



# APO *news*

## Sri Lanka Productivity Awards spread message of better tomorrow

Sri Lanka's premier conference hall, Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo, echoed to the sounds of congratulatory messages, music, and dancing on 23 October 2007. Approximately 1,600 spectators including senior members of government, the private sector, and trade unions gathered to celebrate the National Productivity and Quality Awards. The ceremony began with the lighting of an oil lamp by the distinguished guests, a traditional Sri Lankan ritual.



Minister Seneviratne presenting a plaque of appreciation to Secretary-General Takenaka (R-L: Takenaka, Seneviratne, Madihahewa, Marasinghe)

**T**he ceremony was organized by the National Productivity Secretariat (NPS), the NPO of Sri Lanka. The National Productivity Awards were organized in conjunction with the Ministry of Labor Relations and Manpower, while the National Quality Awards were organized in conjunction with the Ministry of Science and Technology. Minister of Labor Relations and Manpower Athauda Seneviratne's address stressed the importance of improving productivity and inculcating good values. Minister of Science and Technology Tissa Vitharana spoke on the importance of quality improvement.

APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka presented the awards and congratulated the winners and the NPS on successfully promoting productivity and quality in their organizations. Secretary-General Takenaka complimented Sri Lanka's national productivity and quality award system, saying, "The system here is better organized than those in many other APO countries, contributing a great deal to the promotion of productivity in the nation." He attributed the success to advances in various sectors and particularly the government's consistent championing of the awards.

The National Productivity Awards started in 1993, the year the productivity convention commenced. First managed by the National Institute of Business Management, the NPS took over the role in 2001. Interest in the awards has grown phenomenally, as Director of the NPS and APO Liaison Officer for Sri Lanka Upali Marasinghe explained, "When it started in 1993, it was a very small event. At that time, the concept of productivity itself was not well known. The participating sector was

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**"The world leaders in innovation and creativity will also be world leaders in everything else."**

**Harold R. McAlindon**

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limited to the private sector, and the number of applicants was fewer than 50." In 2006, the NPS received 822 applications for 17 categories under the School Sector, Public Sector, and Manufacturing and Service Sector divisions. All applications are first assessed in a desktop evaluation, consisting of a document review. The second assessment involves site visits to successful applicants. The final results are announced after reviewing the results of the second assessment by the steering committee. "The main challenge for the improvement of the awards is to bring our message to remote areas. Therefore, the NPS tries to manage more programs to raise the awareness of productivity as well as the productivity awards," explained Marasinghe.

Among winners in the School Sector division, St. Sylvester's College in Kandy and Meepavita Kanishta Vidyalaya in Meepavita, Ransegoda, received the Gold Award. In the Manufacturing and Service Sector division, the Gold Award went to General Hospital, Ampara, and the Silver Award to Lumbini Tea Factory (Pvt) Ltd. The Ministry of Mass Media and Information won first place in the Interministry category in the public sector.

The National Quality Awards, mirroring the practices of the US Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards and organized by the Sri Lanka Standards Institution, were presented at the same ceremony. Awards were given to Kelani Cables Limited and Comfortwear (Pvt) Limited in the Large-scale

Manufacturing Sector division, to Prasara Washing Plant (Pvt) Limited in the Medium-scale Service, and to Suntel Limited and Ampara General Hospital in the Large-scale Service Sector divisions.

The NPS also organized the third annual Poster and Art Competition and Exhibition under the theme "Productivity Concepts: an Artistic View." The competition had five categories, School Sectors I, II, and III, University Sector, and Open Sector for the general public of all ages. Ministry of Labor Relations and Manpower Secretary Mahinda Madihahewa spoke of the importance of using a variety of approaches to raise productivity awareness. In his message in the commemorative publication containing winning posters and art creations, he wrote, "Creating awareness among the public and private sectors, schools, and the community sectors is an important aspect of the programs organized by the NPS."

The success of the awards demonstrates the key role the NPS continues to play as a national productivity promoter. The increasingly successful National Productivity Awards are the centerpiece of its commitment to productivity promotion in Sri Lanka. The 2006 awards were not only a cause for celebration for the winners but also a beacon of hope for the future national productivity movement. 