

MRR2: Engineers Should Speak Up?

By: **Engr. Tan Ka Kheng**, Ph.D (Cantab.), FICHEME, C.Eng., F.I.E.M., P.Eng.

We must salute Ir. Dr Wahid bin Omar for his suggestion that our local engineers participate in open discussion on engineering issues of public interest. The lack of participation of engineers with credible expertise in the discussion of the MRR2 flyover problem may have led to the emergence of “pseudo experts”, who just could not adequately deal with the causes of the problem. The local media is not known for its technical competence either. On two occasions, I was caught in traffic jam on the flyover and I could feel the abnormally high level of vibrations of the bridge not felt on other flyovers. Immediately I informed as many people as possible not to use the flyover. Should the flyover remains open to traffic and something untoward occurs, it would be a big blow to the stature of the engineers and The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia.

Engr. Tham Kum Weng (June 2006 issue of Jurutera) was right in stating the need of engineers to exercise utmost professionalism in any public debate. However, when the safety of public facilities such as an MRR2, a flyover which has become highly questionable, the public should have the right to voice its concern until the problem is resolved. The public cannot just sit back and wait for the experts to act as it will take time and it may be too late. It will be more fruitful if a technical discussion can be convened in the premise of The Institution of Engineers so that the full facts can be reviewed by experts. Such technical discussions and free public lectures hosted by a learned society like IEM should be encouraged and promoted, so that the concerned parties and general public can gain an authoritative and responsible account of the issues at hand. This is often done

by professional bodies and universities in the West.

The call of Engr. Dr Wahid for transparency and openness amongst engineers is laudable, for without transparency, professional accountability and truth Malaysia cannot hope to progress towards a technologically advanced and civil society. Public accountability is crucial in gaining public confidence in any professional body. The failure of MRR2 flyover, the collapse of NKVE and Highland Tower, and the controversy surrounding Matrade Building and Bakun Dam all require proper investigations and inquiry to build up public confidence and accountability. Malaysian engineers and The Institution of Engineers must seriously think of ways to raise the stature of the engineering profession and the esteem of engineers. ■

CHIEF EDITOR'S COMMENTS

All engineering failures deserve the deepest concern of engineers. In our country, however, engineers quite often find their hands tied and are therefore not able to do what they have been trained to do best. As you have mightily put it, many politicians think they can do a better job than engineers. In such cases the engineers do not choose to keep quiet. They are told to shut up!

The problem pertaining to the MRR2 flyover at Kepong may develop into a litigation, and it is best for experts and non-experts alike to refrain from making any comment on it at this stage.

After the dust has settled, we can look at the problem objectively and hopefully come up with a lesson that everybody, engineers and otherwise, can benefit from.

On Statesmanship, the Journal vs. Magazine Debate and Engr.

By: **Engr. Dr Lee Say-Chong**, M.I.E.M., P.Eng.

I recently received back-to-back issues of JURUTERA (May & June 2006) over a span of several days, which is about two months behind the online issues as the Aug 06 issues has already been uploaded. Not that I'm complaining as it still feels good to be able to read a printed copy with all its glossy pages.

Referring to the interview with Datuk Zaidee in the June 06 issue, I'm sure he has received many accolades but I surmise even Datuk Zaidee may be surprised to be called a statesman, a term normally reserved for politicians. A check of online dictionaries does reveal that to be the case.

Then there is also this multiple definition:

1. A man who is a leader in national or international affairs.

2. A male political leader regarded as a disinterested promoter of the public good.
3. A man who is a respected leader in a given field: “a mature statesman of American letters” (Toby Thompson).

So while less frequently used in this context, the writer cannot be really faulted for his choice of the word.

On the same issue, I couldn't quite make out what is meant by the last sentence in the reply from the Bulletin Editor to MRR2 that reads “... such a situation would have been minimised if not totally considered.”

I too can recall the days of the AGMs of yore when frantic efforts were made to meet the meeting quorum as reminisced by

the President in his Corner in the July 06 issue. And the “Post seeks the person” approach suggested therein is by no means rare as ASCE practices it (nominated and alternate candidates).

If one refers to the table in the same issue as regards the characteristics of Journal vs. Magazine, I think the obvious conclusion has to be that JURUTERA is a magazine. That could perhaps explain the article by Dr Sam in the June 06 issue, which is the rightful place for such a topic for more general interest at a more basic level but perhaps with less academic rigor demanded by journal publication as pointed out by Engr. Mun in his letter to the Editor in the Aug 06 issue.

Lastly on the use of Engr., if I recall correctly, I think the same title is given to the corporate members of IES. ■

COMMENTS FROM THE BULLETIN EDITOR

We thank Engr. Dr Lee Say-Chong for his interest, interpretation of the bulletin and comments.

I apologise for the errors in print. The last sentence, which has been referred to, should read as follows:

“If good GOVERNANCE (not ‘government’ as previously printed) and professional ethics are adhered to and complied with, such a situation would have been minimised if not totally AVOIDED (not ‘considered’ as previously printed).

For information, the title given to the Corporate Member of IES is ‘Er.’ and not ‘Engr.’”