

WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR LIM BOON HENG,  
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO,  
NTUC SECRETARY-GENERAL AND  
CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL (NPC),  
AT THE INAUGURATION OF PRODUCTIVITY MONTH '93  
AT THE KALLANG THEATRE ON 29 OCT 93 AT 4.00 PM

Deputy Prime Minister,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

1 Let me first commend the 136 companies which have responded so positively to the campaign so far. It is the enthusiasm of such companies, together with support from the government and unions, that has sustained the Productivity Movement since 1981.

2 Last year, Singapore's productivity grew by 3.1 per cent, double that recorded in 1991. In the first six months of this year, productivity surged ahead by 6.1 per cent. With this good performance, we can expect productivity growth this year to exceed the long-term target of 3-4 per cent.

3 For this robust growth to continue into 1994, we have to keep up the momentum for productivity growth.

4 Our domestic sector must continue to receive priority attention. The productivity of our small locally owned companies is only one quarter that of the national average.

5 One effective way to assist them is through franchising, that is, grouping the small companies together. Since April last year, NPB has helped to launch 13 franchises involving 63 small retailers. These retailers have benefited in various ways: more training, a wider product range, computerised cashiering, and marketing support. More importantly, they have been able to attract more customers to their outlets. In the long term, all these will translate into real productivity gains.

6 Another way to upgrade the local sector is to help them train their workers cost effectively through on-the-job training (OJT). This mode of training has two advantages. Firstly, small companies need not send their workers away for training. They can do it in-house with the help of instructors trained by NPB.

Secondly, with OJT, we will be able to reach the 33 per cent of workers aged 40 and above, employed in small companies.

7 One other priority area is the participation of workers in shopfloor productivity improvement programmes like QCCs and suggestions schemes. In Japan, 4 per cent of the private sector workforce are involved in QCCs. After more than 40 years, the Japanese still find that QCCs are effective in fostering teamwork and making numerous shopfloor innovations.

8 Our accomplishment is modest in comparison. To date, 32,400 workers or 2.4 per cent of the workforce in the private sector are involved in QCCs. These workers are concentrated in only 258 companies. There is therefore much potential for more companies to involve their workers in QCCs.

9 Participation in QCCs is a good way to focus workers' attention on quality. We must also train workers to have a mindset for quality work. The SQ Centre, NPB and SMA have reached about 400 companies through their Service Quality and Total Quality Process programmes. About 30,000 workers have been trained to improve quality and provide quality service.

10 The strategies I have outlined are not new. What is required is our perseverance in seeing through their widespread acceptance and implementation in companies.

11 I would like to thank Mr Robert Chua and other members of the Productivity Month Campaign Committee from the SMA, SNEF and NTUC for helping NPB in this task. On behalf of the National Productivity Council, I also thank all of you here this afternoon for your presence and continued support of the Productivity Movement.

.....