

## Summary of 44<sup>th</sup> AITAA Governing Board Meeting (GBM)

The Governing Board Meeting (GBM) of the Asian Institute of Technology Alumni Association (AITAA) has been once again fruitfully held. This time it is No. 44, held in the beautiful city Colombo, Sri Lanka, attended by representatives of 16 National Chapters of AITAA (out of 21 active chapters) plus many more guests and observers, including formers presidents of National Chapters and Headquarters, in the 4-days format starting with arrival day of 30 October 2015 and departure day of 2 November 2015, with two business days in between.

The actual meeting starts on 31<sup>st</sup> October at Aqua Function Hall, Hotel Ozo Colombo. The inauguration session starts with lighting of the symbolic oil lamp by the Chief Guest of Honor – Mr. Hewa Matara Gamage Siripala Palihakkara (Governor of Northern Province of Sri Lanka), Dr. Subin Pinkayan (Chairman of AIT Board of Trustees), Mr. Thanin Bumrungsap (AITAA President), Prof. Hiran Dias (Patron of Sri Lanka Chapter of AITAA), Prof. Kazuo Yamamoto (AIT Vice President for Resource Development), and Mr. Sanjeev Jayasinghe (AIT Interim Head of Alumni Affairs Office).

President of Sri Lankan chapter, Mr. Sunimal Weerasooriya, in his capacity of the Chairman of the meeting, delivers the welcome speech. President of AITAA, Mr. Thanin Bumrungsap, continues with his welcome remarks. He states three main purposes of the meeting: 1) to update AITAA business; 2) to get together, know each other better, enhance our networking and maintain it strong during the social events; and 3) to discuss about what AITAA should be able to do to help our alma-mater, AIT. He adds that many friends have suggested that there should be another additional purpose of the meeting, i.e. to explore business cooperation opportunities among the alumni. Mr. Thanin then invites Mr. Sokmuny Thao, President of Cambodia Chapter – the next host of GBM - to come to the head table to assume the role of the Vice Chairman of the meeting.



Mr. Palihakkara, former Sri Lanka Ambassador to Thailand and former member of AIT Board of Trustees, then delivers a keynote address, emphasizing the importance of Asian region development. He shares his vision on recreating AIT through improving its cost effectiveness, enhancing its competitiveness, and maintaining its relevance while above all aligning its teaching, learning, and

research activities to real life issues, critical to sustainable growth and human development in Asia. Alumni, would be, no doubt, representing a significant resource to such an anticipated success.

The GBM then proceeds with introduction of AITAA National Chapters representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, United States of America, and Viet Nam. It follows by group photography on an intermediate rooftop of the hotel building.

During the self-introduction session, one of the delegates (and Patron) of the Pakistan Chapter, Dr. Shamsuddin M. Qureshi (one of the 12 AIT Hall of Fame Inductees and former minister and chairman of councils and commissions on higher education and research of Pakistan) takes the opportunity **to commend Mr. Thanin** for so diligently leading AITAA during the past two years filled with activities yielding so many positive achievements for the alumni community and for AIT. Mr. Thanin expresses appreciation of Dr. Qureshi's commendation, mentioning gratefulness to know that his performances have been positively perceived as the many communication messages distributed to the alumni at large on behalf of AITAA have mostly gone silent.



The business session proceeds with approval of the minutes of 43<sup>rd</sup> GBM, conducted by Mr. Zaw Zaw Aye, Executive Secretary. Mr. Thanin, President of AITAA, then introduces special guests, Executive Committee members, and officers.

Mr. Thanin then presents the AITAA Headquarters Report of 2014-2015, which consists of alumni-related, AIT-related, and student-related activities. He emphasizes that a lot of efforts have been put into alumni networking activities such as donations to the Nepal Chapter and the Myanmar Chapter (including coordinating with the National Chapters to donate) to support them in the natural disasters relief activities. Other networking activities were such as re-establishment of National Chapters, e.g. Canada Chapter, with some more chapters in process, and establishment of new chapters, such as

Nigeria and Timor-Leste, are also in progress. His roles in AIT Board of Trustees and AIT Executive Committee, and as the Co-Chairman of the Student Relations Committee have been crucial. The recent "Online Survey on the Needs of Human Resources and Research Areas of the Region" is an example of the contributions of AITAA to AIT. A more important role which he has tried for more than one-and-a-half year is to convince the AIT Executive Committee that the AIT laboratories need drastic improvements on which the Executive Committee has made a resolution in the latest meeting on 2 October 2015. This issue will be discussed in details in the session on AIT matters the next day. Moreover, there were many other activities such as coordination with the Philippines Chapter on their initiation to donate some equipment to AIT. (For full details of activities report, please visit [www.aitaa.asia](http://www.aitaa.asia).) After that, Dr. Suthi Panpanit, the Financial Officer, presents the Financial Report which receives the approval of the meeting.

