

## **The Mercedes-Benz Club Pageant**

It would be a rare person who would debate that to own a Mercedes-Benz is not one of the true pleasures of living in the post-industrial world. Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts would even say there's no one to dispute that it is the world's most top rated passenger car. Whatever the diverse view points, it seems that this unmistakable German car is certainly the world's best loved.



Their enthusiasm and delight in owning a Mercedes-Benz has led owners around the globe to form social clubs, and the Mercedes-Benz Club of Sri Lanka is no less passionate about its vehicles than the other clubs scattered worldwide. It is not altogether easy to become a member of the Club, having qualified the basic criteria (ie., ownership of a Mercedes-Benz), each applicant is scrutinised by the Committee of the Club, and only those having successfully passed this evaluation entitled to membership. This does tend to make the Club rather exclusive, but it has in no way deterred their energetic efforts to popularise the Mercedes-Benz, to allow their members to learn all they can about their vehicle and to take maximum enjoyment of being the owner of such a “splendid” car.

The Club organises several social events throughout the year, as well as regular meetings of club members. Some of these events include workshops geared to help the members understand better their vehicles, video presentations, lectures by

Mercedes-Benz experts – both local and foreign, motor rallies and diagnostic sessions where your car can have the privilege of being scrutinised by an expert. However, one of the most interesting events organised by the Club is open to all Mercedes-Benz owners – the Mercedes-Benz Club pageant. This pageant is co-organised by the representatives for Mercedes-Benz in Sri Lanka, Diesel and Motor Engineering Company Ltd.

“The best thing about the pageant is that the only qualification to enter is ownership of a Mercedes-Benz, irrespective of the model and year of manufacture”, said Mr Hiranjan Welagedera, Manager, Mercedes-Benz Passenger Cars. The pageant, which is an annual event has been sporadic in the last few years due to the security situation in the country. But the organisers are optimistic about renewing the annual event, as of this year.

The western car park of the BMICH was the venue of the pageant, held on Sunday 18th August, 1996. Due to the keen interest shown by over 200 participants at last year’s pageant, the organisers expected over 250 entrants at this year’s pageant. However, due to the declaration of the day of the pageant as a national day of mourning, the number was reduced to a little over 150 participants. The organisers did not allow this fact to deter their carefully planned and organised event, and the pageant got under way. “As the decision to declare the national day of mourning was sudden, it left us with no choice but to continue with the pageant, as many Mercedes-Benz owners had been preparing their vehicles and gearing for this day. We were not in a position to drop everything and begin all over again”, explained Mr Welagedera.

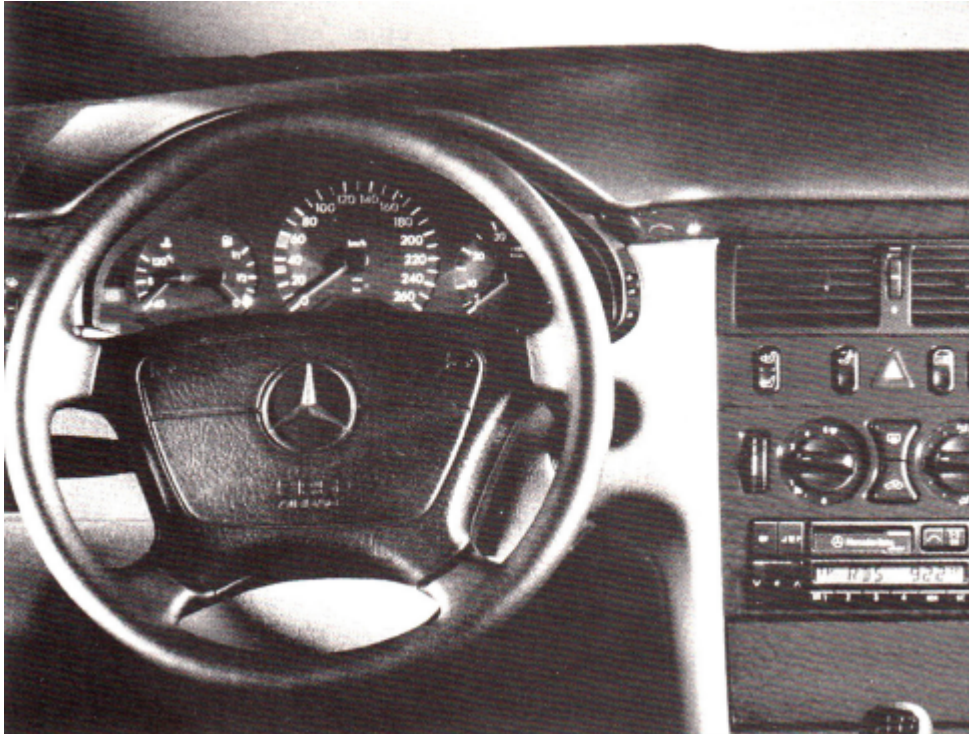
“The objective of the pageant is to generate enthusiasm amongst Mercedes-Benz owners, and the pageant has been very successful in achieving this objective. Owners leave the pageant thinking about how to do better at the next pageant. It is a very infectious type of excitement, and the participants enjoy displaying their well-loved vehicles”, said Mr Welagedera. The pageant is an excellent opportunity for motor car buffs to see several dozen models of the Mercedes-Benz range in one place. And many participants seemed to enjoy doing just that, as they walked from ear to ear admiring each model and the excellent care given by its owner.

