



Some Important Issues Relating to Engineering Profession

Date: October 28, 2004

Venue: India International Centre Annexe, Lodhi Road, New Delhi

PROGRAMME

900 to 930 hrs	Opening Session: Introduction of the theme by Chief Guest : Dr. Uddesh Kohli, Chairman, ECI : Dr. R A Mashelkar, Secretary, DSIR and Director General, CSIR Guest of Honour : Mr. B. S. Baswan, Secretary, Ministry of HRD
10.15 to 11.15 hrs	Session – I Need for Registration of Professional Engineers in the view of the requirements of GATS in the context of Trade in Engineering Services - International Accords (Washington Accord & EMF)
1115 to 1130 hrs	TEA/COFFEE
1130 to 1230 hrs	Session – II Regulation of the Engineering Profession and draft Engineers Bill
1230 to 1330 hrs	Concluding Session Recommendations and Action Plan
1330 hrs	LUNCH

Some Important Issues Relating to Engineering Profession

Introduction

1. The main objectives of the workshop organized by Engineering Council of India (ECI) were as follows:
 - The need for registration of Professional Engineers arising out of GATS Agreements related to trade in Engineering Services.
 - The need for regulating the engineering profession and proposed Engineers' Bill.
 - The Role of the Engineering Council of India in facilitating these important initiatives.

The Workshop was inaugurated by Dr. R. A. Mashelkar, Secretary, DSIR and Director General, CSIR. In his welcome address, Dr. Uddesh Kohli, Chairman, ECI briefly explained the background of the formation of the ECI in April 2002 by professional associations of engineers with the objective of promoting the engineering profession and bringing about accountability, enhancing the image of engineers and developing criteria and standards for the engineering profession in line with the international requirements in the context of WTO/GATS. He also briefly outlined the efforts made during the last 18-20 years in bringing about Engineers' Bill, so that like others professions such as medical, accountants, lawyers, architects etc, the Engineering Profession could also have a statutory body to regulate the profession. Dr. Kohli also referred to the meeting which he and the then President of Institution of Engineers (India), Mr. G. L. Rao and the present President of IE(I) Mr. O.P. Goel had with Dr. R. A. Mashelkar a year ago, to request him to chair the Board for Registration of Professional Engineers (BRPE), the top most body to be set up for this purpose, which Dr. Mashelkar had kindly agreed.

2. In his address, the Chief Guest Dr. R. A. Mashelkar appreciated the efforts made by ECI. He highlighted the need for bringing about accountability and quality in the engineering profession, for which he felt that Engineers' Bill was urgently needed. He also referred to the opportunities before the engineering profession, both within the country as well as for outside assignments, for which it was necessary to have registration process for professional engineers in place as early as possible, which would be in line with the registration system of other EMF countries. He stated that legislation for regulating the engineering profession was in place not only in many developed countries, but also in several developing countries including Malaysia and Pakistan, where as in India we were already late. Therefore, he felt this Workshop was very timely and it should lead to the processing of the professional Engineers Bill as early as possible.

Technical Session – I

3. The First Technical Session on 'Need for Registration of Professional Engineers in Global Context' was chaired by Mr. Y. N. Apparao, Chairman & Managing Director, Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Ltd. and Co-chaired by Mr. Jawahar Kaul, Former President, Consulting Engineers Association of India. Col. K. K. Chitkara (Retd.) made a brief presentation bringing out the need for registering of professional engineers, countries having mutual recognition arrangements, ECI's proposed requirements and its

organizational setup for registration of PEs. ECI developed Systems and Procedures are in accordance with the requirements laid down by the Engineers Mobility Forum of which India had already become a provisional member. A number of countries had signed mutual recognition agreements, on qualification and experience of professional engineers. These include Washington Accord (9 countries), European Federation of National Engineering Associations (26 countries), Asia Pacific Economic Corporation (21 countries) and Engineer Mobility Forum (9 countries).

The Systems and Procedures developed by ECI were in accordance with the requirements laid down by Engineers Mobility Forum (EMF), of which India had already become a provisional member. There was some urgency as India's application for full membership would be considered by EMF in June 2005 and all the registration has to be in full swing before that.

4. After the presentation, a number of points were deliberated. These included:

- A. On the question of AMIE etc, to be considered as equivalent of an engineer degree, it was clarified by the co-chairman that the basic qualification is Engineering Degree or equivalent from university or institute approved by AICTE or Government of India or any other appropriate body or such other qualifications as may be approved by the ECI. AMIE, is presently recognized by Government as equivalent of an Engineering Degree for employment purposes, and necessary mention in ECI's Systems & Procedures may be considered accordingly.
 - B. On the issues of decentralization of Registration of Professional Engineers at Professional Societies level, it was generally agreed that there should be a centralized statutory body to regulate Registration of Professional Engineers, on the basis of criteria which are at par with the international standards. The Systems and Procedures to be adopted by such a body must be made transparent.
 - C. On some questions relating to role of Institute of Engineers (India) and other Professional Bodies, specially when IE(I) is a Provisional Member of EMF, (the membership is to passed on to ECI as soon it gets government authorization) it was clarified that IE(I) is a founding member of ECI and it was instrumental in setting up of ECI. Almost, all the participants were of the opinion that these roles have been discussed in many seminars/workshops in the last few years and it is time that we put a stop to arguments and counter-arguments, which disrupt our objectives ECI is a federation of 26 Professional Societies/Institutes and there is a role for every member as well as those who are not members and are likely to become member in future.
5. In the discussion that followed the need for registration was appreciated by all participants and there was a consensus to initiate the registration process in accordance with the Systems and Procedures so as to assure quality and accountability in the profession and to enable cross-border movement of competent engineers, immediately, without waiting for the passing of the Engineer's Bill, which can take some time.

