

## New business frontiers on the Internet

Asia is experiencing rapid developments and breakthroughs in the utilization of IT, particularly the use of the Internet for e-commerce. According to Prof. Cheol H. Oh of Soongsil University, Republic of Korea, e-commerce will grow significantly to become a huge and lucrative new business frontier. Prof. Oh was speaking at the APO study meeting on the “Internet and New Business Frontiers” held in Taipei, Republic of China, 20–23 July 2004. The APO sponsored this program to study business prospects on the Internet and to formulate a set of guidelines for successful e-commerce. It was attended by 16 participants from 12 APO member countries.

Another speaker at the study meeting was California State University Long Beach Prof. Michael Chung. He said that in the USA the hype associated with past dot.com boom-and-bust days were long gone. Today, e-commerce has become more focused. In addition, the resources and skills required for Internet business are readily available. With the right paradigm, Internet business holds great promise.

Successful e-commerce companies from the host country—Seednet.com, PChome.com, and SMEhub.net—presented their business operations and strategies. From Malaysia, Ms. Fione Tan, President and CEO of eOneNet.com, in her lively delivery provided many practical tips for maximizing business advantages on the Internet. These presentations gave the participants an insight into the potential of Internet-based businesses: the opportunities, market size, and growth possibilities. To cite an example, PChome.com, currently selling 26,000 items on its Web site, has an annual sales growth rate of 30%. From a field visit to the Taiwan Farmer & Fishermen United Information Center, the participants learned that e-commerce eliminates the role of the middleman in marketing. The costs saved enable farmers to price their products more competitively, leading to higher sales turnover and better profits.

Some participants commented that their countries have much to do to catch up with the rest, like speeding up infrastructure development and putting in place supportive security and legal provisions. 