

INTRODUCTION

History

Recognizing the role of scientists in S & T development, the National Science Council (NRC) and its successor the Natural Resources, Energy and Science Authority of Sri Lanka (NARESA) instituted for the first time in Sri Lanka a scheme “National Awards for Scientific Achievements (NASA Awards)” to be awarded once in three years. The first award made in 1982, was won by a five member research team, Dr H. Weeraratne, Dr Senadira, Mr M.P. Dhanapala, Mr C. Kudagamage and Mr C.A. Sandanayake) who pioneered research into high yielding paddy varieties (the BG Series), during the 1960’s. The second prize referred to as the National Science Council Award was shared by Prof. S.N. Arseculeratne, Dr S. Gnanalingam, Mr M. Nadarajah, Dr O.S. Peries and Dr C.R. Panabokke.

NASA Awards were presented for the second time in 1986. The President’s award was won by a team of scientists led by Prof. M.U.S. Sultanbawa for “Achievements in Scientific Research towards Harnessing Natural Product Resources of Sri Lanka and development of a Centre of Academic Excellence in Natural Product Chemistry at the University of Peradeniya”. The NARESA Award was shared by Dr R.L. Wickremasinghe for “A Miscellany of Contributions to Science in Sri Lanka” and the team of entomologists led by Dr H.E. Fernando for their “Concerted Scientific Effort to Save the Coconut Industry from an Introduced Pest *Promecotheca cumingii*”. NASA Awards were presented for the third time in 1991 and then after a two- year break the fourth awards ceremony was held in 1996 under the patronage of Her Excellency the then President of Sri Lanka Mrs Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumarathunga.

The awards scheme was developed further significantly and a revised scheme “National Science and Technology Awards” was introduced in 2005. At this occasion, nine National Awards were presented under nine categories. The awards were presented annually/ biennially under several categories at each occasion to successful scientists and technologists under the patronage of His Excellency the then President of Sri Lanka Mr Mahinda Rajapaksha. The National Science and Technology Awards were presented last in 2010 under 5 categories. Accordingly, under the revised scheme, 35 National Awards have been conferred upon to successful scientists and technologists who had made a significant contribution in the application of S & T for national development. A small publication which included a brief description of each award was printed and distributed at each occasion except for 2005.

Present status

The National Science Foundation did an impact assessment study on the awards scheme in 2012 with a view to further improve the scheme. Taking into account the recommendations of this study some revision to the awards scheme was introduced and National Awards for Science & Technology Achievements (NASTA Awards) are presented in 2014 to recognize scientists and technologists who have significantly contributed towards socio-economic development through the application of S&T. The revised scheme also aims at encouraging the S&T community and the industry towards increased application of S&T directed to innovation for economic advantage, enhancing the transformation of knowledge into products, processes, services or solutions that add value across industry for maximum socio-economic benefit, fostering societal values and attitudes that recognize S&T as critical to future prosperity, ensuring the utilization of S&T for sustainable development aligning with societal needs.

As was done in the previous years, a specially appointed Panel of Judges evaluated 137 applications for consideration for awards in 2014. Applications were called under 13 categories as mentioned below.

People / System related categories	Rationale
1. Outstanding leadership in introducing technologies	Leadership and good team work especially among different disciplines is necessary to address today's needs and are expected to contribute heavily towards the success of S&T efforts. The interaction between Universities, R&D institutions and the Industry, and the partnerships they develop are crucial in the successful application of S&T outputs. This is to be encouraged, rather than solo efforts which frequently tend to get stuck at certain points in the process. In the acquisition, development and application of Advanced Technologies international Collaboration is an essential ingredient for success.
2. Excellence in multidisciplinary team efforts in the application of S&T	
3. Technology development and application through local partnerships	
4. Harnessing advanced technologies through international collaboration	

'S &T application' oriented categories	Rationale
5. Transfer of technologies either developed or adapted to industry inclusive of SMEs	Industrial sector, particularly the SMEs can perform with much improved results provided they are given adequate S&T input by way of transfer of technologies. This is in fact the mandate of the State R&D institutions, and Universities can play an active role in this area as well. The five year ST&I strategy clearly enunciates the relevance and importance of sustainable development issues, application of Advanced Technologies for Hi-Tech value addition, Value addition to natural resources, exports and import substitution. Quality and Productivity improvement is a cross-cutting input that can result in benefits far greater than normally perceived. Though not quite fitting into the approach taken above, the last category clearly is important, and need to be recognized.
6. Science and Technology contributions for sustainable development in areas such as energy, food and water security, and climate change	
7. Development and use of eco-friendly materials, processes and services	
8. Development and use of innovative applications based on advanced technologies	
9. Value addition to local natural resources (biological, earth & marine resources etc.)	
10. Development of viable substitutes for imports	
11. Acquired and/or adapted technologies resulting in successfully exported products/ services	
12. Productivity improvement, and quality improvement of products, processes and services	
13. Outstanding S&T contributions having an impact on major national initiatives	

Applications were received from individuals, as well as government and private sector organizations. The evaluation method was composed of several screening steps, validation of screenings and a detailed assessment process which included presentations by applicants and field visits. The Panel of Judges selected five excellent works for National Awards and five projects as Certificates of Merit in this year.

A brief description of each award/ merit is presented in this booklet.

National Award Winners

