

Winners at Singapore Corporate Awards win multiple prizes

Keppel and MegaChem bag four each and also the gold for being best-managed

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MULTIPLE-AWARD winners big and small dominated the field at the 10th Singapore Corporate Awards (SCA) on Wednesday, which honoured Singapore-listed firms for their excellence in corporate governance.

The biggest large-cap winner this year was the Keppel group of companies, which bagged four prizes, followed by the CapitaLand group with three.

Among the small-cap winners, specialty chemical-solutions firm MegaChem also snagged four awards, and precision-tool maker Micro-Mechanics, two.

Most notably, the coveted gold prize for the best-managed board among listed firms with a market cap of S\$1 billion or more went to conglomerate Keppel Corp, which has bagged eight golds in various categories since the SCA were launched in 2005.

Keppel chairman Lee Boon Yang said in a statement on Wednesday: "We are encouraged by the recognition accorded to Keppel companies at this year's Singapore Corporate Awards. In particular, we especially value the gold award for the Best Managed Board to Keppel Corporation.

"As directors of Keppel Corporation, we always act in the best interest of the group. We hold ourselves accountable to all stakeholders and will do our very best to safeguard their interests. In order to discharge our duties and responsibilities efficiently and effectively, we ensure that the board comprises directors who collectively provide the range of experience and competencies required for good governance, effective oversight and strategising."

MegaChem also won gold for Best Managed Board in the small-cap segment. Its executive chairman and



managing director Sidney Chew noted in a statement that this was the first time the company had picked up four prizes in a single year.

"This is testament to our commitment towards treating shareholders as partners and in raising the robustness of disclosures for investors to make informed decisions."

Gold-award winners have to sit it out for two years before they are eligible to be in the running for the same awards again.

The SCA marked its 10th anniversary with the creation of a special prize, the Distinguished Contribution to Corporate Governance Award, which went to corporate veteran J Y Pillay.

Mr Pillay, the founding chairman of Singapore Airlines, said in a speech on Wednesday that firms may sometimes find it "inconvenient" to observe a formal code of corporate governance, but doing so pays off in the long run. "Where accountability is diluted, governance is undermined. And with that dissipation, inevitably efficiency, productivity, performance and morale suffer," he said.

Willie Cheng, chairman of the Singapore Institute of Directors (SID) and

SCA co-chair, said in a statement that Mr Pillay had steered Singapore Airlines to global prominence, not only among passengers but also among investors, and led the development of the 2005 Code of Corporate Governance that planted the seed for SCA.

The awards were co-organised by the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants, SID and *The Business Times*, supported by the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority and the Singapore Exchange and sponsored by Bank Julius Baer.

Business Times editor and SCA co-chair Alvin Tay noted the recent rise of activist hedge funds across the world, which can "exert significant pressures on companies, both at investors' meetings as well as in the realm of public perception".

"Although we have not seen much of this group of investors in Singapore, I think it is a matter of 'when' rather than 'if'. The panacea to this phenomenon is not to stop them from coming, but to be beyond reproach in your corporate governance, such that nothing can be held against you."

The guest of honour at the awards ceremony was President Tony Tan Keng Yam.

(Above) The opening act for the evening's entertainment. (Below) Corporate veteran and founding chairman of Singapore Airlines J Y Pillay receiving the inaugural Distinguished Contribution to Corporate Governance Award from the evening's guest of honour, President Tony Tan Keng Yam. This award was introduced this year, the 10th anniversary of the Singapore Corporate Awards (SCA). PHOTOS: JOHN HENG

