

Thailand honors quality award winners

For the first time since its launch in 2002, the coveted Thailand Quality Award (TQA) was won by a local enterprise, Thai Paper Company Limited, the second recipient of this prestigious award. The award presentation was made at a grand ceremony held at the Royal Thai Navy Hall, 4 March 2004, and graced by Deputy Prime Minister Visanu Krea-Ngam. On this occasion, five other organizations received the lower-tier Thailand Quality Class (TQC): Thai Carbon Black, Siam Cement (Kaengkhoi), Chulalongkorn University Continuing Education Center, Thai Containers, and Siam Mitsui PTA Company. The first three, including Thai Paper, were TQC winners in 2003 (for details of the TQA, see APO News June 2003 issue).

Mr. Paron Israsena Na Ayudhaya, TQA National Committee Chairman, said that the TQA recognizes world-class excellence in organizational performance. Thai Paper is entitled to use the esteemed TQA emblem to promote its businesses. "They will also contribute to increasing Thailand's competitiveness by serving as a model to encourage and inspire others."

Deputy Prime Minister Visanu, in his opening speech, said that Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was very pleased that a Thai company had won this year's TQA. He called on the TQC winners to make even greater efforts to increase productivity and to adopt knowledge management practices so that they too could win the TQA in the near future. The Deputy Prime Minister commented that the days of "economies of scale" have been replaced by "economies of speed." In this environment, for organizations to be competitive, they need to improve themselves in all areas and increase their capacity to reach new world standards.

Thai Paper Managing Director Chaovalit Ekabut said that his company was very proud to have received this prestigious award. "The TQA is excellent for optimizing organizational performance as it inspires employees to give their very best effort to achieve a challenging, practical, and rewarding goal." For organizations to survive and make progress in this era of the borderless business environment, they will need to improve themselves continuously, he added. "Organizations that implement the TQA framework will reap great benefits in a short period of time." Thai Paper shared the "secrets" of its success in winning the TQA at an all-day conference that the Thailand Productivity Institute hosted on 25 March 2004. The event attracted about 400 corporate executives.

In response to written queries from the *APO News*, Thai Paper Regional Sales Manager Puttaporn Saengratanadej reported that the company started its quality improvement program a long time ago when it implemented a companywide Total Quality Management Program in 1993. Everyone in the company was encouraged to participate and the program was launched with shopfloor activities like QC circles. "These activities played a major role in changing the work behavior of the employees, enabling them to be customer focused, fact based, and process oriented."

During the economic crisis of 1997, the company implemented a number of measures to monitor performance and to take timely remedial actions. Attempts were made to explain to employees the actions of the company and how they could help. It was during this time that the company sought and obtained ISO 9002, ISO 14001, and TIS 18001 certifications. The objective in doing this, as explained by Mr. Puttaporn, was to standardize processes and gain acceptance for their products in the world market. After the economic



Deputy Prime Minister Visanu (left) presenting award to Mr. Chaovalit

crisis had passed, the company set itself the challenge of qualifying for the prestigious Deming Application Prize, won in 2003, and the TQA.

On the company's future, Mr. Chaovalit said that Thai Paper plans to be one of the leading players in the industry in Asia by expanding its production capacity and improving further the quality of its products. 