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The judges at the pageant were Mercedes-Benz specialists, including several experts flown in especially for the pageant from the Mercedes-Benz Corporation in Germany, a few members of the Mercedes-Benz Club of Sri Lanka and the Workshop Manager of the Diesel and Motor Engineering Company Limited. The judging was to international standards, and the competitors were all aware that only the best would be awarded the much sought after certificates of excellence.

Many of the earlier models of Mercedes, from the pre-World War II era were a major attraction of the pageant. Many of these cars were manufactured before 1939, and they are a testimony to the remarkable mechanical skill of the Mercedes Corporation, that these durable passenger cars were still in excellent running condition. These pre-World War II models of the Mercedes range competed for the Oldest car (won by Don Sarath Jayantha Colonne), Oldest car with most number of original fittings (won by Ana Malal-goda), and the Oldest car with the original upholstery (won by S R Dharmasiri).



There were many awards in all to be won in various categories, and these included the Driver with the oldest driving license (won by Rathna Cooke), Best looking car of the show (won by Shobana Cooke), and the Most attractive car (won by Ratna Cooke).

“One of the highlights of this year’s pageant was that there was a greater participation of some of the newer models. It is this variety of models which has become one of the most fascinating facets of this pageant. The pageant has seen Mercedes-Benz cars owned by individuals as well as Parliamentarians and State officials, Embassies and other diplomatic organisations and a number of corporate owners”, said Mr Welagedera.





Justice Dr L M Jayaratne and Dr (Mrs) Rohini Jayaratne were both individual winners at the pageant this year, winning awards in the 100,000 km high mileage category and the best maintained car. “This was the first Mercedes-Benz pageant in which we have taken part even though we have been owners of Mercedes-Benz vehicles since the early 1970s, and club members for several years”, said Dr L M Jayaratne, a former governor of the Southern Province. “The pageant is a wonderful opportunity to see such a range of Mercedes models, together in one place. I don’t think there would be this kind of opportunity even at other car shows and rallies”, said Mrs. Rohini Jayaratne. Commenting on the Mercedes-Benz as a passenger vehicle they had this to say, “The present Mercedes we own is our fifth, we have changed models. but never the manufacturer! As a passenger vehicle there is no other car which, in our opinion, can match the durability and high quality of the Mercedes range. And besides, it is also one of the most comfortable passenger cars.

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It was obvious that the participants enjoy the opportunity to meet other owners and swap tales of “I remember when...” and the usual “car talk”. The organisers had taken great care to ensure that this was a day which could be enjoyed by the whole family and ample entertainment for young children, in the form of art competitions and games had been arranged.

If you are a Mercedes-Benz owner, whether individual or corporate, there is no better way to understand your vehicle and get the most of it than to be a part of the Mercedes-Benz Club in Sri Lanka.

For information. on the Mercedes Benz Club in Sri Lanka, contact the Manager, Mercedes-Benz Passenger cars, Diesel and Motor Engineering Company Ltd., 65 Jetawana Road, Colombo 14, Sri Lanka. Tel: (941) 449797, Fax: (941) 449080.