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**A Middle-Aged IEM**by **Engr. Chin Mee Poon**, F.I.E.M., P. Eng.

THE Institution of Engineers, Malaysia is turning 50 this year, about two years younger than our country. If we liken it to a human being, IEM can be considered middle-aged and should rightly be at the prime of its career.

Confucius, the great Chinese teacher, thinker and philosopher, once said he knew of his destiny only at the age of 50. Likewise, IEM should be very clear about its direction for the next 50 years, after having existed for half a century as a learned society for engineers in this country.

What is 50 years in the history of a developing nation? In the past 50 years, our country has metamorphosed from being the largest rubber and tin producing country in the world, to become the biggest producer of air-conditioners and computer chips.

Our population has increased many fold in the same period. The use of computers has become widespread and IEM has widened its embrace to cover many more disciplines of engineering than the original civil, mechanical, electrical and chemical engineering.

In line with our country's dynamic progress towards Vision 2020 of becoming a developed nation, IEM cannot remain static. It has to constantly evolve with time and take stock of its role in the nation's development.

As new generations of engineers flood the market, IEM has to reflect upon its strengths and weaknesses and remind itself of the changing aspirations of its younger members, as well as those of graduate engineers who are still contemplating outside its gate on whether to join as a member or not.

Despite the fact that the work of engineers affects the daily life of the average Malaysian in one way or another to different extents, many people, including journalists, are still quite ignorant of IEM's roles and what its members do. Perhaps it is time IEM become more pro-active in helping to chart the course of our country's development.

Whenever a major engineering failure occurs in the country, IEM must be seen to be among the first to present its learned opinion. In addition, IEM must take it upon itself to advise the Government on courses of action to be taken to prevent a recurrence of the mishap in particular and to make our living environment a safer place.

IEM must remain relevant at all times. By doing so, new blood will be constantly injected into its systems and it will retain its vitality even for the next 50 years or more. ■