

"Public Colloquium on 'An Understanding of the ASEAN MRA on Engineering Services'"

By: *Engr. Dr Ooi Teik Aun, F.I.E.M., P.Eng*

The Saturday morning public colloquium on 'An Understanding of the Asean MRA on Engineering Services' was delivered by Engr. Rocky H.T. Wong, Head Commissioner of the ASEAN Engineers Register (AER) at the IEM Conference Hall on 14 July 2007. The AER Secretariat is located at the IEM headquarters in Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan. Engr. Choo Kok Beng, founder member of the Asean Engineers Register assisted in the colloquium.

The ASEAN MRA on Engineering Services (as defined by WTO/CPC 8672) was signed by all 10 ASEAN Economic Ministers on the sideline of the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur on 9 December 2005. It has been more than a year since the MRA came into being, and yet, it has not been put into operational mode.

MRA stands for 'Mutual Recognition Arrangement' and a MRA for a specific sector is to facilitate free trade in that specific sector, with the least amount of limitations and the absence of Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). A MRA is regulators-driven during framing and operation.

Of great interest to Malaysian engineers is the ASEAN MRA on Engineering Services. Engr. Wong explained that there are four modes of supply for trade in services, namely, cross border trade, consumption abroad, commercial presence and presence of natural persons.

The ASEAN MRA on Engineering Services was the first MRA on services signed by ASEAN member countries. At that time, it was the obvious to do the 'Doables' and hence only Engineering Services (CPC 8672) was dealt with.

The objectives were to facilitate the mobility of engineering services professionals; and to exchange information in order to promote the adoption of best practices on standards and qualifications.

In order to qualify as an ASEAN Chartered Professional Engineer (ACPE), the person must have:-



- (i) Completed an Accredited Engineering Degree;
- (ii) Licensed (by the domestic Professional Registration Authority, PRA) to practice independently;
- (iii) No less than seven years experience after graduation – with at least two years in charge of significant work;
- (iv) CPD – in compliance to national policy;
- (v) Certified (by domestic PRA) to be free of serious violation of the 'Acts';
- (vi) Screened by and registered with ACPECC secretariat (yet to be established) upon payment of registration fee.

Alternatively, we have the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations (AFEO) and the ASEAN Engineers Register (AER) which established the following qualifications for a person to be registered as an ASEAN Engineer:-

- The Engineering degree must be recognised by a domestic institution;
- Corporate member of a domestic institution and licensed to practice;
- Minimum seven years post graduate working experience in an engineering environment; and
- Subscribe to CPD in compliance to national policy.

Among the objectives of the AER are:-

- Continuous updating of engineering capabilities;

- Harmonise the standard of engineering practices; and
- Gain international recognition to facilitate the mobility of ASEAN Engineers.

The AER and AFEO have adopted the ASEAN Engineering Code of Practice as follows:-

- Code of Ethics;
- Accreditation Procedure;
- Professional Assessment Process;
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD); and
- Policy Statement on Design Codes and Standards.

The Malaysian engineers are generally pampered and they are very much domesticated. The colloquium highlighted the fortunate position of engineers as they are in worldwide demand. It is up to them to make themselves available to the global market; particularly the Asean market. In this respect, it is important that Malaysian engineers are registered as Asean Engineers in order for them to take advantage of the Asean market potential. The meeting recruited more than 10 new members.

Dr Ooi, on behalf of the IEM Standing Committee on Corporate Affairs, presented a memento to Engr. Rocky HT Wong for his enlightening talk and exchanges of opinion. ■