

REPORT ON THE PARTICIPATION OF THE BOARD AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF IECA-EC'06 AT LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA



The International Erosion Control Association is a premier organisation established for the promotion of soil erosion control all over the world. The IECA has been established with its headquarters at Steamboat Springs in USA. They have been organising the annual conference of IECA every year coinciding with an Expo on the various erosion control products. A series of seminars/training programmes are also held in connection with the IECA Annual Conferences.. The annual conference of IECA,2006 was held at Long Beach, California in USA during the period 20-24, February, 2006. As sanctioned by the Ministry vide letter No.F.4(30)/2004-Coir/167 dated 16th February, 2006, Shri. A.C. Jose, Ex. M.P., Chairman, Coir Board and Shri. M. Kumaraswamy Pillai, Dy. Director participated in the Annual Conference of IECA and EC '06 in Long Beach, California.

Proceedings of the EC '06

The EC '06 commenced on 20th February 2006 Monday at 8 a.m. with a training programme on different soil bio-engineering applications. There were 13 different topics as per details given below:

- Design for Sediment and Erosion Control
- CPESC Exam Review Course
- CPSWQ Exam Review Course
- Theory in Practice: Wind Erosion Control Prediction System (WEPS)
- Principles and Practices for using Vegetation to Prevent Erosion
- Streamwise: An introduction to Fluvial Geomorphology
- Innovative Restoration: Applied Processes & Technologies for stabilizing Stream banks and Restoring Rivers
- Comprehensive Storm Water Management for New Development/Redevelopment in California
- Soil-Loss estimation for construction lands using RUSLE 2.0 - Part 1 of 2
- Low impact designs to reduce erosion and offsite impacts
- Tools for Rules: How to select, Install and Inspect Construction Site BMPs for NPDES Compliance
- How to write and implement SWPPP
- The Best of the BMPs: Application, Implementation and Maintenance



Shri. M. Kumaraswamy Pillai, Dy. Director attended the training programme on Innovative Restoration: Applied Processes & Technologies for Stabilising Streambanks and Restoring Rivers. The programme gave an overview of the process and technologies presently used in the protection of stream bank which includes application of coir nettings for embankments protection, cocologs for stream line protection etc. The training programme was useful to get an exposure on the various techniques being adopted world over by the scientists.

Meeting with the President, IECA

The Chairman, Coir Board along with the DD (Stat.) held separate meetings with Mr. Doug Wimble, President, IECA, John W. Peterson, past President of IECA on the possibilities of promoting coir geotextiles in international level. Both the President and Past President of IECA informed Chairman that the coir geotextiles are most effective, strong and durable when compared to other natural fibre geotextiles and the only disadvantage is the cost factor which is prohibiting the environmentalists in using coir geotextiles to a large extent. However, they said that in critical slopes even today coir geotextiles are preferred over other synthetic products and natural fibre geotextiles. Mr. Doug Wimble assured Chairman, Coir Board that he will try to incorporate more geotextiles material from coir in his personal business as well as in other areas in Australia. He also informed Chairman that he would like to promote coir geotextiles in India also and he had already initiated a project for soil erosion control in the Konkan Railway Corporation. Preliminary discussions were held with the Konkan Railway authorities. He sought the support of Chairman, Coir Board in promoting coir geotextiles through his company in India. The Chairman promised all possible support to Mr. Doug Wimble in his venture. Both Mr. Doug and Mr. Peterson informed the Chairman that the IECA is seriously considering seeking funding support for one of the NGOs from Kerala in undertaking soil erosion control project in two districts of the State through which employment could be generated to a large section of people. The Chairman also recommended strongly for



assisting the NGO as it would help to generate additional employment to women workers in the rural areas of two erosion prone districts of Kerala through coir geotextiles.

In the evening, the team from Coir Board attended a reception held at Queen Mary Ship organised by the IECA in honour of the delegates from all the countries.

