

New Zealand Press Association

May 15, 2003

AUDITOR WINS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION FIGHT

Wellington, May 15, NZPA - Transparency International is to present an award to former Samoan auditor-general Sua Rimoni Ah Chong, saying he exposed financial crime at the highest levels of government in Samoa.

Mr Ah Chong is to receive one of the Berlin-based anti-corruption watchdog's three integrity awards for 2003, after a nomination by its New Zealand branch. Mr Ah Chong is still fighting a legal battle over his suspension and dismissal in 1995, after exposing six cabinet ministers over improper activities and payments in his annual report to Parliament.

A commission of inquiry, which included several people criticised in his report, was appointed, not to look into the irregularities, but into the auditor-general himself, Transparency International said in a statement today.

The other award recipients are Dr Dora Akunyili, the director general of the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration in Nigeria, and Anna Hazare, an Indian campaigner against corruption in forestry and in government, who will be presented with their awards at the opening ceremony of the 11th International Anti-Corruption Conference in Seoul, Korea, on May 25.

Posthumous recognition will also be given to Abdelhai Beliardouh, an investigative journalist from Algeria, and Antonio Siba-Siba Macuacua, the chairman of the largest commercial bank in Mozambique, both of whom died while taking a stand against corruption.

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