

22nd Conference of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations (CAFEO)

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Mingalarbar! This traditional greeting of Myanmar was the first words that greeted the delegates of CAFEO 22, when we were warmly welcomed by the hosts of CAFEO 22 at Yangon International Airport. From 18-19 December 2004, more than three hundred engineers from 10 ASEAN countries and 8 non-ASEAN countries gathered in Yangon, Myanmar for the 22nd Conference of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations (CAFEO). The conference was hosted by the Myanmar Engineering Society (MES) at Sedona Hotel, Yangon. The Myanmar Engineering Society only became a member of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations (AFEO) in 2000 and was hosting the conference for the first time.

Briefly, the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations (AFEO) is a non-governmental body and its members are the national institutions or organisations of engineers of ASEAN countries. In order to attain AFEO's purposes and objectives such as the promotion of goodwill, understanding, cooperation and the exchange of ideas and experiences, a conference is held every year, hosted in rotation by each member organisation.

For CAFEO 22, Malaysia was represented by a 52-member delegation led by IEM President Ir. Prof. Abang Abdullah Abang Ali. The conference also

had participants from non-ASEAN countries such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and the United States.

The theme of the conference was "Engineering Capacity Building for ASEAN Integration and Global Competitiveness." According to MES President, Prof. Dr Sein Myint, the theme was in line with the ASEAN Vision 2020, where:

- We envision our rich human and natural resources contributing to our development and shared prosperity.
- We commit ourselves to moving towards closer cohesion and economic integration, narrowing the gap in the level of development among Member Countries, ensuring that the multilateral trading system remains fair and open, and achieving global competitiveness.

The opening ceremony of CAFEO 22 began with the parade of AFEO member countries and placement of ASEAN national flags on the stage, followed by an engaging cultural dance, with each dancer costumed in the various ASEAN countries' national costumes. Following



Ir. Prof. Abang Abdullah Abang Ali, President of IEM during the Parade of AFEO Member Countries at the Open Ceremony

tradition, the AFEO Distinguished Honorary Fellow Awards were conferred during the opening ceremony, with the absentee recipients being ex-Indonesian President B.J. Habibie and ex-Philippine President Fidel Ramos. The final AFEO Distinguished Honorary Fellow was conferred on the Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar, H.E. Lt-General Soe Win, who officially opened the conference after his keynote address.

During the 2-day conference, parallel technical paper presentations were also held in the hotel. A total of 134 papers were presented on the following topics: Engineering Capacity Building, Human Resources Development, ASEAN



Cultural Dance with Costumes Representing ASEAN Countries



AFEO-22 Delegates from ASEAN Countries

Integration, Energy and Infrastructure Development, Attaining Sustainable Economic Growth and General Engineering.

The Young Engineers of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering (YEAFAEO) Conference was held concurrently. It was attended by delegates from Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Cambodia and Thailand, along with observers from Hong Kong and Japan. Each of the respective countries gave a brief introduction on their activities. Among the main issues discussed during this conference were strategic plans to enhance communication between YEAFAEO members, formation of a permanent secretariat for YEAFAEO and exchange programs between countries. After the conference, special visits were made by Myanmar's young engineers to enhance friendship between the YEAFAEO delegates, including a visit to Myanmar China Town to try their local food and see the famous ShweDagon pagoda.

The closing ceremony on the second day was officiated by Prof. Dr Sein Myint. The AFEO Flag was officially handed over by him as the outgoing AFEO chairman to the incoming AFEO Chairman, Mr. Khampong Phanvongsa, President of Lao Union of Science and Engineering Association. This was further followed by exchange of gifts between all the ASEAN delegates before the CAFEEO-22 conference was officially ended.

Myanmar – “The Golden Land”

Myanmar is the name which has long been used by its people to describe their

homeland which the British called Burma. It is also known as the Golden Land not only for its Golden Pagodas, but for its rich land and the wealth of its agriculture and precious minerals. Geographically, Myanmar is the largest country in the South-East Asian Peninsula, sharing borders with Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand. It has a total land area of 676,557 square kilometers and is roughly twice the size of Malaysia (which includes the land areas of Sabah and Sarawak.)

The climate of Myanmar is dominated by a tropical climate with three general seasons. The rainy season is from mid-May to mid-October, the cool season (winter) is from mid-October to mid-February and the hot season (summer) is from mid-February to mid-May. The best time to visit Myanmar is during the cool season, which is from November to February.

Many CAFEEO delegates took the opportunity to enjoy some city sightseeing as most have never set foot in Myanmar. Special tour packages were arranged for delegates that arrived earlier. Tour packages for delegates' spouses were arranged as well. Some of the city sights includes the Shwethalyaung, one of the world's most beautiful reclining Buddhas, as well as the Shwemawdaw Pagoda, one of the most venerated pagodas in Myanmar. For bargain hunters, souvenirs were aplenty at the Scotts' Market, with most delegates wishing they had more time to shop!

According to our tour guide at the National Races



AFEO Flag Hand Over Ceremony by Outgoing AFEO Chairman Prof. Dr Sein to incoming AFEO Chairman Mr. Khampong



Exchanging Gifts Between Delegates During the Closing Ceremony

Village in Yangon, the Myanmar people come from more than 100 different races, with the main race being the Bamar, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Shan and Kayah races. Due to the diversity of its people, the country celebrates more than 30 festivals, with a public holiday occurring almost twice monthly.

The People of Myanmar

This story would not be complete if mention is not made of the warmth and charm of the people of Myanmar. The organizers of CAFEEO-22 had recruited many English-speaking young engineer volunteers for the conference, whose warm hospitality never failed to touch our hearts. From the time we arrived at the airport till the time we departed, we were constantly amazed and touched by their sincerity and courtesy. Thus, the authors would like to thank these young volunteers for making their visit to CAFEEO-22 and YEAFAEO-11 such an unforgettable experience. ■



Malaysian Delegates to CAFEEO-22, Myanmar