The 16 National Chapters then report on the annual activities of their Chapters, with special report from the Myanmar Chapter on flood disaster relief activities. The Nepal Chapter, although not attending this GBM, has sent a report of the earthquake disaster relief efforts. The Cambodia Chapter, the designated host of the next GBM, promotes Siem Reap, the flagship of the historical tourist attractions in Cambodia, as the venue of the next GBM, and enthusiastically expects to see many alumni there in 2016. Mr. Thanin commends Myanmar Chapter and Nepal Chapter for their good performances in the natural disasters relief activities, giving good examples of how AIT alumni can contribute to the society.

Mr. Taweechai Termkunanon, AITAA Auditor, as the Chairman of the Working Group on the Distinguished Alumni Award and Honorary Membership Award, then presents the nominees' profiles and the meeting approves 14 Distinguished Alumni Awards, 3 from Bangladesh – Dr. Afzal Hossain, Dr. Abdul Ghani, and Dr. Sultan Ahmed; 1 from India – Dr. Ajay Pradhan; 1 from Myanmar – Ms. May Sabe Phyu; 1 from Pakistan – Dr. Saleem Raza Zamo; 3 from Sri Lanka – Dr. Ranjith Perera, Dr. Malwila Dissanayake, and Dr. Sunil De Silva; 3 from Thailand – Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kittichai Triratanasirichai, Mr. Chaiwat Kovavisarach, and Dr. Kasemsun Chinnavaso; and 2 from United States of America – Dr. Debasmita Misra and Dr. Sushil Acharya; and 2 Honorary Membership Awards, 1 from Pakistan – Prof. Ahsan Iqbal; and 1 from Sri Lanka – Dr. Neville Fernando.

Mr. Zaw then proceeds with AITAA Presidential Election by declaring that by the deadline of 30 September there were two nominations of candidates; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Somchet Thinaphong nominated by AITAA Thailand Chapter and Mr. Thanin Bumrungsap nominated by AITAA the Philippines Chapter. But Mr. Thanin himself has declined, on ground that he would like to open up an opportunity for some other alumni of high competence to partake in contribution to betterment of the AITAA and AIT communities as a whole, after serving as AITAA Headquarters President for one complete term, plus 3 previous years as AITAA Thailand Chapter President, and in other positions since 1984. Mr. Supachai Rakpanichamane, Vice President of AITAA Thailand Chapter, presents Dr. Somchet's profile. Dr. Shamsuddin M. Qureshi from Pakistan Chapter then **asks the meeting to acknowledge Mr. Thanin's good works and good guidance for all AITAA Chapters** and requests Mr. Thanin to reconsider continuation of his tenure. Mr. Zaw replies by suggesting restriction to the election regulations. Mr. Zaw then invites Dr. Somchet to the podium for his manifesto presentation. After that, Mr. Zaw tells the meeting that election ballots will be distributed for secret vote of approval or objection. But Dr. Qureshi interrupts by suggesting the meeting to take a unanimous decision of approval rather than going into ballot voting. Nobody disagrees. Thus it is eventually considered that Dr. Somchet has been unanimously elected by the Governing Board.

The GBM Chairman asks for reconfirmation of GBM hosting after No. 45 in Cambodia in 2016. Taiwan Chapter graciously reconfirms the offer to host the 46<sup>th</sup> GBM in 2017. When the Chairman asks whether any National Chapter want to make an advance offer to host the 47<sup>th</sup> GBM in 2018, the Pakistan representatives kindly make the offer. The two chapters receive a round of applause.

Mr. Thanin gives a closing remark for the first-day's sessions by touching on the efforts to reestablish Australia Chapter and Canada Chapter, with the latter successful, and cites USA Chapter as a good example of remaining active in a circumstance similar to those two countries. Moreover, the USA Chapter is the one having traveled the farthest. Mr. Thanin continues with explanation of the efforts

on sharing of database of alumni between AITAA Headquarters and National Chapters. A few chapters then positively share their views on the issue.

The first business-day's sessions ends with the Sri Lanka Chapter President handing over the symbolic AITAA Globe to Cambodia Chapter President to signify commitment to hosting the next GBM in 2016 witnessed by President of AITAA and Governing Board. The delegates exchange their souvenirs.



On 1 November 2015 – the second business day of the GBM – Mr. Sunimal, GBM Chairman, opens the session, welcoming all delegates, and informs the meeting about the schedule of the continued session of AITAA Business. He invites Dr. Subin Pinkayan, Chairman of AIT Board of Trustees, to deliver his message.

