

FIVE SCIENTISTS BAG NATIONAL AWARDS FOR MAKING STRIDES IN RESEARCH WORK

HRH Princess Sirindhorn to present shields, cash prizes to winners

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THE NATION

Scientists whose research findings benefit industry and the Thai community were named yesterday as recipients of the nation's most prestigious awards in their fields.

Prof Soottawat Benjakul was the only winner of this year's Outstanding Scientist Award for his research into improving the quality of seafood and seafood products, as well as developing post-harvest technologies.

Soottawat is the first lecturer from Prince of Songkla University (PSU) to receive such a national award.

"Since receiving the Young Scientist Award in 2001 when I started to conduct my research on seafood, I have worked to find better ways to help the industry. I never expected my attempts would lead to the Outstanding Scientist Award," he said.

Soottawat's research also covers the processing of seafood by-products to alleviate environmental pollution. He has authored more than 300 research articles and two book chapters, which have been used internationally. His research has received 600-700 citations.

"I really emphasise doing basic research to obtain knowledge first before I carry out applied research. I won't do trial and error. Since I'm also a lecturer who teaches young and new scientists, I will train them to do the same. Thailand lacks basic research," he added.

Readers can view a video interview with Soottawat on www.nationmultimedia.com

The Young Scientist Awards went to four scientists, aged below 35, whose research has been recognised internationally.

Assist Prof Dr Pithi Chanvorachote from Chulalongkorn University (CU) was honoured for his research into cancer, and the search for a drug that can better



SOOTTAWAT



PITHI



YONGYUT



YUTTANANT



KAJORNSAK

combat the disease.

He has conducted several research projects on cancer chemotherapy, reactive oxygen/nitrogen species and their role in carcinogenesis, anti-cancer drug resistance, and cancer metastasis. His research has expanded to include investigation of herbal and marine organism extracts for use in cancer therapy and in "cosmeceuticals".

"I've studied cancer cell biology from cell samples from the US. Now

I'm studying Thai cancer cells because I want to understand the different types of cancer people suffer here and work to find a drug that suits Thai people," Pithi said.

Another CU lecturer to win an award this year was Dr Yuttanant Boonyongmaneerat. He conducted research aimed at the development of a novel hot-dip galvanising technique that requires relatively low zinc consumption and yields galvanised steels with high corrosion resistance.

Dr Kajornsak Faungnawakij, from the National Nanotechnology Centre, was the third award recipient for his team's research and development in chemical engineering and applied chemistry.

His team designs active catalysts for various types of reactors and their goal is to replace homogeneous catalysts that are generally non-reusable and polluting, with green and novel heterogeneous nanocatalysts, for near-zero pollution.

The fourth award recipient was Assoc Prof Dr Yongyut Laosiritaworn, lecturer and researcher from Chiang Mai University. He uses computational physics techniques to establish a fundamental scientific database for electronic industries in designing various applications with better and more economical performances.

Head of the award judges, Amaret Bhumiratana, said Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn would present the winning scientists with shields of honour on August 9. The outstanding scientist would get Bt400,000 cash and each of the young scientists would get a cash prize of Bt100,000.

The Foundation of the Promotion of Science and Technology under the Patronage of His Majesty the King presented the awards.