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Bringing the World to SIWW 2008

Singapore International Water Week is the Global Platform for Water Solutions that brings together policymakers, industry leaders, experts, practitioners to address challenges showcase technologies discover opportunities celebrate achievements in the water world.

Inaugural Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize receives 39 nominations globally

The inaugural Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize, a prestigious international water prize named after Singapore's founding father, received 39 nominations from more than 15 countries when nominations closed three weeks ago.

The Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize is the highlight of the Singapore International Water Week, which will be held for the first time in Singapore in June this year. It aims to honour outstanding contributions towards solving the world's water woes by applying innovative technologies or implementing policies and programmes which benefit humanity. Nominations for the water prize are only accepted from experts in the water industry. This includes chief executive officers of multi-national companies and water utilities, leading academics in water research, policy and management, and members of government.

"We are extremely pleased with the quality and geographical spread of the Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize nominations. There are a few very outstanding works amongst them and the highest number of nominations has been received from the Asia Pacific region," said Mr Tan Gee Paw, Chairman of the Nominating Committee of the Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize.

The nominations will go through two rounds of rigorous selection and the eventual Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize Laureate will be decided by a council comprising individuals of high international standing from the academia, international organisations and multi-national companies. The council is chaired by Dr Tony Tan, former Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore and the Chairman of Singapore's National Research Foundation.

The first Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize Laureate will be announced in March 2008. The recipient of the prize will receive S\$300,000, an award certificate and a gold medallion. The Singapore Millennium Foundation, a philanthropic body supported by Temasek Holdings, is the sole sponsor of the Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize, pledging S\$1.5 million over five years.

Buoyant Water Industry in Singapore

PUB turns water into multi-million dollar industry

Singapore's island geography exemplifies the old "water, water everywhere" paradox. Surrounded by the sea but with few fresh water resources, it faced shortages, flooding and pollution in the 1960s and 70s.

But all that changed when the tiny South-east Asian state decided to tackle its water woes head on by investing heavily in water R&D and technologies.

The gamble paid off. "We have ensured that our water supply is sustainable for generations to come," says Mr Khoo Teng Chye, chief executive of PUB, the national water agency.

In the process, the agency found itself becoming an international poster child for successful water management. In August 2007, it won the industry's equivalent of the Nobel Prize – the Stockholm Industry Water Award, and in 2006, it was named Water Agency Of The Year.

Behind its success is an approach that combines innovative policy and engineering solutions in a strategy it calls the Four National Taps: collection of water from local catchment areas; imported water; reclaimed water (branded NEWater in Singapore); and desalinated water.

The water reclamation programme, which uses advanced membrane technologies to recycle used water, has been particularly successful. Being 100 per cent sewerage, Singapore is able to collect all its used water and turn it into a high-grade brand of reclaimed water it calls NEWater.

Most of this is used for industrial and air-cooling purposes, but a small percentage is mixed with reservoir water before being treated for the drinking water supply.

In theory, Singapore could reuse every drop of water infinitely, says Mr Harry Seah, director of the agency's technology and water quality office. The challenge now is to do it more cheaply, efficiently and sustainably.

In 2006, the Singapore government earmarked the water sector as a growth industry, with plans to invest S\$330 million in water R&D over the next five years.

The funds will be spent on basic and applied research to seek breakthroughs in water technologies, technology incubation, encouraging early adoption of new technologies, and scholarships to groom talent in the industry. PUB hopes that Singapore International Water Week will further raise the profile of the country's water sector.

"It is a major step for us in our efforts to develop Singapore into a vibrant and thriving global hydrohub." says Mr Khoo. "It signals our strong commitment to developing the water industry in Singapore and building overseas linkages and partnerships."

In the Spotlight: NEWater



For many years, reclaimed water was long regarded as the stuff of science fiction.

Today, however, it has become very much a reality, and nowhere is this more so than in Singapore, where NEWater is one of its four sources of water.

One of the few countries to successfully use technology to produce its own brand of reclaimed water, Singapore supplies about 40 million gallons of its NEWater to industries every day and a small amount is blended with raw reservoir water.

NEWater is the result of a journey that began way back in the 1970s, when a study was done to determine the feasibility of producing reclaimed water. Although technically achievable, there were no plans at the time to take it further because of the high cost of membranes and also because the technology had not been proven reliable.

Decreasing costs and improvements in membrane technology in the 1990s led PUB, the Singapore's national water agency, to revisit the idea. A water reclamation study in 1998 successfully demonstrated that the latest proven membrane technology could produce NEWater of drinking water standards.

The method: a three-step process using microfiltration, reverse osmosis and a final stage of disinfection using ultraviolet light. The result: a high-grade purified product, one that costs less than desalinated water.

Four NEWater plants have been built, and in the pipeline is a fifth. When completed in two years' time, the fifth plant

will be able to produce 50 million gallons a day. By 2010, NEWater will be able to meet 30% of Singapore's current water needs, doubling the original target of 15%.

The biggest market for NEWater has been in the industrial sector, where NEWater is used as a source of non-potable water in manufacturing and air-conditioning cooling towers. This in turn frees up reserves of potable water.

NEWater is so pure, however, that it can be channelled for indirect potable use as well. A small amount (7 million gallons, or the equivalent of about 2% of Singapore's water needs) is blended with reservoir water every day before being treated conventionally for drinking purposes. By 2011, the amount of NEWater to be mixed with reservoir water will be increased progressively to 10 million gallons a day.

The success of NEWater has not gone unnoticed abroad, either.

In 2002, it won PUB an Award of Excellence from the National Water Research Institute in the United States, which cited its outstanding contributions to microfiltration technology.

And when the authorities in Queensland, Australia, decided to build a large water recycling plant last year, they sought advice from PUB and employed water management models and technologies similar to those used for NEWater.

Queensland's new plant is gearing up to supply 20 million litres of water every day to one of the region's major power stations, indirectly freeing up water for some 140,000 people in a drought-stricken area.

Just another example of how water reclamation is helping to make every drop count.

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