21st February'06 (Tuesday)

The training programme on various topics related to soil erosion control continued on 21st February also at the Long Beach Convention Centre. There were 11 parallel sessions which the participants could choose. The details are furnished below:

- CPESC Exam Review Course
- CPSWQ Exam Review Course
- Moving Inspections into the 21st century - Digital Data Collection and Management
- Sustainable Native Plant Establishment, Bioengineering and Success Monitoring Methods
- Environmentally Sensitive Streambank Stabilization
- How to design natural channels using Principles of Geomorphology
- Implementing Erosion Control Soils: Part II of Soil Dynamics for the 21st Century
- Soil-Loss estimation for construction lands using RUSLE 2.0 - Part 2 of 2
- Tools for Rules : How to select, install and inspect construction site BMPs for NPDES Compliance
- Design for Sediment and Erosion Control on construction sites
- Effective inspection programmes for Construction Site Runoff Control



Shri. M. Kumaraswamy Pillai, Dy. Director attended the training programme on "Implementing Erosion Control Soils - Part II of Soil Dynamics for the 21st century". The training programme elaborately dealt with the different types of soils and the materials which are ideally suited for controlling erosion in these types of soils. There were also group discussions and case studies. The training was quite useful in understanding the different methods of erosion control after assessing the soil characteristics.

IECA EXPO - Opens

The EC '06 Expo of the IECA commenced at 5 p.m. on 21-02-2006. There were 151 exhibitors representing the importers/ machinery manufacturers/ consultants etc. who have put stalls displaying wide range of geo-textile materials made out of natural fibres, synthetics and other composites. There were also machineries demonstrated on the use of environment protection. From Indian coir sector, there were 3 participants as detailed below:

1. M/s. Charankattu Coir Mfg. Co., Cherthala.
2. M/s. Jonh N' Fibres, Alleppey.
3. M/s. Sai Coir International, Pollachi.

All the above 3 manufacturers displayed different varieties of coir geotextiles ranging from coir nettings, erosion control blankets, cocologs, gravel bags made out of coir etc. and the visitors to the EXPO were able to see the wide range of coir geotextiles displayed. It was



reported that there were a lot of enquiries and firm orders for coir geotextiles materials/cocologs. Apart from India, Sri Lanka also had put up a stall for coir geotextiles through one of their companies known as Rolanka which has its office in USA. Further, the major importers of coir geotextiles in US have also displayed cocologs and coir fibre erosion control blankets in their stalls among other things. The EC '06

exposition provided a great opportunity to the delegates and business visitors in understanding the various geotextiles materials available world over.

The Chairman, Coir Board accompanied by Shri. M. Kumaraswamy Pillai, DD(Stat.) visited the major exporters and importers of geotextile material who have put up stalls in the EC'06 Expo and persuaded them to either increase their volume of share in coir business or to introduce coir geotextiles also in their line of activity. The Chairman also highlighted various advantages of using coir geotextiles in soil erosion control purposes.

At the EXPO hall, Shri. K.G. Jayanath, Ventura Fibre Co., USA called on Chairman and held discussions with him on the possibilities of organising a Seminar on coir geotextiles in USA. Mr. Jayanath informed Chairman that at the instance of the previous Chairman of Coir

Board, he had made preliminary arrangements to organise 3 seminars in different parts of USA so as to popularise the coir geotextiles in the country. However, it was not pursued further by the Coir Board. Shri. Jayanath suggested that there is a vast potential in geotextiles application in USA and at present the share of coir geotextiles is very low even though the major export of coir geotextiles from India is to US. Out of the total quantity of geotextiles used in USA the share of Indian coir geotextiles is rather very low. The Chairman wondered whether it would be possible to organise exclusive seminar on coir geotextiles at 3 places in US and Canada involving IECA and Coir Board where Mr. Jayanath could be an Event Manager. It will be also possible to organise a display of coir geotextiles coinciding with the Seminar and the exporters of coir geotextiles can also participate. The Chairman also shared the idea of organising seminars in the US with Shri. C.R. Devaraj, Charankattu Coir Mfg. Co., Mr. Ramakrishnan of Sai Coir International and Mr. John Thayil of John N' Fibres and all of them concurred with the proposals.

