



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014





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Nominee Suneth Wijesinghe at the METALIX booth with former President Late R. Premadasa at the First Techno Fair Organized by the IESL.

Pioneering Industrialists in Sri Lanka

My father M.P (Jerry) Wijesinghe was an outstanding Electrical and Refrigeration Engineer who graduated from the Bombay Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute in 1950. At the age of 24, he is one of the first Ceylonese Engineers to join the General Electric Company represented by Walker and Grieg of England.

With an ambition to produce a refrigerator locally he made a prototype at his house in Kotte in 1960 and proposed to set up a factory in Sri Lanka under the GEC brand. The British top management opposed the idea and in 1961 Sir Cyril Soysa financed this project and set up the factory in Kalutara, under the Company Associated Electrical Corporation which created the brand "SISIL". Prema Wijesinghe gave birth to this brand by naming it "SISIL" while it was a prototype, with the meaning "cool" in Sinhalese. SISIL celebrated its 50th anniversary which is now owned by SINGER Sri Lanka which is a superbrand in Sri Lanka today.

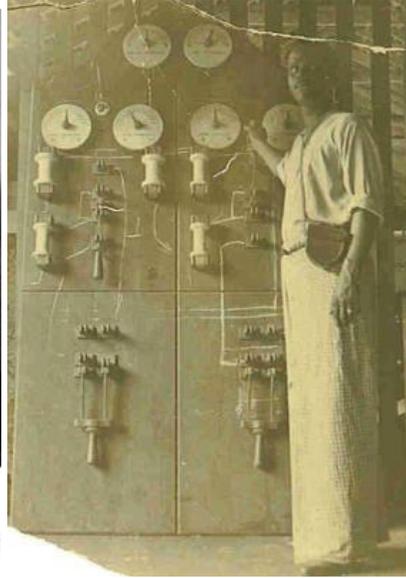


Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014



**Launching of the 1st locally manufactured Refrigerator in Ceylon
— SISIL on 4th April 1963**

(L to R) — Mr. E. G. (Guy) Wickramanayake, QC, Hon. Malthripala Senanayake, Minister of Industries, Mr. M. P. Wijesinghe, Director and Sir Cyril De Zoysa, Chairman, Associated Electrical Corporation.



M.P.Wijesinghe

M.S.Perera

Prema Wijesinghe's father M.S. Perera was attached to the Royal Army and was recognized for innovative electrical skills while he was in-charge of the power distribution in the Colombo city.

M.S. Perera and his brother are the founders of General Autoworks in Colombo which is now known as Lal & Nihal.

My mother's roots originate from Malaysia with her cousin late Cyril Herath becoming the Inspector General of the Sri Lanka Police who is also one of my idols.

With this background, I am proud to be the 3rd generation of electrical engineering industry in Sri Lanka and I would like to make a brief introduction and achievements during my 25 year career in support of my application.

I, Suneth Wijesinghe, was born on August 04th 1966 in Colombo to M.P (Jerry) and Prema Wijesinghe residing in Kalutara while the SISIL factory was set up. I am the youngest in a family of three. I am married and have three children.

Educated at S. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia I quit school at an early age and joined the family business at M/S Metalix Engineering Company Limited which was founded in 1967 by my father and his business associates Late Mr. Niloo Bhatt and Mr.N.M. Udeshi.



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

While working I was a keen member of the Rotaract Club of Colombo West and during my term of Presidency I accomplished two fund raising projects namely “The Island Music Award Show” and a “Café Theater” to donate the proceeds to SUMITHRAYO the NGO to set up a vocational training centre in their facility in Nittambuwa where Mrs. Nalini Ellawala was in charge of this centre. I had a team of young members lead by Rotarian Mr.Nihal Bastian as the club advisor.

Following the footsteps

I began my career as an apprentice at Metalix which is a household name for its Mathematical instrument sets for students, Electric Kettles and steel office furniture.

I was fortunate to attend a training programme at Klockner Moeller Germany which produces electrical switchgear in Bonn. I began working in the international marketing and sales division and later at their factories.