Technical Session II

6. The second Technical Session on 'Regulation of the Engineering Profession and draft Engineers Bill' was chaired by Mr. H. L. Bajaj, Chairman, Central Electricity Authority and Co-chaired by Mr. Mahendra Raj, Chairman, Mahendra Raj Consultants Pvt. Ltd. Mr. Sudhir Dhawan, in his presentation, brought about the present status of other professions in the country and the fact that there was no statutory body for regulating the Engineering Profession. He gave a brief background of the past efforts in regard to Engineers' Bill. He also gave the status of the regulation of the Engineering Profession in other countries of the world. He mentioned that the countries which have statutory bodies for the regulation of engineering profession include Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Canada, Germany, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, USA and UK. He gave salient features of the draft Engineers' Bill and also of the statutory body, which will regulate the profession.
7. Gist of deliberations during this session and the Chairman's response are as under:
 - a. All participants were unanimous that Engineers' Bill be enacted in India and it should be piloted by the Ministry of HRD. A few participants stated that it is easy to enact a legislation but it is not so easy to implement it. The implementation process should also look into moral aspects and avoid inherent malpractices in the implementation.
 - b. ECI and IEI should work together. We not only have to rationalize our approach but also to revolutionize it.
 - c. Consensus was in favour of having an Engineers' Bill to regulate Engineering Profession. We need to institutionalize all the processes so that we can deliver goods to the society.
 - d. Mr. Ravi Mathur from the Ministry of HRD stated that
 - Govt. has to be satisfied that there is a need to have an organization to register PE's.
 - Should such body should be the one which deals with education, or should it be a separate body.
 - If the Bill is to be passed, we have to be clear as to whether there are any obligations in WTO for registering PE, to be covered by the Bill.

General view was that engineering education and profession must be regulated by separate and independent bodies. It has to be a decentralized function and the role of professional bodies of engineers will be very important.

- e. The proposed Bill is not against any body, it is for engineers, society and the nation, In Gujarat, buildings collapsed and the accountability for bad design and construction could not be pinpointed. It is the government's responsibility to help regulate the engineering profession in the interest of the society.

In the discussion, there was a general consensus that the Engineer's Bill was needed to be processed urgently. Now that the draft had been submitted to the Government, the same should be processed as early as possible.

Concluding Session

8. The Concluding Session was chaired by Mr. B. S. Baswan, Secretary, Ministry of HRD. Dr. Uddesh Kohli briefly outlined the conclusions arrived at the two Technical Sessions. Mr. Baswan invited the comments/suggestions from the participants. Almost all the participants highlighted the need and urgency for Engineers Bill. The Bill was needed not only in view of international requirements, but also for national urgency to recognize, regulate and develop the engineering profession. It was brought out that when the draft Bill was submitted in early 90's to the Ministry of HRD, a view was then taken by the Ministry that there was no consensus in the engineering profession at that time and the Ministry would take up the Bill once such a consensus has reached. Now that ECI had been formed by various professional bodies of engineers including IE(I) and as a result of the work of ECI during the last two years, such a consensus had been achieved, the time had now come when the Ministry of HRD, acting as a nodal agency, should take up the processing of the draft Engineer's Bill. All participants unanimously supported the need and urgency of the Bill and requested Secretary, Ministry of HRD to take it up on an urgent basis, even consider it through an Ordinance. Representatives from IE(I) and IETE raised the issue whether the qualifications of candidates passing their examinations such as AIME would be considered as equivalent of engineering degree and the Past President IE(I) preferred their draft of the Bill. It was clarified by Chairman ECI that there was no difference in the two drafts on this account, and there was no intention of excluding any candidates, who possess engineering degree or equivalent qualification as recognized by the Government or regulatory bodies such as AICTE. He also mentioned that ECI would be dissolved and it would be replaced by the statutory body proposed in the Bill, as soon as it was formed. The role of the existing ECI was only during the interim period to undertake registration of engineers and other functions based on the Systems and Procedures developed by ECI. Some participants also highlighted the fact that the numbers being very large, registration process should be decentralized and involve all the professional associations of engineers in the task of assessment as envisaged in ECI's Systems and Procedures.
9. Mr. Baswan, in his closing remarks stated that there was need to have a good workable solution, rather than wait for the best solution. He was happy to see a consensus emerging in the engineering profession for the Engineers Bill, for which he also agreed that the time had come. He stated that Ministry would process the Bill on an urgent basis. However, it would need to go through several procedures, which would require some lead time. He asked Chairman, ECI to suggest names of three representative from engineering profession, who could be available for advising the Government in this regard. In the meanwhile as the registration of professional engineers was urgently required, ECI should initiate the activities envisaged for the statutory body.