

Information-Processing Skills in Demand

One of the most pressing problems facing major Japanese corporations is a shortage of systems engineers and other workers capable of performing information processing. This is the conclusion of a survey by the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Research, which is affiliated with the Labor Ministry.

The January 1987 survey, aimed at shedding light on the present state of information processing in major corporations, covered 1,830 companies employing 1,000 workers or more, but excluding computer makers and other information-processing service companies. The response rate was 44.8%.

The survey found that 70.5% of respondents considered a lack of systems engineers to be the most serious problem regarding information processing in their companies. Sixty-four percent complained of insufficient staff in all areas of information processing, while 78% said they still lacked workers in that field despite hiring new programmers over the past two years.

On the other hand, workers engaged in information processing were found to be uncertain about their future despite their relative youth, with 37.9% complaining of inadequate systems for evaluating their special skills and 22.1% worried about a shortage of managerial positions in the future.

Ways to Combat The Strong Yen

Japanese manufacturing companies in the United States are coping with the strong yen by exporting their products to Japan and third countries and procuring more parts locally, according to a survey by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

Of 479 factories responding to the poll, 21 have begun exporting their products back to Japan, and 19 others to third countries. Of these 40 firms, 19 were in the electrical and electronic industries, six in the chemical industry, four in the precision machinery industry and three in the food industry.

Some 35.7% of respondents said they had raised their sales prices in the U.S. market, while 31.7% were strengthening their sales networks and 15.9% shifting the focus of their sales efforts to locally made goods.

On the production side, 42.5% of respondents said they had started procuring some parts from American rather than Japanese suppliers, while 16.6% were beginning to produce parts at their U.S. plants. The ratio of local parts procurement had risen at 37.7% of the plants polled.

Energy Outlook Shows Petroleum Share Down

Japan's primary energy supply is expected to increase by an average 1.6% annually from fiscal 1986 to fiscal 2000, reaching 540 million kiloliters crude oil equivalent by the turn of the century, according to projections by the Advisory Committee for Energy.

The forecast by the advisory panel to the Ministry of International Trade and Industry represents a revision of the government's long-term energy supply-demand outlook prepared in 1983, and reflects changes in the nation's economic conditions.

The previous forecast for average annual growth was 2.4%. The downward revision results mainly from progress in restructuring the Japanese economy and implementing energy-saving measures.

The share of petroleum in total energy demand is expected to fall for the rest of the century due to a shift to alternative energy sources. The ratio, which stood at 56.8% in fiscal 1986, is projected to decline to 49.7% in 1995 and 45% in 2000.

Demand for atomic energy, on the other hand, will gradually increase. The ratio, 9.5% in 1986, is projected to rise to 13.4% in 1995 and 15.9% in 2000. Increased thermal power output will raise demand for coal in absolute terms, but the ratio of coal to total energy demand should remain steady in the 18% range.

Meanwhile, electric power and gas companies have decided to lower their rates effective January 1988 to lessen the burden on corporate consumers.



Lineup of New Takeshita Cabinet

(Formed on Nov. 6, 1987)

Prime Minister
Noboru Takeshita

Profile of New Prime Minister

Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita started his political career as a prefectural assemblyman in his native Shimane Prefecture. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1958 and worked his way through the Liberal Democratic Party hierarchy as a skillful coordinator. He assumed a Cabinet post for the first time when he served as chief cabinet secretary in the late Eisaku Sato's administration. He was appointed to various ministerial posts in subsequent administrations, twice serving in the prestigious post of finance minister. He was named to the key party post of secretary general in 1985.

	Age
Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita	63
Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa	68
Justice Minister Yukio Hayashida	71
Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno	65
Education Minister Gentaro Nakajima	58
Health and Welfare Minister Takao Fujimoto	56
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Takashi Sato	59
International Trade and Industry Minister Hajime Tamura	63
Transport Minister Shintaro Ishihara	55

(In charge of New Tokyo International Airport)

Agency Predicts Cancer Control

Superconducting materials will be in practical use in 10 years and most cancers will be controlled by the beginning of the next century, according to a survey by the Science and Technology Agency.

