Bulletin Editor's Message: The End or the Beginning?

By: Ir. Mah Soo, Bulletin Editor

If there is no past, could there be the present and the future? Would it not be better to tap the wisdom of the past to gain better footing in the present and future?

In a perpetual relay, the spectators, or even the participants, find it difficult to determine which lap is then being run, as the ending of one becomes the new beginning of another. Hence, it is easy to recognise the present and difficult to pinpoint the forerunners and the future successors unless a trace on the history is made. Legacy will then become important for perpetuity. 'Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could' and if no commitment is made, then there will definitely not be any outcome!

Engineers differ from accountants in that they are usually more concerned with the technicalities and deadlines without giving much emphasis to financial considerations. Such was the concern when the monthly bulletin, JURUTERA, was delivered late. Did anyone realise that prior to 2003, after offsetting advertising revenue, IEM was reported to have coughed up the costs of printing JURUTERA and the Journal of about RM 60,000.00 annually with the same complaint about late delivery. With a switch of some magic pen, IEM currently stands to collect about RM 35,000.00 (as of April 2005-March 2006) as revenue from the publisher, Dimension Publishing Sdn. Bhd., who also has to bear the printing costs. This could translate into a total of benefit in hard cash of RM 95,000.00 to IEM to meet its other expenses. In fact, for the April 2005 to March 2006 term, IEM stands to collect a revenue of about RM 35,000.00, an improvement of 17.5% over that of the June 2004/March 2005 period. Regular communications between the IEM Editorial Board and Dimension Publishing Sdn. Bhd. to work towards better understanding, cooperation and collaboration and arriving at a win-win situation for both sides. Discussions are still on going between IEM Editorial Board and Dimension Publishing Sdn. Bhd. to fine-tune the deadline targets in search of the ellusive timely delivery.

This could be only be realised if there are sufficient and appropriate contributions of articles from IEM members which have to be submitted before the fifth (5th) of each month for these articles to be included in the same month's bulletin. Your co-operation in submitting your contributions on time, be they articles, reports, comments, replies on queries or announcements, so as not to upset the tight time schedule, would be much appreciated.

I wish to thank all, who have contributed to make the monthly JURUTERA possible. Special mentions are:

1. IEM members for giving us the understanding and important feedback during the readership survey;
2. The contributors of articles to make JURUTERA informative and interesting;
3. Members of the Editorial Board, the Standing Committee on Information and Publications for helping in the vetting of articles;
4. IEM's Secretariat especially Puan Aziah, Nurul and Cik Vani for their logistic support;
5. Dimension Publishing Sdn. Bhd. for their co-operation and collaboration; and
6. All others who have contributed directly or indirectly towards the publication effort, for their invaluable assistance and contribution.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish the new Committee every success in their new endeavour. ■

MRR2: Engineers Could Not Speak Up?

By: Ir. Dr Wahid bin Omar

The concern of the public on the safety of MRR2 flyover, which later was blown up by the media, is something that should be of interest to engineers. The issue is real and the risk on public safety is also something that no sensible engineers would dare to bear. The way the media plays up the issue may be a little exaggerated. It is not very strange for the media to sensationalise the issue as they are looking for profit. What is strange is that the voice of engineers be it from individual experts or from established institutions such as IEM, ACEM or Master Builders is almost unheard of. I am not very sure whether there is any provision in the acts or engineering ethics that prohibit engineers to participate in the public discussion. I am in the opinion that the engineers should be encouraged to participate in the discussion and the least role we can play is to educate the public to understand the issue from the correct perspective. The clear example is how we could explain the subjects such as crack formation and the possible causes, the possible sources of design and construction errors that may have occurred. The subjects can be discussed in general and I do not think of any legal risk. The main objective is to explain the technical issues so that we can avoid unnecessary panic among the public. It is admitted that the media do give some space for expert's opinion but it is very limited and the tendency is that they will only highlight points that could attract counter opinion in a more political and hostile manner.

Engineers should be proactive and conduct a thorough studies on the problems that occurred such as to MRR2, Matrade Buildings and NKVE collapse and special seminars be conducted where the issues can be debated. Against the ethics? I do not think this is an ethical issue. The aim of such discussion is for fellow engineers to learn whatever lessons drawn from those occasions. Learning is not necessarily confined to study about good and nice experiences. Perhaps learning from bad experience is more effective. Which party to initiate such actions? Professional establishment through their special interest groups can actually carry out study and present their finding and open for discussion. Generally desk study by experts together with some additional information through personal communication may be sufficient to form a good technical report. Definitely the report will be better if access is obtained to official report which to my opinion should be make available for such study (not for public). Personally I believe that many are interested to know the actual reasons behind those problems that have been reported. Risk of legal repercussions? Again my believe is that as long as the scope of discussion is limited within purely technical issue and avoiding finger pointing and passing judgement there should not be any worry. The technical issue can be valuable lessons for engineers to observe for future projects and avoiding unnecessary wasting of resources by repeating similar error or mistake.

In conclusion, it is timely for engineers to initiate a new culture of transparency and openness and it is to my opinion more in-line with ethics and professionalism that we hold to. In addition the culture may contribute towards the enhancement of knowledge among engineers and it is the way forward in order to compete in the globalised world. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

Effective from 1 April, 2006, please note on the following conditions for attending the IEM evening talk.

1. Admission is free for IEM members only (walk in).
2. Non-members will be charged RM 20.00 subject to the availability of the seats.
3. Limited seats available on a 'first come first served basis' (maximum 110 participants).
4. No telephone reservation will be entertained.
5. Latecomers will not be allowed entrance if hall is full.
6. Please bring along the relevant flyer for confirmation of attendance (CPD purpose).

For IEM members, membership card should be presented for identification purpose. Failure to present the card will be declared as non-members and will necessitate payment of non-member fees.