I am thankful to Mr Crowder, Mr Vikinger and Jurgen Nauwartat for teaching me at a young age how to think “Global” when Germany was making headlines in the world.

During my stay in Germany from 1986 to 1988 I worked at WOCO which is the world’s leading producer of automobile rubber and plastic components and with Dr. Ing Max Schlotter, specialists in Electroplating chemicals.

Mr. F.J Wolf, the owner of WOCO, trained me on international business and R&D new products during my training at the WOCO laboratory. Mr. Wolf was working with my father to set up a joint venture in Sri Lanka but we remained close family friends.

Taking these new experiences I continued to work at Metalix and developed new business strategies taking the industry to a new level and transforming the company to become the market leader in the low voltage panels industry, furniture and home appliances.

New Business Ventures Pioneered by Me

New products such as Jug Kettles were introduced to Sri Lanka for the first time under my leadership. I set up a business for exports to Maldives in 1989 by undertaking contracts to supply Diesel Genset from Interpower UK and LV panels manufactured by us. My visit to Maldives was in 1989 and was successful in exporting Kettles and Furniture subsequently.



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

I set up a Mobile phone handsets sales division in 1990 to sell UNIDEN brand to MOBITEL (formally known as Telstra) when the market was opening up. My first interaction with Dr Hans Wijayasuriya, the present CEO of Dialog AXIATA dates back to this when I was testing a BOSCH brand for MTN networks.

In 1995 I had the opportunity to join the AOTS (Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship) Programme for Sri Lankan Entrepreneurs RSRE 11 program which was organized by the JESTECA Colombo.

This programme helped me to improve the factory production with TQM and 5-S practices. This PSRE 11 had 24 members from various industries and my participation and factory visit to Asahi Brewery was an inspiration to further improve my entrepreneur skills and vision and determination that Japanese small and medium companies were enjoying.

My business vision was further influenced by Japanese production practices that helped me to build the Metalix's new factory in Watareka, Padukka under my supervision.

Managing Director of a Public Listed Company

Metalix is one of the first Light Engineering Company to be listed in the Colombo stock exchange in 1992 and I was appointed as the Managing Director in 1998. This announcement came at a time the Company was facing a labour unrest and a financial difficulties due to the down turn of the economy in Sri Lanka.

I had to face many challenges and take harsh decisions to restructure the Company and bring the situation back to normal.

Going on my own

My saddest day was when the Company made me obsolete when a main shareholder of the Company wanted me to resign at a board meeting on 10th of July 1998. We did not have controlling shares in the Company since going public. My father was helpless over the affairs of the Company by this time.

It was a shock to me and I had overnight been made redundant. This changed the course of my future but the characteristics of entrepreneurship which were dormant in me unleashed my potential. I was determined not to fall apart and took some bold steps in re organising myself.

My first call was to Mr. Benoit Verspieren, the Export Director of LEGRAND in Limoges, France to help me out with supplies of switchgear. Having known him since 1995 he was kind enough to appoint Malco as their agent and granted me a credit line for 3 months.



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

I approached Seylan Bank and with the help of Dr.Laith Kotalawela, the former chairman of Ceylinco Group I was able to obtain financing to set up Malco Engineering Pvt Limited and start in a small way manufacturing electrical panel boards with a staff of four at a back yard make shift factory in Nugegoda.

This is the beginning for Malco which has a proud history of 15 years since it journey from 1998.

Business Milestones

Although Malco was present in Maldives supplying Switchboards and undertaking contracts, the turning point of my career is to have been one of the first Electrical Companies to be established in India which is approved by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in 2004.

This gave me an elevation to compete with the big names in India such as TATA Power, Kirloskar and many other established brands.

In 2005 Malco was able to win its first project to supply Low Voltage panels, Gensets and High Voltage 11KV panels and it is also the first time a Sri Lankan Company has made 11KV medium Voltage panels which is an achievement to the local Electrical industry.