22nd February - Wednesday

Poster Presentation by Coir Board



The Coir Board made a beautiful poster presentation at the Long Beach Convention Centre which attracted all the delegates attended the EC'06. The poster depicted one of the collaborative projects undertaken by the Coir Board with the Kerala Agriculture University on the "Protection of Canal/ River embankments using Coir geo-textiles". A lot of clarifications were sought by the scientists which were answered by the Deputy Director, Coir Board.

The Chairman, Coir Board visited the Convention Centre and held discussions with the importers and delegates from various countries at the EXPO hall.

Discussion with Bangladesh team

Mr. Md. Fazlul Huq is the IECA Ambassador for Bangladesh who was leading a delegation from that country consisting of 3 members including Mr. S. M. Shameem Iqbal, Chairman, KVS Group, Chittagong. The discussions centered around a regional co-operation between India and Bangladesh in promoting natural fibre geotextiles like coir and jute. The

delegation from Bangladesh informed the Chairman that there is one unit under the KBS Group engaged in the extraction of coir fibre and weaving of coir geotextiles on jute looms. The Chairman, Coir Board invited the Bangladesh team to visit India to have a first hand information of Indian coir industry. He said that there can be collaborative projects by the Bangladesh with the Indian entrepreneurs to promote the coir industry in the country.

Discussion with Malaysian Delegation

The Malaysian Delegation consisting of the members of the Malaysian Chapter of IECA led by Dr. Noraini Mohd Tamin, President, IECA Malaysian Chapter. Dr. Tamin apprised the Chairman the activities of the IECA Malaysian Chapter and suggested that there can be better co-operation within the Asian countries producing geo-textiles and supplying to the West. He said that in line with the IECA Annual Conferences being held every year, the Malaysian Chapter is hosting an international event called ESCAP - 07 which will be held during September, 2007 so as to generate enthusiasm on the soil erosion control technologies in the Asia Pacific Countries. Dr. Tamin requested Chairman, Coir Board to lead a big contingent of manufacturers, consultants and officials of the coir industry in India at the ESCAP-07.



In the afternoon, the Chairman, Coir Board held separate discussions with other major importers. The discussions with MECCAFERI was an important one. Mr. Ghislain Brunet, Tech. and Marketing Director, Ashish D Gharpure, PE(MD), Coir Sales and Technical Manager were present during the discussions. M/s. MECCAFERI is a leader in the erosion control technologies and are supplying gabion walls in implementing erosion control projects. They have also been using coir fibre as a mulch inside the gabion walls to promote vegetation. It has been brought to the notice of Chairman, Coir Board that the MECCAFERI have a lot of projects being taken up with India which includes one project to protect the road embankments in Alleppey-Changanassery road using gabion walls in the State of Kerala. The Chairman, Coir Board suggested that they may enhance the share of coir fibre and other materials like netting and cocologs so that there will be a cost benefit and also performance will be on a higher rate. The Chairman offered to extend the R&D facilities of CCRI/CICT to the MECCAFERI for product development and also testing and standardisation of materials. Mr. Ghislain Brunet agreed to

consider the suggestion made by Chairman and informed that they will respond to it as quickly as possible.

Board meeting of the IECA

At 6 p.m. on 22nd February, 2006, the meeting of the Board of Directors of IECA was held at Hotel Hyatt Regency, Long Beach. On the invitation from the President of IECA, the Chairman, Coir Board attended the meeting and made a presentation on the status of Indian coir industry and the possible areas of co-operation between IECA and Coir Board in promoting natural fibre geotextiles which will also help in sustainable development and generation of employment. The Chairman requested the IECA to co-operate with the Coir Board in promoting the Indian coir geotextiles in USA and to organise a few seminars/exposition exclusively for coir geotextiles. Mr. Doug Wimble, President of IECA thanked Chairman for having attended the meeting and making a few suggestions on possible co-operation between Coir Board and IECA.



23rd February, 2006 - Thursday.

There were oral presentations at the workshop by the technical experts and Shri. M. Kumaraswamy Pillai, Deputy Director (Stat) attended a couple of sessions on the application of Erosion Control projects in different areas including Tsunami affected area. In the evening, the Expo EC-06 wound up. Having discussed with the coir exporters who participated at the fair it was given to understand that they received a few orders and also firm enquiries at the exhibition which is expected to be converted into orders.

