Comment 1: Renewable Energy – The 5th Energy Option

By: Engr. Daniel K. Jesuthassan, *F.I.E.M., P.Eng.*

I refer to the article by Engr. Dr Maulud in the July 2006 Bulletin. I agree that Malaysia must increase the use of Biomass to meet its energy needs. However, this must not be through a process of subsidies. The following comments may elicit some response:-

a) Carbon credit, if available, may give some benefit to biomass as a financially viable energy source for electricity generation.

b) Biomass is essentially storable fuel – although not long term – hence dispatch should be on a take or pay basis up to a certain daily or weekly capacity factor. Not "must take" as and when decided by the generator.

c) Any national energy policy for electricity generation must aim towards optimum electricity price for all electricity consumers in the short and long term. Whilst the author appears to pay lip service to this matter in the last paragraph of his paper, the general tone of the paper is towards making biomass viable through a process of subsidies. ■

062-063•engr edu/5th energy 9/11/06 2:40 PM Page 63

Comment 2: Education on Demand

By: Engr. Chai Siew Key, *M.I.E.M., P. Eng.*

I read with interest the articles on engineering education in the August 2006 edition of the Monthly Bulletin. The editorial comment made by Ir. Mah Soo on "education on demand" was probably made in a jest but this holds true in my personal contacts with young engineering graduates. Over the years, I couldn't help but "sense" the consistent deterioration of "standard" of our budding engineers. I know the word "sense" is hardly fair but as a customer of our mass education process, I hope my voice here would draw some attention.

In the past, engineering education tends to emphasise analytical and scientific knowledge. We blamed this for producing a lot of "squares" with poor EQ, poor communication skills, lacking creativity, etc. To correct these "perceptions", we have adopted various different approaches to engineering education, purportedly to produce more well-rounded students, more articulate students, etc.

Unfortunately, in my role in employing young engineers, I have discovered that most of them cannot even "remember" basic technical concepts during interviews. This problem has worsened until the point where we are forced to compromise our expectations year after year. This holds true for both local and overseas graduates, both from public and private universities. If you'd perform a quick check with fellow peers, I'm sure you'd soon discover this syndrome quite common in Malaysia .

Instead of looking for ways to improve our engineering education system, could we perhaps start looking at our foundation education system in our primary and secondary schools? Could it be that our education philosophy is wrong, making tonnes of students with straight 'A's (something we call success in our education system) without the slightest hint what are the top scores for? Are we creating raw muscles without hearts? Does the word "passion" sound a bell here?

Without this redress, I fear the goals set forth in our multitude of policies will remain elusive, more than ever. Alas, we continue to be subservient to our cleverer masters, living off, to quote James Fallow, "technology-less growth". ■

COMMENTS FROM THE BULLETIN EDITOR

We thank Engr. Chai Siew Key for his letter.

IEM has always offered its service to the nation. In this respect, with its participation on the National Accreditation Board, IEM, through its representatives, has always stood firm on the full compliance of existing adopted guidelines, without any compromise, in the qualifying criteria for Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) to gain accreditation. This is to ensure the standard of these IHLs meet the required standards expected as well as producing quality graduates that could be accepted into the industries. We hope that the relevant Ministries and Government Agencies will take heed of IEM's views and recommendations when implementing such relevant policies and guidelines on education per se.

There is also some encouraging news in the recent media that our Education Minister, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, has said that there will be an "Education Shift Towards Quality" and that the blueprint would be introduced to set standards and criteria to assess students' performance.

With the spirit of "Malaysia Boleh", all of us should strive to help in building of our nation's human capital in support to our Wawasan 2020 towards achieving developed country status.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO IEM'S BOOK PROJECT

To all Members and Readers,

The Standing Committee on Publications is currently embarking on the IEM's Book Project. this would contribute towards the heritage and legacy for perpetuity.

We would welcome from all IEM Branches, Members and Readers, especially those who have been with the IEM over these years, photographs, articles, stories, anecdotes and any documentation, to capture the history of the IEM and the development of Engineering and any engineering achievements of heritage importance in Malaysia.

Please submit your contributions by **30 September 2006** to:-

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