ENGAGING THE GOVERNMENTS : LOOKING OUT-OF-THE-BOX

By: Ir. Prof. Abang Abdullah bin Abang Ali, IEM President

One difference that Academician Dato' Lee as WFEO President is making at the world body is his untiring effort to engage national governments through the United Nations and UNESCO. I noticed this and spoke in support of this welcome trend at the recent WFEO Convention in Shanghai early November 2004. It is a change from our previous pre-occupation with highly technical issues, which has been making us almost oblivious to the many discussions on national and international policies, which affect us all. It opens the door to our involvement in major global issues such as sustainability and capacity building.

Back in Malaysia, the Board of Engineers, Malaysia sent a delegation to meet the Prime Minister last month, to express our concern at the waning interest in science and technology, and hence engineering, amongst students. We impressed upon the PM that there is indeed a failed expectation amongst those who have been encouraged to take up science during their student days, only to find that their contemporaries in the art stream finally becoming their bosses in ministries, while they are only limited to designated technical posts. Recently non-engineers are replacing engineers in GLCs. How can we encourage our young people to take up engineering when the other vocations are given better opportunities, we asked the PM.

The IEM last week sent a delegation to meet the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation at his office in Putrajaya, presenting our Position Paper on R&D and offering our assistance in the ministry's effort to revamp the R&D and Innovation system in the country. The Minister, himself an engineer and more importantly a member of IEM, is appreciative of our initiative to meet up with him with our offer of assistance and invited IEM to propose projects for commercialisation. He however insisted that the projects must be industry-led and suggested that we meet up with him regularly. He advised engineers to get out of our technical cocoon and take up MBAs or the like to widen our outlook in life.

A week before that I was myself involved in a delegation from the Board of the National Accreditation Board (LAN) in a meeting with the Minister of Higher Education. I took that opportunity to impress on the Minister the importance of turning Malaysia into a hub of educational excellence and suggested a need to develop the engineering education and training system in Malaysia.

And yesterday, I had a visit by the Australian High Commissioner to my office in UPM, which is quite a pleasant surprise, in his effort to discuss enhancement of relations between Malaysia and Australia especially in engineering services. We managed to discuss further improvement in relations between Engineers Australia and IEM and cooperation on certain issues.

It seems that we are on the way to active engagement with our government as well as other national governments and this can only be a good omen for engineers in the country. We have really started looking out-of-the-box now. ■

- ERRATA -

In the November 2004 issue of Jurutera, due to production error, the last sentence of paragraph 3, column 1, on page 36 should read:

"They were Allahyarham Tan Sri Raja Ir. Zainal bin Raja Sulaiman, Y. Bhg. Tan Sri Dato' Ir. Abu Zarim bin Haji Omar, the late Ir. Chan Khee Poh, and the late Ir. Wong Kin Hong."

- APOLOGY -

The Editorial Board apologizes and regrets the error, and deeply regrets to have distressed and upset Y. Bhg. Tan Sri Dato' Ir. Abu Zarim bin Haji Omar and his family and also to Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong on the printing error on his write-up.

Chief Editor
Standing Committee on Publications