

TOP NEWS

# Construction firm wins 2012 TOP 100 SMEs award

STORY AND PICTURES BY GEORGE OMONDI AND SALATON NJAU

Atlas Builders and Plumbers Ltd, an engineering firm on Nairobi's lower Kirinyaga Road, led construction enterprises in reclaiming their glory this year's survey of Kenya's fastest-growing medium-sized enterprises.

The first-time entrant in Kenya Top100 SMEs competition was crowned the winner of the Fifth Edition of the annual competition at a colourful ceremony held at Nairobi's Carnivore Restaurant grounds on Friday night.

The company's director, Dr Harish Bhanderi said beating more than 200 participants came as a major surprise. This was the firm's first entry in the competition that is co-sponsored by the Nation Media Group (NMG) and accounting firm KPMG.

"Our employees have worked exceptionally hard for this to happen. This win is no doubt going to boost their morale and confidence," said Dr Bhanderi, adding that cordial relations with suppliers and customers have also played a major role.

Nairobi's industrial area-based Rupra Construction, the only other construction firm to make it to top 10 list, was named the fifth fastest growing SME, reflecting billions of shillings that flows into this segment of economy each each.

**Grow in short-run**

The number of construction firms featuring in top 10 is expected to grow in the short run buoyed by the segment's ten-year boom which has given government and commercial banks the confidence pump billions of shilling in it.

Data from Central Bank of Kenya shows that just as government raised its budgetary allocation to public works and housing ministries in 2011, commercial banks also pumped in Sh50.9 billion to building & construction and another Sh137.4 billion to real estate.

The sustained 10 per cent average growth over the last 10 years has lifted building and construction segment's contribution to national wealth to 4.3 per cent, employing a total of 108,971 people in 2011.

Traditionally, however, firms in the labour-intensive manufacturing sector take most of the 100 top positions even as construction and information technology firms battle it out for the first ten positions.

But just like last year when Thika-based nut processor Jungle Macs upset this tradition by becoming the first manufacturer to win the top honours, this year's top 10 went to unusual segments.

While manufacturers retained their traditional dominance with Tropikal Brands taking the second overall best, technology firms were generally knocked out of the top ten positions.

Also missing in top ten list are agribusiness firms which took up just about 2 per cent of the top 100 positions yet agriculture generally contributes 24 per cent of wealth produced in Kenya every year.



From left: Satguru Travel and Tours staff Rajesh Vachhani, Hatesh Harwani, Chetan Kshirsagar, and Nancy Wambui display their trophy during the Kenya Top 100 Mid-Sized Companies Award Gala on October 12. The company was position eight out of 100.



Management and staff of Rupra Construction Company (the fifth fastest-growing SME) display their trophy at the Gala night on Friday evening.



Nation Media Group CEO Linus Gitahi (right), and Roads ministry PS Michael Kamau (centre), present a trophy to Keppel Investment Ltd director Kirit Shah. The company was position three out of 100.



Management and staff of Tropical Brands Afrika, and Ministry of Roads PS Michael Kamau (3rd right) pose for a photo during the Kenya Top 100 Mid-Sized Companies Award Gala at Nairobi's Carnivore restaurant. Tropical Brands is Kenya's second fastest growing company.



Management and staff of Shian Travel display their trophy during the Kenya Top 100 Mid-Sized Companies Award Gala at the Carnivore restaurant. The company was position four out of 100.



The managing director of Kenya's seventh fastest growing SME Chemicals and Schools Supplies, Mr Amit Shah (left), receives a trophy from Nation Media Group CEO Linus Gitahi.



KPMG East Africa CEO Josphat Mwaura (right), presents a trophy to Kentons Ltd's Dr Ashok Shah (centre) and Rosila Shah. Kentons is Kenya's 10th fastest growing SME.



Radar Limited staff display their trophy after their company was declared the ninth fastest growing SME in Kenya. With them on the right is KPMG East Africa CEO Josphat Mwaura.



Mr Stanley Ngatia (left), the sixth fastest-growing SME Powerpoint Systems (EA)'s general manager, and CEO Cosmas Musyoki (centre) receive their trophy from Nation Media Group CEO Linus Gitahi.