Dr. Subin expresses his sincere appreciation and thanks Sri Lanka Chapter for organizing this beautiful meeting. He mentions that he has prepared some notes for the meeting and summarizes some points instead of the report from the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. He suggests that he would like to have inputs and brainstorming from the alumni. Dr. Subin elaborates that a week before the GBM, there were two brainstorming sessions; a very good one at a level of the Board of Trustees on "To pursue what we would like AIT to have in the future" which will be summarized by Prof. Worsak, and another one organized by Prof. Worsak at administrative level on the same scheme. Therefore he would like to have brainstorming from the alumni to complete three levels of brainstorming in collecting relevant information for the people who will make an AIT business plan for 5 years of 2016–2020. Dr. Subin further details the status and works that AIT has done so far under his chairmanship, such as the Roadmap, in progress Business Plan, and new Programs. He also refers to AIT ownership situations before his tenure. He then suggests some ideas on what AIT should do in order to be self-supported and sustainable. He also looks forward to the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AIT as a homecoming celebration and suggests that the GBM be held in Thailand that year.

Prof. Kazuo Yamamoto, VPRD of AIT, starts by saying that although he is not an alumnus, he feels so much attached to AIT. Then he presents some AIT financial status, progress of the Library Modernization project, academic status such as resources, recognition, ratings, and rankings, collaborations with other organizations and industries, and plan to renovate experimental equipment for each school, citing Mr. Thanin for having staunchly pursuing the issue. He welcomes critical remarks that are constructive for the future of AIT.

Mr. Thanin, President of AITAA, responds to Dr. Subin's remark about AIT's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, pointing out that it has always been an unchartered tradition that the Thai Chapter hosts the GBM in the years ending with the number 9. Thus GBM in 2019, the year of AIT's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, should be hosted by Thailand Chapter.

**Mr. Thanin continues by talking through a PowerPoint presentation**, starting by emphasizing the importance of hand-on laboratory science, beginning at the kindergarten time. He quotes Prof. Worsak's most recent message of Saturday 24 October 2015 to Faculty and Staff about Nokia in trouble because of failure to adapt to "change". He explains about his efforts starting from talking to Prof. Worsak in March 2014 about alarming conditions of AIT laboratories, with presence of Khun Chainarong (former AITTA President who is also in this meeting), where Prof. Worsak was adamant that AIT needed only library improvement but not the labs which he said were in perfect conditions. Mr. Thanin's effort went on to raising the issue in AIT Excom meeting in December 2014 with supporting remark of Prof. Yamamoto (who is also in this meeting), exploring some of the AIT labs in April 2015 and presenting his findings in AIT Excom meeting in June 2015 which were well acknowledged, making a remark in AIT Board of Trustees meeting in July 2015 and subsequently

receiving a concurring message from Dr. Za-Chieh Moh in August 2015, and finally obtaining a resolution of AIT Excom on 2 October 2015 on course of actions to be taken for “change” and improvement, again with support of Prof. Yamamoto. Mr. Thanin closes his presentation by emphasizing that AIT will need help from the alumni in that connection.

**Prof. Yamamoto thanks Mr. Thanin for the presentation** and then uncovers his initial plan on how to renovate laboratory equipment.

The representatives of all the National Chapters then make comments and suggestions, with some chapters expressing their appreciation for the eye-opening presentation and confirm their readiness to help raise funds.

Mr. Sunimal requests Dr. Subin for his closing remark of AIT business session. Dr. Subin cites a simple question of demand and supply of human resources in representatives’ countries to which AIT could use the information for practical implementation. Mr. Sunimal thanks all for comments and contributions and gives the floor to AITAA Headquarters for Conclusion session.

Mr. Utai Srimhai, AITAA Business Officer, presents the draft minutes of meeting in bullet-point style. Some inputs are noted and should be compiled. The draft minutes of meeting will be distributed to delegates by email.



In the afternoon, there was a city tour of Colombo on an open-top tour bus with a tour guide giving information on the city’s important places.



In the evening of the guest arrival day of 30 October 2015, there was a welcome cocktail party with good music at Ozo Hotel. Mr. Sunimal Weerasooriya, President of Sri Lanka Chapter of AITAA delivered a welcome speech by to the delegates and guests.





In the evening of 31 October 2015, there was a Gala Dinner at Galadari Hotel. The AITAA Distinguished Alumni Awards and Honorary Membership Awards were presented by AITAA President to the awardees and representatives. The delegates enjoyed the performance of the music band and the party. There were speeches by Dr. Subin, Mr. Thanin, and Dr. Somchet. Dr. Qureshi took the opportunity to again make **a commendation for Mr. Thanin's diligence and outstanding performance.**



In the evening of 1 November, there was a farewell dinner with Sri Lankan cultural shows arranged at the Aqua Function Hall, Ozo Hotel.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank friends and members of Sri Lanka Chapter of AITAA for the well-organized 44<sup>th</sup> AITAA GBM in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Thank you, Mr. Sunimal Weerasooriya, and your committee members, and organizing team.

**Ayubowan**