24th February, 2006 - Friday.

It was a field day and the participants were taken for a field demonstration on the different applications of geo-textiles and machineries at the Beach. 25 companies who are

dealing with geo-textiles materials and also machineries demonstrated their products/machineries. There were live demonstrations of the machineries also. The materials demonstrated included silt fence made of polythene, rice straw wattles, Erosion control fibre



matrix, turf reinforcement mat, gravel bags, concrete revetment mat, triangular silt dikes etc. The presence of coir was limited to fibre stuffed inside the erosion control blankets and Cocolog which is fondly called as "silt snakes". The absence of coir nettings, which is one of the strongest geo-textiles materials for soil erosion control was conspicuous.

The matter was discussed with Mr. Doug Wimble, President, IECA who was present at the Beach. He informed that all the exhibitors had been informed of the field demonstration and only those who showed interest and remitted the fee were allowed to demonstrate. Unfortunately, none of the exporters from Indian coir industry were present at the demonstration site.

Having interacted with many of the demonstrators at the field day, it was observed that coir nettings are becoming lesser in use due its high cost element when compared to the alternatives. The environmentalists are looking for cheaper alternatives than woven materials. It was observed that except Cocologs, there was no material from India demonstrated. Even a machinery was demonstrated at the field day which can produce Cocologs and lay it at the actual site by using coir fibre and polypropylene netting with the help of a tractor. Wide use of such machinery may also dwindle the export of Cocologs from the country.

Observations/Recommendations

Having attended the four days' conference and field visit on 5th day, the team observed the following:

1. The IECA Annual Conference is the largest convergence of environmentalists, manufacturers, consultants, users, govt. officials etc. concerned with the erosion control mechanism. The trade and industry and Coir Board should actively participate in all the IECA conferences to make the participants feel the presence of Indian coir industry.



2. The IECA Annual Conferences coincide with the training programmes on erosion control methods and techniques, oral presentations, poster presentations, exhibition and field visits. All these events are dominated by the major importers of the US, machinery manufacturers etc. They represent majority of the faculty who will be training the

participants under the training programmes, demonstrating their machineries and products on the field day and at the exhibition. The coir exporters limit their activities by putting up stalls at the exhibition and interacting with the visitors visiting their stalls only. It is felt the exporters have to play a greater role by actively participating in the training programmes as resource persons and demonstration of the products at the field day.

3. The Coir Board may also participate actively in oral presentation/poster presentation every year by submitting the papers within the stipulated time. The Board may also put up a stall to facilitate the small and medium exporters where the entire range of coir geo-textiles may be exhibited. Every year, at least a couple of new R&D products which could be used as geotextiles may be exhibited. The importers should have the option to chose the coir geo-textiles with a materials cost ranging from US \$ 0.5 and above.

4. The Coir Board in association with the IECA may organise a few seminars in USA to promote the Indian coir-geotextiles in the country. The USA is the single largest country importing 32% of the Indian coir geotestiles exported. Even then, the share of Indian coir geotextiles is in a very low order when compared to the total quantity of geo-textiles imported by USA. There is a vast potential to increase the share of the Indian coir geotextiles exported to USA and the proposed seminars would help in this direction.


5. The brand of Indian Coir Geo-textiles have to be projected with the logo created by the Board through the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad so that wherever the logo is seen by the users that should remind them of Indian Coir Geo-textiles.

6. It is highly necessary to have a Chapter of IECA in India. The Coir Board may take initiative to organise the Chapter by brining in more members from the coir sector so that the

management of the IECA will rest with the coir industry. Mr. C.R. Devaraj, the IECA Ambassador to India may be associated in forming the Chapter.

Conclusion

The Board's participation in the IECA provided an opportunity to understand better the various options in the soil bio-engineering practiced world over vis-a-vis the Indian coir geo-textiles. The team also realised the inadequacies of marketing Indian coir geo-textiles abroad. A clear marketing strategy for promoting coir geo-textiles in the international market will have to be formulated in consultation with the trade and industry and other technical experts.


(M.Kumaraswamy Pillai)
Deputy Director(Stat)


(A.C. Jose)
Chairman