



e-Newsletter, Issue 2, June 2011

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1.0 Presidential Visit to India

ASCE-India Section is glad to announce that it recently hosted the ASCE Presidential visit for the 2nd time in its history. ASCE President Ms. Kathy J Caldwell, P.E., F.ASCE visited India from 31st May to 4th June, 2011. Ms. Caldwell was accompanied by Mr. Patrick Natale, P.E., F.ASCE, Executive Director, Mrs. Meggan Maughan-Brown, Director of International Relations & Strategic Planning, from ASCE Headquarters in the USA, Dr. Himansu Banerjee, Governor Region 10, ASCE from Australia, and Mr. Pratim Ghose, Governor Region 10, ASCE from Bangkok, Thailand.

First two days of the Presidential visit were in Kolkata and the next couple of days were in New Delhi. Brief accounts of Ms. Caldwell's visit, various issues discussed, and most importantly, an outline of the Round Table Conference (RTC) hosted by ASCE, are given here.

1.1 Arrival of the Presidential Team (31st May)

The President and her team arrived at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata at around 5 pm from Dhaka, Bangladesh. They were welcomed and greeted by Dr. Anil Krishna Kar, President, ASCE-IS, Dr. Debabrata Kar, Mentor, ASCE-IS, and a couple of other members of the Interim Executive Committee (ExCom). Ms. Caldwell was accompanied by her husband, Prof. Ronald Cook, Ph.D., P.E., First Gentleman of ASCE, and Mr. Natale by his wife Ms. Sheila Natale.

After initial introductions with everybody from ASCE-IS, the President and her team were escorted by two ExCom members to their hotel in Alipore.

On checking in at the hotel, a brief discussion took place between the two ExCom members, Mrs. Meggan Maughan-Brown and Dr. Himansu Banerjee to firm up the program for the meeting that was scheduled to take place the next morning at the Hotel. They also handed over relevant papers (program, agenda, etc.) to the Presidential team.

1.2 Presidential Meeting with Interim Executive Committee of ASCE-IS (1st June)

The following morning, the Interim Executive Committee of ASCE-IS led by Dr. A K Kar met the President and her team at 9 am in the hotel. Dr. A K Kar was accompanied by Dr. Debabrata Kar (Mentor), Prof. Sudhir Kumar Das (Secretary), Mr. Biman Gati Gupta (Treasurer), Mr. Sandip Kumar Deb (Student Program Manager), and Dr. Ayanangshu Dey (Event Coordinator).

At the very start of the meeting, a short session was hosted where Dr. A K Kar, on behalf of the ASCE-India Section, presented Ms. Kathy Caldwell and her team with gifts as a token of appreciation for their time and initiative. After formal introduction process, the actual meeting got underway.

Initially, Dr. A K Kar gave a formal welcome address which was followed by Ms. Kathy Caldwell's brief preamble to the meeting. The agenda of the meeting was outlined by Dr. Himansu Banerjee. The entire meeting was presided over by Ms. Caldwell and Mrs. Meggan Maughan-Brown acted as the Moderator.

Presidential Team with ASCE-IS Executive Committee Members



Various issues were discussed in the meeting, some of those being administrative, fresh society registration of ASCE-IS, opening of a new bank account, sorting out some pending issues with past committee, etc. It was brought to the notice of the President that the ExCom was also coordinating with the previous committee to take over relevant documents at an early date. The Constitution and Byelaws of ASCE-IS, earlier sent to ASCE HO for their review, were received with minor comments. It was mentioned that the current ExCom was holding frequent meetings to streamline the activities of India Section and would like to meet monthly once normal operations were restored. The formation and operation of 4 Branches of India Section were briefly mentioned but was left for discussion in the Round Table Conference (RTC) at New Delhi on 3rd June.

Dr. A K Kar and Prof. S K Das suggested a possible reduction in yearly membership subscription for India Section members as it was still being categorized as relatively high under the current context. Ms. Caldwell and Mr. Natale reacted positively to this suggestion and assured that there would be further reduction in membership fees (to 1/3rd of the original amount of \$210, i.e. \$70). Such reduction would be applicable for the next 3 years before any subsequent review.

