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Encouraging school children into engineering careers

The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL) has been conducting the Junior Inventor of the Year (JIY) competition annually since 1987. It is a competition targeted at school children in the age group of 12 – 20 years. Over the years it has gained popularity among the school children island-wide. Last year over 500 applications were received for this competition which is aimed at promoting creative and innovative thinking amongst the school children. While preliminary competitions are conducted in the provinces the final competition is held in Colombo at the headquarters of IESL at Vidya Mawatha, Colombo 7.

Through various awareness programmes conducted in schools and else where, at times with the assistance of officials from the Education Department, the children are made aware of the rules and procedures related to the competition.

The winner of this competition would be awarded the title 'Junior Inventor of the Year' in addition to being presented with a gold medal, a cash prize and a certificate. Twenty others who secure the first twenty places would also be awarded medals, prizes and certificates. Some of the winners would be entitled for scholarships, which will cover their university education as well. All this is done with a view towards encouraging young school goers to take up engineering as a career. The awards are presented to the winners at the inauguration of our Annual Sessions of the Institution in October every year.

All matters related to the competition are coordinated by a Steering Committee of the Institution. Due to the concerted efforts made by this Committee chaired by Eng. J Meegoda, in streamlining the competition, in 2007 the competition gained international recognition by being able to get affiliated with the

Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (Intel ISEF). Intel ISEF is the world's largest pre-college celebration of science held in May every year. Through this affiliation, some of the winners of the JIY competition every year get an opportunity to take part in the Intel ISEF conducted in USA in the following year. All costs associated with their travels including air fair, accommodation and meals would be borne by Intel. These students before taking part in the overseas competition are required to attend training sessions organized by the IESL in association with the Faculty of Engineering, University of Moratuwa.

The Intel ISEF provides an opportunity for the best of the world's young scientists and inventors to come together to share their ideas, show case their cutting edge science and engineering projects, and win awards and scholarships.