This IT park project owned by True Value Homes India is one of the first ultra modern IT parks to be built in Chennai in 2004. The consultant to this project Mr Govindraajulu qualified Malco after seeing the quality workmanship at the HSBC Call Centre project where he was the consultant.

Malco took part in ELECRAMA (2006) and POWERGEN (2008) exhibitions in Mumbai and Delhi which made me a proud Sri Lankan to reach out to the world market.



11KV HV panel production witnessed by with M.P Wijesinghe



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

Major Breakthrough

It was a pleasant surprise when Larsen and Toubro Limited Mr.K.P Cion, head of MEP, invited Malco to manufacture 4 units of 2500KVA 11KV Generator sets for a Research Centre in Mysore. This contract worth over 2.4 Million USD is currently ongoing. I had to work with six major suppliers in China and India and coordinate with a team to design, assemble, supply and install the sets in Mysore, India.



At Larsen and Toubro Limited Mr Satish head of Airports exchanging MOU with Suneth Wijesinghe at L&T ECC Chennai.



L&T Project manager inspecting the Genset in Malaysia Factory

“Malcopower” is the brand name which is used for Gensets which subsequently was approved by the Indian Nuclear Authority (BARC).



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

Presently Malco has been prequalified by Shangri-La Hambantota hotel project for the Mechanical and Electrical contracts.

Embarking as an Enterprising Businessman.



MPRC Dr Emir with Suneth Wijesinghe at Putrajaya with Malaysian Petroleum Subject Minister Dato' Sri Idris Jala and Deputy Minister of Petroleum Sri Lanka.

I was passionate about the transformation of the Oil and Gas industry in Malaysia and was following the industry since 2007 to bring in the models of business of Petronas and other leading Companies to help the Government of Sri Lanka.

I set up a small office in Kuala Lumpur and was closely working with Panel builders and Genset assemblers to manufacture under our brand to cater to the far-east. This was closed after the financial crisis hit in 2008 when I lost orders from India and Maldives.

My first contact with Petronas was in 2010 to register Malco as trading partner. I had few meetings with the Risk Management team headed by Mr Tamby Sudeen and currently Malco is negotiating to purchase MIRI Crude Oil to operate the CPC refinery which is facing difficulties due to US sanctions.

Oil and Gas industry in Sri Lanka is now at a stage of developing and I was instrumental in bringing the Malaysia Petroleum Resources Corporation (MPRC) which is under the Malaysian Prime Minister's mandate and Petroleum Resources Development Secretariat (PRDS) to sign a MOU to develop and share business models in the petroleum industry in the upstream.



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

Dr Emir Mohd of MPRC and Saliya Wickramasuriya of PRDS signed the MOU witnessed by His Excellency the Malaysian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka Mr Azmi Zainuddin.

My proposal to sign this MOU came after two years of efforts by establishing contacts in the industry such as Petronas, UMW and Sapurakencana who were keen to establish business in Sri Lanka.



MOU signing ceremony at PRDS

Concurrently Malco, with its business associates DAYA Material Bhd ,Dato Mazlin Junid and Shahul Hamid, signed a MOU to develop business in the downstream which included setting up a Lube Oil Blending plant, off shore bunkering and rehabilitation of the Sapugaskanda refinery.

I also made contact with Sapura Group founder Tan Sri Shamsuddin Kadir at a time I was seeking a business partner for Oil and Gas exploration during which the bidding round was announced by PRDS. It was a very rare meeting where we shared our humble beginnings and life story at his residence in K.L and I am a admirer of his work and follow his advice time to time.

I am thankful to Tan Sri for introducing me to Hibiscus Petroleum Dr. Kenneth Pereira with whom I have teamed up to offer exploration services to PRDS and Cairn Lanka.

I consider this as partnering myself with the future of the country in the emerging Oil and Gas sector with the off shore exploration and development work yet to come. My intention is to give back to the society as this natural recourse could one day be the future of Sri Lanka as seen in Malaysia.



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014



With Tan Sri Shamsuddin Kadir with Roland Husdon my UK business associate.