Here, Mr. Pat Natale made two important announcements. Firstly, ASCE HO would be prepared to extend a non-interest bearing loan to ASCE-IS. The

amount would be gradually adjusted against the annual section allotment in the coming years. Secondly, he suggested that ASCE-IS might contact a suitable "Sister Section" in USA to work together.

The Presidential team was informed about the circulation of the first electronic newsletter (e-newsletter) of ASCE-IS for the month of May. Work on having a dedicated website for the Section in "www.asce.org" server was also in progress. A brief account was also given to Ms. Caldwell and her team on the upcoming events, i.e. technical talk arranged in July and a probable field trip some time in September/October.

An outline of the RTC at New Delhi on 3rd June was detailed out with specific reference to the agenda of the meeting and outcome that ASCE would expect in order to reach out to and involve its members with a variety of technical activities.

Dr. Banerjee suggested engaging Bangladesh Section of ASCE to plan joint technical events in future and it was well-accepted. The issues like sustainable development, certification courses training, and professional development were also put on the table. Ms. Maughan-Brown mentioned that ASCE-IS could use the variety of information available with ASCE (specially in the form of webinar, manuals, etc.) to hold technical events. ASCE-IS would like to explore this opportunity in future and popularize this amongst its members.

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At the end of the meeting (4:00 pm), Mr. Pat Natale summed up an effective Action Plan for ASCE-IS in the coming months to organize events and other technical sessions. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks and closure jointly by Dr. H Banerjee and Dr. A K Kar.

1.3 IEI and ASCE Joint Seminar (1st June)

A seminar was jointly hosted by the Rural Development Forum (RDF), The Institution of Engineers (India) (IEI) and ASCE in the Sir R N Mookherjee Hall at the West Bengal State Center of IEI from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. The theme of the seminar was “Engineering without Borders” and Ms. Caldwell was invited to be the Chief Guest on the occasion. Ms. Caldwell was accompanied by her team and ASCE-IS ExCom Members.

On behalf of ASCE, Ms. Kathy Caldwell gave a brief presentation on the “Vision for Civil Engineering in 2025” document prepared by ASCE and highlighted the main points in line with the selected theme of the seminar. Amongst other dignitaries, Er. G Prabhakar, President, IEI, Prof. (Dr.) S K Bandyopadhyay, Chairman, RDF, IEI, Prof. (Dr.) N R Bandyopadhyay, Chairman, CATE, IEI and Er. Sandip Kumar Deb, Director, RDF, IEI were present. High Tea was served to the attendees at the end of the session.

1.4 Dinner at Calcutta Club (1st June)

The President ASCE hosted a dinner at the prestigious “Calcutta Club”. A few eminent Civil Engineers and other dignitaries were invited to attend the dinner and have interactions with the President and other ASCE officers. ASCE members in Kolkata were invited by ASCE-IS President to meet her.

Some prominent dignitaries present at the dinner were Er. G Prabhakar, President, IEI, Major General (Retd.) R K Sanan, Secretary and Director General, IEI, Prof. (Dr.) N R Bandyopadhyay, Chairman, IEI, Dr. Arunava Majumder, Professor Emeritus, Javavpur University, and Mr. Amitabha Ghoshal, Vice-Chairman, STUP Consultants.

This event also provided the local ASCE members with a rare opportunity to get introduced with the ASCE President and her team, to share their thoughts, and interact with them. This was very much appreciated by the members.

1.5 Meeting with President, IEI (2nd June)

Ms. Kathy Caldwell and her team attended a meeting with Er. G Prabhakar, President, IEI for signing of a bilateral agreement between the American Society of Civil Engineers and The Institution of Engineers (India). Mr. Pat Natale and Mrs. Meggan Maughan-Brown accompanied Ms. Caldwell on the occasion. The President, Secretary, Student Program Manager, and Event Coordinator of ExCom were also present to represent ASCE-IS.

Major General (Retd.) R K Sanan, Secretary and Director General, IEI, Er. Anil Kumar, Deputy Director General, IEI, Dr. Partha Ghosh, Director Technical, IEI, Mr. Sisir Banerjee, Council Member, IEI, Mr. Amitabha Ghoshal, Vice President, CEAI, and others were present in the meeting on behalf of The Institution of Engineers (India).

