

Aitken Spence bags inaugural Presidential Tourism Awards for travel sector

Colombo

January 29, 2008:

Aitken Spence Travels bagged the two main travel awards at the inaugural Presidential Awards for Travel and Tourism Excellence for 2007 held at the Presidential Secretariat. The company won the awards for the Best Destination Management Company and the best Professional Conference Organization (PCO) competing with all other major industry operators.

The awards were received by Gehan M. Perera, Managing Director of Aitken Spence Travels and Ace Travels & Conventions and Dharni Soza, Director from Prime Minister Hon. Ratnasiri Wickramanayake at the Presidential Secretariat in the presence of Minister of Tourism Hon. Milinda Morogoda, Deputy Minister of Tourism Hon. Faizer Mustapha, Member of Parliament and Tourism Ambassador Arjuna Ranatunga, Secretary to the President Lalith Weeratunge, Acting Secretary Ministry of Tourism George Michael, Chairman - Tourism Authority Renton de Alwis and a large gathering of distinguished guests from the tourism industry.

Aitken Spence Travels is the largest tour operator in the country representing over 200 international tour operators and is the only Sri Lankan Destination Management company equipped with the ISO 9001:2000 certification.

Its subsidiary Ace Travels and Conventions is the leading Professional Conference and Exhibition Management Company in Sri Lanka having coordinated many of the international events to be held in the country such as the International Congress on Aids in Asia Pacific (ICAAP), the South Asia Broadband Conference and the launch of Microsoft Vista.

Aitken Spence Travels, a subsidiary of conglomerate Aitken Spence Plc has in its existence of over three decades actively contributed towards uplifting the industry.

Gehan M. Perera, Managing Director of Aitken Spence Travels and Ace Travels & Conventions upon receiving the awards said, *"This award is a great honour and tribute to our dedicated staff who work round the clock to make holidays very special for our guests and meticulously organise Conferences & Exhibitions with attention to detail. Both at Aitken Spence Travels & Ace Travels & Conventions we strongly believe in excellent team work and professionalism. Over the years, we have invested heavily in training & developing of our staff from the top right down to the bottom to deliver professional management and high levels of service. Whilst investing in the best of technology, international standards we have also taken care to create a congenial environment to work in a friendly atmosphere to bring out their talents. Our core values such as honesty, integrity and fairness to all employees has*

been the corner stone of building this culture within the company. This has helped us to have the best team in tourism in Sri Lanka today.

The other important factor is we are an innovative team and are positive in everything we do. This has been evident in the past years when tourism took a down turn, our team has risen above the situation opened up new markets, stimulated different channels in existing markets and kept the Sri Lanka Tourism flag flying high, supporting our partners.

I must also emphasise on the award won by Mr. Ravindra Palagolla our Chauffeur Guide. Ravi represents a team of excellent Chauffeur Guides who are our front line ambassadors in tourism. They work long and irregular hours and toil hard to provide excellent levels of service to our customers in the destination and work in close coordination with our Sales & Marketing and Operational teams who work equally hard to get them across to Sri Lanka.

We would like to thank our principals and our partners in Sri Lanka including hoteliers, transport suppliers, guide lecturers without whose support we could not have achieved success.

Whilst we are deeply honoured with these awards, we now look forward to the future of achieving even greater heights and improved levels of service to exceed the expectations of our customers consistently”.

The Presidential Awards for Travel and Tourism Excellence was inaugurated by the Ministry of Tourism to foster competitiveness and uplift the standards of the local tourism and travel industry. The winners were selected by an eminent panel of judges based on a comprehensive evaluation criterion covering aspects such as revenue generation, customer profile, international promotional initiatives, branding and communication strategies, innovation in service delivery, CSR projects and contribution towards industry development.

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