

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

OUTSTANDING SCIENTISTS

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCHERS BAG TOP AWARDS

Khon Kaen, Kasetsart pair honoured

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THE NATION

Two agricultural researchers from Khon Kaen University (KKU) and Kasetsart University (KU) have been declared 2009 Outstanding Scientists for their research benefiting Thai agriculturists and plant exporters.

Khon Kaen researcher Prof. Aran Patanothai, played an important role in breeding large-seeded peanut cultivars [cultivated varieties] to be released to local growers in several northeastern provinces.

And KU honoured researcher Prof. Saichol Ketsa for bringing a better understanding of the processes that lead to quality loss after harvest. He has also taught farmers and exporters how to improve post-harvest quality and to reduce post-harvest losses.

The award committee sent out 952 letters to science specialists nationwide asking them to propose candidates for the prestigious award.

Aran has released 'Khon Kaen

60-3' as the first large-seeded peanut cultivar to locals in the Northeast. Currently, he is breeding a peanut with an improved fatty acid ratio to lift the quality and value of the crop.

"Thailand," he said, "is based on agriculture. We have to rely on agriculture during the economic recession, and as populations grow, Thailand should raise its standards to compete on the world stage. Research can help boost agricultural competitiveness."

Saichol's research relates to keeping orchids, mangosteens and rambutans fresh longer after harvest, and how to protect bananas from senescence spotting.

He is now working on a preservative solution to keep orchids and other types of fruit fresh longer.

Some 41 researchers have been recognised as outstanding scientists since the Foundation for the Promotion of Science and Technology under the Patronage of His Majesty the King started presenting the awards in 1982.



OUTSTANDING scientists present their research products: Saichol is on the left and Aran on the right.

Three others from Chulalongkorn (CU) and Mae Fah Luang (MFU) universities won Young Scientist Awards this year.

CU's Assistant Prof. Thammanoon Sreethawong, whose specialty is energy science, has worked on a dissertation related to the syntheses and development of nano-crystalline mesoporous metal oxides.

Another CU researcher, Assist

Prof. Amornchai Arpornwichanop, researched the recovery of dilute acetic acid for butyl acetate production. He also focused on process control and systems engineering.

MFU's Assistant Prof. Surat Laphookhieo, has researched chemical composition and biological activities of herbs, separating the compositions of 80 substances. More than 20 of them are newly discovered.

Like the Outstanding Scientist Awards, specialists proposed candidates for the Young Scientist Awards while other candidates could propose themselves.

The winners were selected from 22 candidates.

The National Science and Technology Development Agency, Siam Cement Group and Thailand Research Fund supported the awards.