After initial introductions, the signing of the agreement was underway. During their introductory talks, both the presidents agreed to provide more cooperation and involvement amongst the two Engineering Societies in the years to come. A short video film was shown on The Institution of Engineers (India) to apprise the Presidential team of the technical activities IEI undertakes to encourage Engineering at national level. A brief presentation was given by Mr. Amitabha Ghoshal on the forthcoming Concrete Congress scheduled to be held at Mumbai in 2012.

ASCE President and her team were presented with gifts by the IEI President after the agreement signing formalities were concluded. Exotic Bengali sweets were served with snacks. This was very much appreciated by Ms. Caldwell and others.

Signing of Bilateral Agreement between ASCE and The Institution of Engineers (India)



1.6 President Leaves for New Delhi (2nd June)

The ASCE President bids farewell to Kolkata in the afternoon to fly to New Delhi, the Indian Capital. She was accompanied by her team and 3 members of Interim ExCom of ASCE-IS, who were previously selected to attend the RTC at New Delhi the following day. These individuals were Dr. A K Kar, Dr. D Kar, and Dr. A Dey.

The RTC was organized at New Delhi by ASCE. The attendees coming from outside of Delhi were put up at the same hotel, where the RTC was arranged on 3rd June. On arrival at the hotel, Mrs. Meggan Maughan-Brown, Dr. Banerjee, and Dr. Dey got together to check on the logistics for the next days' conference, give necessary instructions to hotel staff, and organize the documents to be handed over to the attendees before the meeting.

1.7 Round Table Conference (RTC) at New Delhi (3rd June)

The basic idea behind arranging the RTC at New Delhi was to ascertain members' participation at all India level and explore ways to propagate the activities of ASCE to different corners of India. Apart from the Presidential team from USA, 2 Governors, and 3 ExCom members, the following individuals were invited to attend the RTC (given in order of the region they represented),

Region 1: Eastern India – Mr. Balaram Mukherjee, M.ASCE, Director (Tech.), KND Engineering Technologies Ltd. Kolkata, and Mr. Ashish Kumar Mishra, Student Member, ASCE, G.E. University, Dehradun.

Region 2: Western India – Dr. Urmil Dave, AM.ASCE, Senior Associate Professor, Dept. of Civil Engineering, Nirma University, Gujarat, Mr. Arvind Shah, F.ASCE, CMD, ICG Engineering Pvt. Ltd, and Dr. Gajanan Sabnis, P.E., Distinguished Member and Fellow, ASCE, CEO, 21 SHM Consultants, Mumbai, India, and Emeritus Professor, Howard University, USA.

Region 3: Northern India – Mr. Srirup Mitra, M.ASCE, Sr. Engineer, Feedback Ventures Ltd., Gurgaon, Delhi, Mr. Satish Kumar Vij, AM.ASCE, President NGO/Consultant, Dr. R. Ayothiraman, Assistant Professor in Dept. of Civil Engineering, IIT Delhi, Mr. Arif Ali Siddique, Aff.M.ASCE, Engineer-

-ing Group Supervisor, BECHTEL Inc., New Delhi, Mr. Sanjay Parida, Aff.M.ASCE, Planning & Design Engineer, Lahmeyer International (India) Pty. Ltd., New Delhi, Dr. N T Rao, M.ASCE, Vice President, Intercontinental Consultants & Technocrats, New Delhi, and Dr. B C Roy, M.ASCE, Senior Executive Director, Consulting Engineering Services (India) Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

Region 4: Southern India – Dr. B K Raghu Prasad, AM.ASCE, Professor, Dept. of Civil Engineering, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and Dr. Sireesh Saride, Aff.M.ASCE, Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Hyderabad.

Ms. Kathy Caldwell, President-ASCE, first welcomed all attendees to the conference which was followed by a brief address by ASCE-IS President Dr. A K Kar. Dr. Banerjee moderated the next session when the attendees introduced themselves.

An outline of the program for the day was then presented by Dr. Banerjee after sharing some history and background of formation of ASCE's India Section in 1988. Subsequent to this, Ms. Maughan-Brown talked about the format and procedure devised for the RTC. It was highlighted that success of the entire exercise depended on the small group brainstorming session which was to follow. The RTC attendees were divided into 3 groups of about 5 people each and a team leader was assigned for each group. Dr. A K Kar, Dr. D Kar, and Dr. A Dey were entrusted with the responsibility of leading the 3 groups. To conclude the session, Dr. Sabnis, on behalf of Western India International Group (WIIG) gave a brief presentation about their technical activities.