Going Forward

Sri Lanka is at a juncture to become Asia's Transport and Aviation hub and develop its traditional industries.

I see this as a golden opportunity for me. While expanding the business in Energy, aviation related activities, healthcare and hospitality sectors are main areas of interest to my Company to undertake contracts.

New Ventures

I have identified renewable energy on the Company's road map in the next decade to foster and protect the environment by supporting the Green label concept.

I am associated with Suzlon of India for wind energy projects and presently promoting solar PV systems on DC power for rural electrification. I am also working on a prototype Vertical Axis Wind Turbine for rural power in the range of 2-4KW.

I am keen to change the power supply to Direct Current (DC) 12/24V in the rural and affordable housing as a pilot project. DC supply opposed to alternating current (AC) is cheaper to transmit with low losses and is safer.

One of the other areas is to promote Green House and Hydroponic Agriculture techniques which were proposed to the IFAD (international Fund for Agriculture Development) recently. Due to lack of



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

government support IFAD has suspended this project and I am determined to find other options to support the farmer community in the dry zone.

I joined the National Chamber of Commerce and have made proposals to improve the Electrical industry in Sri Lanka. A draft proposal that has been submitted to the Public Utility Commission for consideration is to implement the Pre-paid electricity metering system with Dialog Axiata being the GPRS provider. This is supported by the University of Moratuwa Engineering Club which is organizing a public event this December to propose changes in the electricity billing system.

Team work and collaboration

In getting the above achieved as an entrepreneur it is important to realize what a team can achieve. I believe in the acronym TEAM- which is “ Together Everybody Achieve More”.

E-commerce is the way forward for Malco to grow and recently I have updated the Company website with interactive features and online shopping for wiring accessories and lifestyle products made by Legrand and Fedders and signed up with WOW.lk

I have cut down on office expenses by taking on key Company managers on contract basis and encourage work from home policy to reduce overheads.

I see this as the future for the other corporate companies in the world too to follow soon as there is a rising cost of maintaining buildings and staff.

With the aid of internet and mobile phone, I am able to connect with about twenty of our main principles, suppliers, their design teams in Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka and about six sub-contractors in Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

This drives my business effectively and caters to clients hands on. I am available on weekends and late hours and accessible to customers and over fifteen main contractors who give business from most parts of the world.

In the above context networking with the industry leaders and sharing business opportunities is paramount.

I joined the National Chamber of Commerce and have made proposals to improve the Electrical industry in Sri Lanka. One of the proposals has been submitted to Public Utility Commission for consideration to implement the Pre-paid electricity metering system with Dialog Axiata begin the GSM provider and supported by the University of Moratuwa electrical engineering society which is organizing a public forum to propose new tariffs for electricity. With this smart meter we can achieve different tariffs for peak/off peak and day rates.



Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship awards Sri Lanka 2014

I also joined Guidepoint Global which is a consultancy agency in the US. I render my services as a consultant to promote Joint Ventures here and abroad. I was associated with SOFTLOGIC group to promote an I.V (Saline) bottling plant with an Indian group in the pharmaceutical industry.

I have promoted our leather products Company "DI" to a French Company "LE TANNEUR" who is at present sampling their products. This contact came about while I was in India.

Conclusion

It has not been an easy journey for me. I have had my breaking moments. Nevertheless my determination, the spirit of not giving up, seeking new and varied avenues of accomplishing tasks amidst challenges, becoming humble and seeking assistance in achieving what I dream and above all belief in myself which has brought me thus far. This strong belief in me also gives me the confidence that I can take forward what I built and make it an asset to society. It is in that spirit that I am currently training engineering students to take over the company engineering outfit and groom my son and daughters to carry on with the Company as a family business which I have managed since this year with self financing.

I enjoy playing golf during my free time which also gives me an opportunity to think of new ideas and make new friends.

I strongly believe in the below quote by a famous man in my industry.

"The value of an idea lies in the using of it." Thomas Edison, General Electric Co-founder.