



**Best of the crop:** (from left) Mr. Tan of second-placed Kenyon, Mr Koh of top winner Samwoh Corp, and MD Voo Soon Sang of third-ranked Woodlands Transport Service

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Samwoh Corp, and MD Voo Soon Sang of third-ranked Woodlands Transport Service

# E50 winners celebrate power of infrastructure

**Construction, engineering and transport firms dominate awards**

By CHEN HUIFEN

[SINGAPORE] Infrastructure and transport companies reigned supreme at this year's Enterprise 50 (E50) Awards, with more than a quarter of the winners coming from the two industries or providing related support services.

Eight construction firms and six that provide engineering services made the list, which recognises Singapore's best privately held companies.

"The construction sector performed relatively well in FY2009," said KPMG Advisory Services partner Chiu Wu Hong. "This was partly fuelled by efforts by the government to expand and accelerate infrastructure spending. Accordingly, companies providing infrastructure services such as construction and engineering have benefited and performed well."

Co-organised by KPMG and *The Business Times*, the E50 Awards are an annual ranking of the top 50 privately held homegrown firms. Companies go through a rigorous evaluation process that includes on-site visits by a panel of judges.

Civil engineering and building materials company Samwoh Corp emerged a second-time top winner, after clinching the peak title last year.

Samwoh managing director Elvin Koh said the firm expected a good position this year. It had posted record turnover of \$178 million, about 10-15 per cent higher year-on-year.

"We just wanted to find out if our business model was a good one," said Mr Koh. "And, of course, E50 is to us the most prestigious business award in Singapore as well."

Founded by three lorry drivers in the 1970s, Samwoh started out as a transport firm. Over the years, it transformed itself into an infrastructure builder, and recently ventured into green building technologies. The company scored an industry first when it opened the Samwoh Eco-Green Park in Kranji Crescent this year.

The building is the first in Southeast Asia built with

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a large amount of recycled concrete aggregate. It is also home to Samwoh's R&D centre, which researches new construction materials.

Second-placed Kenyon Engineering is a veteran of the E50 Awards, having made the list six times. Its ranking this year, however, is its best to date. Managing director Tan Yong Keng attributed this to his staff, who he said helped the company get through difficult times.

"And also, of course, the Singapore business environment is so good. It's such an orderly place and attracts a lot of business operations here," Mr Tan said. "And we are fortunate to be able to serve MNCs - most of our clients are MNCs. And we have plenty of support from them."

In third spot this year is Woodlands Transport Service (WTS), which provides bus and heavy vehicle services. This is the first time WTS has taken part in the E50 Awards.

Besides WTS, other transport firms that made the cut included Trans-cab Services, Yew Choon, Bok Seng Logistics and Kim Soon Lee.

"The increase in transport firms was largely driven by new applicants," said KPMG's Mr Chiu, who also chairs the E50 evaluation committee. "By riding on economic growth and building their brand names, these enterprises look to the E50 Awards as an endorsement of their strength and growth potential."

Staff and partners from all the E50 companies celebrated last night at a gala dinner at Resorts World Convention Centre on Sentosa Island.

Speaking at the dinner, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Lim Hwee Hua urged SMEs to look towards the emerging world - China, India, Southeast Asia, Latin America and parts of Eastern Europe.

She said the growing middle class and rising purchasing power in these mar-

kets will provide opportunities for Singapore's SMEs to further expand overseas and export their expertise.

"As emerging market cities develop, so will their need for expertise in areas such as city planning, financing, operation and management of infrastructure increase," Mrs Lim said.

"It is estimated that these cities will require up to \$40 trillion of infrastructure expenditure over the next 20 years. Many of our SMEs, including several of those receiving awards today, are already well poised to take advantage of these opportunities."

The E50 Awards were created in 1995. And since then, they have been viewed as a launch pad for a local listing. The Awards are supported by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, IE Singapore, SPRING Singapore and Singapore Business Federation. OCBC Bank is the sponsor.

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