The survey polled 3,100 government officials, business leaders and leading scholars on likely scientific and technological advances by the year 2015. In all, 2,000 responded.

The surveys have been conducted every five years since 1971. As in past surveys, most respondents predicted progress in medicine and biotechnology.

Respondents predicted effective measures to prevent metastasis of cancer in 2002, three years later than the average in the previous survey, pointing to slow progress since then in cancer control technology. They also predicted that superconductive materials usable at temperatures suitable for liquid nitrogen will be in service by 1994.

Dr. Noboru Makino, chairman of the Mitsubishi Research Institute and head of a committee evaluating the survey results, said the responses were characterized by a rising faith in and little antipathy to technology. There was also an increase in proponents of technologies with high value added, Makino said.

Tighter COCOM Rules Name 13 Countries

The Cabinet approved amendments to control orders on foreign trade and foreign exchange November 4 to tighten monitoring of high-technology exports to the Communist bloc forbidden under the rules of the Coordinating Committee (COCOM). The amendments followed on from revisions to the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law aimed at preventing further violations of COCOM rules.

The amendments name 13 countries on a new list of Communist-bloc countries subject to tighter export controls: Afghanistan, Albania, Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, North Korea, Mongolia, Poland, Rumania, the Soviet Union and Vietnam. China was not included. The amendments also specified 181 strategic goods and 19 technologies which must not be exported to these countries.

China was excluded from the list in view of the importance of its relations with Japan. COCOM earlier eased restrictions on exports to China.

Violators will risk a maximum prison term of five years as compared with three years under the old rules. However, exporters of strategic goods to China in violation of COCOM regulations will still only be liable to the three-year maximum sentence.

The government originally planned to include China in the list, but abandoned the plan in the face of Chinese charges that Japan was hurting its industrial modernization efforts by suspending, canceling or delaying export contracts.

Foreign Firms Report Few Gov't Curbs

Sixty-four percent of foreign companies in Japan do not feel there are restrictions by the Japanese government on their operations.

This is the finding of a survey of some 400 major American and European companies doing business in Japan conducted jointly by the American Chamber of Commerce and the European Business Community Council.

In particular, most manufacturing companies surveyed (75%) held this view, which suggests that the Japanese market is more open than is generally believed abroad.

Annual direct investment in Japan by foreign companies totaled \$935 million in 1986, a 5.3-fold increase from \$176 million in 1976.

Eighty percent of the foreign investors surveyed cited Japan's growth potential and its rising importance in world markets as their reasons for setting up in the country. Thirty-eight percent saw Japan's trade customs and intricate distribution system as barriers, but many said such obstacles could be surmounted, and dismissed the reputed "closedness" of Japanese markets as a myth.

Posts and Telecommunications Minister	Masaaki Nakayama	55	State Minister	Tsutomu Kawara	50
Labor Minister	Taro Nakamura	69	(Director General of Defense Agency)		
Construction Minister	Ihei Ochi	66	State Minister	Eiichi Nakao	57
Home Affairs Minister	Seiroku Kajiyama	61	(Director General of Economic Planning Agency)		
(Chairman of National Safety Commission)			State Minister	Soichiro Ito	63
State Minister	Keizo Obuchi	50	(Director General of Science and Technology Agency)		
(Chief Cabinet Secretary)			State Minister	Toshio Horiuchi	69
State Minister	Osamu Takatori	58	(Director General of Environment Agency)		
(Director General of Management and Coordination Agency)			State Minister	Seisuke Okuno	74
State Minister	Shigeru Kasuya	61	(Director General of National Land Agency)		
(Director General of Hokkaido Development Agency; Okinawa Development Agency)			Cabinet Legislative Bureau Director	Osamu Mimura	63