

Japanese Government Programs in the HRD Promotion Month

1. HRD Promotion Month

Since the inauguration of the Abe administration at the end of last year, HRD has become increasingly important as it has been stated in the Japan Revitalization Strategy that “Human Resources are precisely the greatest resource that Japan boasts to the world”, which set a future path toward creating a society in which all the human resources including young people can fully exercise their capabilities was established.

Every year the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare designates November as “the HRD Promotion Month” and November 10 as “the Trade Skill Day”, aiming to develop attractive vocational abilities. During this month, the Japanese government and prefectures hold events highlighting skills of manufacturing-related fields, which have supported the Japanese economy for a long time.

In the HRD Promotion Month this year, the Japanese government requested employers’ organizations to promote further development of vocational abilities at companies and actively disseminated/publicized measures supporting HRD for diverse vocational careers in accordance with the needs from employers.

In midst of growing importance of HRD, this article introduces the following events which were held during the HRD Promotion Month:

- Award for Outstandingly Skilled Workers (Contemporary Master Craftsman)
- National Skills Competition
- National Vocational Skills Contest for Disabled Persons (Abilympics)
- Political Requests for Business Organizations and Leaflets

2. Award for Outstandingly Skilled Workers (Contemporary Master Craftsman)

On November 7, notable skilled workers (Contemporary Master Craftsman) were awarded.

This award was founded in 1967 and grants awards to outstandingly skilled workers who are considered as leading skilled workers in respective fields. The award aims to improve status of skilled workers and their proficiency levels while also assisting young people to set their goals, who wish to be an artisan or to work in a trade skill field.

This year, 150 persons were awarded, including Mr. Susumu Sahara, an interim product inspection worker, and Mr. Tsutomu Ochiai, a chef of Western-style cuisines.

3. National Skills Competition

From November 22, National Skills Competition and National Vocational Skills Contest for Disabled Persons (Abilympics) were held.

National Skills Competition, which has been held every year since 1963, provides opportunities for young skilled workers under 24 years old to compete for National Championship, thus appealing to the importance and necessity of skills in manufacturing-related fields among Japanese people. This competition also plays a role to choose the skilled workers who are to participate in the biannual WorldSkills Competition.

This year, over 1,100 competitors participated in 40 job categories including manufacturing and construction fields during 4 day competition.

On the other hand, Abilympics are the competition where disabled workers compete on their vocational abilities which they have acquired from the daily tasks at the workplace. Thus, it has been held for companies and general public to deepen their understanding and awareness for persons with disabilities and promote their employment. At this year's competition, the skills were competed for 24 job categories such as tea room service and PC data entry and demonstrations were conducted for IT and cleaning fields.

Through these events, the momentum for skills recognition will be heightened to ensure skilled human resources in manufacturing-related fields.

4. Political Requests for Business Organizations and Leaflets

In addition to the events above, the vice Minister of MHLW, Mr. Sato and the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Takatori has made requests to major business organizations such as the Japan Economic Federation (Keidanren) for promotion of HRD at companies. This was a new approach from this year.

On that occasion, they handed over leaflets, which explain about HRD measures carried out by MHLW in an easily understood manner, taking into account a situation in which various HRD measures by MHLW have not been fully prevalent among companies.

The leaflets will be distributed to related organizations, Hello Works (public employment security offices) and Prefectural Labour Bureaus.

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare continues to promote HRD through various programs including above-mentioned ones.