

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------|
| ► PRESIDENT'S CORNER The IEM – A Dinosaur? | 2 |
| ► LETTER TO THE EDITOR | 11 |
| ► COVER STORY Restructuring and Rebuilding | 6-9 |
| ► FEATURES Public Information Systems | 13-16 |
| Local Capacity and RedR's Global Structure | 32-34 |
| MyKad: The Government Multipurpose Card | 36-40 |
| ► CORPORATE PROFILE Industronic Berhad – The Specialist on Electronic Public Information Display Systems | 25-27 |
| ► COLUMN Once Upon A Time : Crimes of Intellectual Egotism | 19 |
| ► REPORT A Half-day Course on Centralised Waste Collection and Vacuum System | 23 |
| A Report on a One-day Seminar on "Vertical Transportation" | 29-30 |
| ► ANNOUNCEMENT IEM Diary | 1 |
| Hon Secretary's Report | 2-3 |
| Conference & Seminar | 8 |



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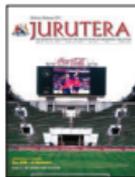
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PHOENIX'S REBIRTH

By: Ir. Chin Mee Poon

Nothing in this world lasts for ever.

It's true. All living things have a limited life span. Even non-living things, under the constant bombardment of the elements and forces of nature, deteriorate and may eventually crumble or collapse altogether. The Himalaya, Karakoram, Hindu Kush and Kunlun mountain ranges, being geologically young, are still growing but at the same time are subject to a lot of landslips, rockfalls and other forms of erosion in the process to achieve a state of stability.

However strong and solid an engineering structure may appear to be, there will come a time when it can no longer fulfill its function and hence has to be replaced.

Rebuilding is almost as natural as reproduction. When a big tree in our tropical rain forest dies and falls, one of the saplings that have been struggling for survival in its shade quickly grows and takes over the air space thus left vacant. Similarly when a building or structure is demolished or destroyed, a new building or structure designed to better meet the needs of the time will rise in its place.

A reconstruction project affords the architect, engineer and other players of the construction industry a golden opportunity to exercise their imagination and ingenuity to improve the living or working environment. The collapse of the twin World Trade Centre towers in downtown Manhattan of New York City may be a disaster, but the challenges to redevelop the area such that visitors will be reminded of that fateful day of 9/11 but at the same time moved to look towards a brighter future, are tremendous and captivating.

The great fire of 1871 almost destroyed Chicago completely. From the ashes and debris, however, has risen a better-planned city known as the birth-place of modern architecture.

The Americans and their allies have billions much of Iraq, and now they are talking about spending dozens of dollars to rebuild that country. Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain: lives lost cannot be resurrected.

Yes, it is true that nothing in this world lasts for ever. The three main deities of Hinduism, i.e. Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer, testify to the cyclical nature of birth, growth and death. Although death (or destruction) is awful, it is from death that the proverbial phoenix is reborn.

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