

Sri Lanka confers productivity and quality awards

10 February 2003 was a red-letter day for 23 governmental ministries, private-sector business enterprises, and schools in Sri Lanka as they received the National Productivity Award from the Ministry of Employment and Labour. Three other business corporations were recipients of the National Quality Award. The presentation ceremony was a grand event attended by Minister of Power and Energy Deshabandu Karu Jayasuriya as the Chief Guest and Ashley Wills, US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, and APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima as the Guests of Honor. Other dignitaries present were Minister of Public Administration and Management Reforms Vajira Abeywardene and Minister of Employment and Labour Mahinda Samarasinghe.

The Sri Lankan National Productivity Award was introduced in 1993 and the National Quality Award in 1996. Both schemes were the brainchild of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe when he was the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs. The National Productivity Award is divided into four competitions for the Government Ministry Sector, Manufacturing Sector, School

Sector, and Service Sector. As explained by Minister Samarasinghe in his message in a newspaper supplement published to commemorate the award presentation, "This award scheme is to encourage and guide companies to become world class and identify models for others to emulate. The competition for government ministries is aimed at recognizing those with high productivity, while the school awards are meant to inculcate a productivity and quality orientation so that school leavers will find it easier to fit into the new business environment."

The Minister also announced that to give direction to the productivity movement, a National Productivity Policy covering both the private and public sectors has been adopted by the government. Minister Samarasinghe contends that fostering a good macro-economic environment conducive to productivity alone is insufficient for wealth creation. "It is at the micro-economic level that wealth is created." For this reason, he called on Sri Lankan corporations to be productive by adopting more sophisticated business strategies, developing the



Mr. Tajima presenting an award

skills of their employees, installing better information systems, and competing for the higher quality segments of the global markets.

As a guest of honor, APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima gave a special address in which he said that with rapid economic globalization and the development of the IT revolution, "products and services have to be globally competitive in price, quality, and delivery in order to survive and grow," and issues like environmental protection and poverty alleviation must be dealt with. Strengthening the productivity drive is a basic requirement to achieve rapid economic growth, he added. 