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THE NEED TO SHOW A HEALTHY RESPECT

Once again we celebrate the passage of a new year. We look forward to something better than what was achieved during the past year. For a start, after a nervous six months of planning and cajoling you, the reader, for contributions, the editors managed to line up better content. It shows that readers will respond if they are given the right cue.

The subject of Science & Technology made news recently. The government has announced the stepping up of measures to ensure "brain gain" rather than the all too well-known problem of "brain drain". The government also released the Second National Science and Technology (S&T) Policy and Plan of Action last year, and Semiconductors and Nanotechnology are among the 11 identified as key emerging technologies. We still need to prioritise our research programmes and focus on those which will yield the highest dividend. The Academy of Sciences, the chief architect of this plan, identified seven strategic thrusts. A total of 55 specific initiatives were also outlined.

Initiative 25 suggests collaboration with NGOs and industry in S&T promotional activities. In debating the action plans necessary to carry out the initiatives, a participant at a recent workshop lamented the often unfriendly attitude shown by government agencies towards NGOs. He advocated that for these agencies to engage the public, they should value the contributions of industry and professional associations and even walk the extra mile to support or nurture them.

If a fruitful partnership does not exist between government and such associations, the country will not succeed in establishing a firm base for a technological society. If, for example, BEM and IEM carry out activities independent of one another, there will be, not one, but two or more bases for engineering development in the country. That would be wasting valuable resources indeed.

Just as healthy respect at the institutional level is important, mutual respect for one's fellow professionals and fellow IEM members helps keep IEM focused on its main goal of serving its members and the society at large. We notice, however, a tendency to find faults or even tear down the work of others. After facing unjustified criticism of their new ideas, members who give their time to serve IEM will surely become demoralised.

After all, we are human. We sometimes forget that even Newton is one, as the new historical series by Sdr. K.H. Man "Once upon a Time... Isaac Newton the Man" impresses upon us. The editors are positive that you will enjoy reading about the little known details of this man.

Seeing the "big" picture is the main thrust of this month's message from the IEM President. Jurutera used to regularly feature the President's Message in its pages, but this feature was discontinued a few years ago. We are pleased the President has graciously met our request.

The Year of the Monkey promises good times ahead. The editors cannot help but be bullish about being able to make good their own promises.



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