countries of the APO, either on a bilateral or multilateral basis. The venue could be rotated among the participating countries. The important consideration is the greater benefits, through cross-cultural exchange of ideas and experiences, that could be gained by all concerned than if each country were to do it alone." ☺