

Editorial

The year 2004 will go down in the history books as the Year of the Tsunami. It was also a year during which there was a *tsunami* of conferences and events focused on drying science, engineering and technology, which were held all over the globe. It is refreshing to note the surging interest in a unit operation that is commonly thought of as mature technology with little potential for innovation and worthwhile research contribution. Indeed, many chemical engineering curricula especially in the world do not even cover the basics of drying so that their graduates go to the workplace without the rudiments of a key unit operation found in almost all industrial sectors but a lot of fundamental knowledge about nanotechnology and life sciences. To what extent engineering curricula need upgrading is a matter of intense debate in academic circles, but that is not the theme of this editorial.

One of the distinguishing features of a recent international event held in Mumbai in December 2004 viz. the International Workshop and Symposium on Industrial Drying (IWSID'2004) was the unusually large representation from industry. Some 70 per cent of the participants came from industry. For a rapidly developing industrial nation that also is the second most populous country in the world, this intense interest in industrial drying is hardly surprising. The quality of the lecturers in the workshop as well as that of the participants was exceptionally and uniformly high. Much of the credit must be accorded to the hardworking Organizing Committee led by Prof. J.B. Joshi and Dr. B.N. Thorat of the renowned University of Mumbai Institute of chemical Technology (MUICT) based in Mumbai. The strong industry support was evident at every stage and in every aspect of this memorable event. With some 250 attendees from over thirty countries this event was similar in scope to the IDS events but with a notable difference in the strength of industry participation.

Since drying technology is an applied discipline industry involvement is essential to a meaningful dialog between the researcher and the practitioner. It is only industry who can usefully deploy results of useful drying R&D; no academic institution can utilize such results for their own benefit. I have, therefore, been emphasizing the need for closer industry-academia interaction. IWSID2004 in Mumbai did manage to accomplish this with enviable success. We do hope that this model will be followed by other event organizers as well.

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