President's Round Table Conference with ASCE-IS Members in New Delhi



After a short break, the 3 groups got together amongst themselves and started interacting to come up with a variety of concepts, options, issues, opinions, suggestions, which were required to be debated and discussed in order to come up with some concrete and reasonable ideas of how ASCE activities in India can be strengthened and spread out amongst its members. Group leaders of individual groups moderated the respective sessions, took notes, sought clarifications, and finally summarized the essence of these discussions.

The 3 group leaders in turn presented their respective accounts of what were the proposals and suggestions put forward by their members. Some of the most critical items were to restore the confidence of existing members, retain the default members, and induct new members. Holding technical seminars, panel discussions, field trips, both at regional and national levels, were the obvious choices by which members' involvement could be increased.

Dividing India into 4 separate geographic regions with a central governing body (ASCE-IS) was accepted by all with minor modifications. Formation of a national level interim ASCE-IS committee with Dr. A K Kar as the President has been agreed upon and this committee will have representation from all the 4 regions considered now. The regional branches will form their respective executive committees to operate till the first election is held. Gradually, these individual regional entities will start to organize their own technical activities, fund raising, etc.

Special attention was given to form student chapters at various educational institutions as Ms. Caldwell showed a particular interest in promoting this concept. A suggestion was also put forward to directly approach the leading technical institutions requesting them to open their ASCE student chapters. Collaborative activities with these institutions like technical talk, international seminar, arranging a national level student competition were also the opportunities that ASCE-IS might look into. All agreed that such activities at the very university level were expected to spread the awareness about ASCE and its motto amongst undergraduate and graduate students.

From the membership database, it was reported that a large no. of members were either in arrears (mostly professionals) or dropped out (mostly students). Once, the ExCom and other committees

are formed, these individuals can be contacted with requests to reconsider their decisions. The 4 regional branches can share the work load as per the locations of these members. A common email can be sent letting them know that ASCE-IS is active again and both at regional and national levels.

Students should be encouraged to renew their free membership each year by signing on and confirming that they are still in university at study. ASCE also has a plan of reduced membership dues for students during their initial 5 years in the profession. Information on upgrading an Aff.ASCE or AM.ASCE membership to full member grade was required to be circulated amongst members as a form of raising awareness amongst members about membership upgradation.

The members agreed on having a membership drive to induct new members. On issues like recognizing individual efforts, package to promote institutional membership, etc. ASCE HO would discuss and get back to ASCE-IS with a complete package clearly defining such options and the associated benefits.

After a short coffee break, Mr. Natale summarized the session with a list of activities that ASCE-IS was required to organize in the coming months. Every support from ASCE HO would be available on achieving this along with some input and decisions that were expected from ASCE HO.

The concluding remarks were given jointly by Dr. Banerjee and Dr. A K Kar. Both of them appreciated the active participation of the members present and expressed satisfaction over the sugges-

President's Team with the Round Table Conference Attendees in New Delhi



-tions put forward by them in taking ASCE-IS further to make it an active international entity of ASCE. Finally, the President expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the members for taking their valuable time, coming over to attend the RTC, and making it a success.

After the RTC, Ms. Caldwell and Mr. Natale were interviewed by the representative from a leading technical magazine in India. They were again interviewed in the evening by representatives from another well-circulated technical magazine in India.

The highlight of the evening was the cocktail party thrown by the ASCE President. It was attended by a number of leading professionals, educationalists, and ASCE-IS members from Delhi. The ASCE Region 10 Governors and ASCE-IS ExCom members also took part.

1.8 “Goodbye Madam President” (3rd June)

All RTC attendees bid Ms. Caldwell final goodbye before leaving Delhi and go to their respective destinations. They wished her team a wonderful stay in New Delhi and a safe trip back to the United States. The President, in return, wished all the attendees a very safe trip back to their places and was very much optimistic to see a vibrant ASCE - India Section in days to come.

During informal discussions, everybody agreed that interactions amongst the attendees, their respective group leaders, and the Presidential team had been a novel experience for them. A significant amount of progress could be achieved after a hard day’s work and they would look forward to work together in spreading the ideas and activities of ASCE in India.

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