National and Regional Networking

On 10 August 2005, the Head Commissioner of ASEAN Engineers Register(AER), Ir. Dr Gue See Sew (FIEM), Honorary Secretary of IEM, Ir. M. C. Hee (MIEM), the AER Monitoring Committee Member, Ir. Rocky Wong Hon Thang (FIEM), the President of Persatuan Insinyur Indonesia (PII), Ir. Rauf Purnama as well as its Vice-President, Ir. Heru Dewanto and I paid a courtesy call to the ASEAN Secretariat to meet with H.E. Ong Keng Yong. The items discussed included the popularisation of AER register amongst ASEAN Economic Ministers and Senior Officials to compliment their effort towards finalising MRAs on engineering services. Rather than inventing a new directory of expertise, we urged the ASEAN Secretary General to improve upon the AER hosted by the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations (AFEO).

The next day was a meeting organised by the Board of Engineers Malaysia to discuss the ASEAN PLUS agenda. The PE Board of Singapore as well as Institution of Engineers from Indonesia and Malaysia, the Korea Professional Engineers Association as well as the Japan Association of Professional Engineers were present at the discussions of benchmarks for accreditation. The discussions concluded that the present vehicle of Federation of Engineering Institutions in South East Asia and the Pacific (FEISEAP) could be used for the above purpose rather than setting up of a new vehicle. The AER for professional practitioners may opt to consider the FEISEAP benchmark as substantial equivalence for academic qualifications for these professionals at the undergraduate level.

At the Tripartite meeting between IEM, IES and PII the next day which also coincided with the declaration of emergency by Kuala Lumpur due to the hazardous cross-border haze condition and the closure of schools for two consecutive days, a resolution to address the issue of cross border airborne pollution was agreed upon. The roles of IEM, IES and PII are to lobby their own government to jointly start a short term, mid-term and long-term study towards the establishment of more permanent solutions to alleviate the question of annual airborne pollutants arising from human agricultural activities. Ir. Rocky Wong has also volunteered to provide further input to a proposed paper and IEM members who are passionate about this issue are most welcomed to join this committee. What was further agreed at this meeting is to extend the boundary of Tripartite to include the entire borders of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore from its present focus at Johor state, Riau Island and Singapore (SIJORI). Common engineering issues faced by the three institutions including the recent earthquake and tsunami issues were discussed. The next Tripartite meeting shall be hosted by IEM in 2006 to monitor progress in the above discussions.

The General Assembly of the Federation of Engineering Institutions in South East Asia and the Pacific (FEISEAP) saw the discussions on revitalising its role and functions, the first of which is the setting up of a benchmark for accreditation as referred to in the engineer's register of APEC countries. A Jakarta Declaration was signed by all those present, the purpose being to focus on the definition of an accreditation benchmark for engineering education and for equating equivalence of continuing professional development (CPD) activities amongst member institutions within the Asia-Pacific region. The next step is to also encourage those newer member institutions of ASEAN to join FEISEAP in this effort. The next engineering institution to lead FEISEAP shall be from Japan.

At the home front, I attended the meeting of the National Professional Services Export Council (NAPSEC) chaired by MATRADE. The important issue being the information item on financial assistance available for professional services sector, which are made available to all IEM members from the Secretariat. The financial assistance to be provided include tax incentives for promotion of export of professional services; grants for market development and brand promotion; and various schemes for export financing. A number of trade visits are also planned by the Council and this information shall be disseminated to the membership of those Non-Governmental Organisations present at the meeting.

Arising from the recent visit by an official from RedR International to IEM, there is a need to set up a register of engineers for disaster relief operations employing the template of RedR International. The purpose of such a register, which IEM shall assist to initiate, is primarily to provide our members the opportunities to be involved with post disaster reconstruction activities. Training for the RedR volunteers may be sought overseas if necessary. In this respect I would like to thank the Chairman of Graduate and Student Section, Sdr. Suresh Yegambaram, for being proactive in initiating discussions on this issue. The Graduate and Student Section are also very active in promoting IEM to the stakeholders in the private and public sectors locally and outside the country under the banner of young engineers of AFEO namely YEAFEO. Their activities are truly appreciated by me and they also represent the future leaders of IEM. ■

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