



## Storm in the Teacup

*By: Engr. Mah Soo, F.I.E.M., P. Eng.*

There seems to be a challenge between El Nino and La Nina as to who would take the center stage in 2007 and thus causing difficulties in the correct forecast of the weather. Malaysia has recently experienced such shifting between them in the sudden change of very hot weather to many heavy downpours. Freak storms, floods and landslides have again made their ugly appearances causing much miseries, sufferings and disruptions to our daily lives. Rampant disregard to our environment in the form of deforestation and pollution has caused untold global climate changes resulting in such traumatic incidents.

In the local front, the most recent reports of floods in Puchong and Shah Alam and the landslides in Putrajaya should have caught most of our attention and would have become the talk of the town and during the coffee breaks. In keeping with current events and issues, the Jurutera, the monthly Bulletin of the IEM, has been trying to have articles published in line with such events to make it 'as up-to-date as possible to keep up with the times'. In doing so, time is very much the essence as a delay of one or two issues could have defeated the timeliness objective and the articles could become stale news and even sometimes outdated. The IEM has many distinguish members in such related disciplines and could contribute much to make the IEM Bulletin an interesting read as well as pointing to the future direction of the IEM in serving our nation and community better especially in the mitigation measures to such unpleasant incidences. We appeal to all our IEM members to lend a helping hand to make this task easier and possible with timely contribution of

articles and peer vetting without being reminded now and again.

Regarding the issues of floods and landslides, numerous articles have been published and Position Papers were even put up by some of our distinguish IEM members but not much benefits to the nation and community in addressing the issues seems to have come out of it. In fact these are opportunities that the IEM could grasp in coming out to the forefront and forwarding proposals and recommendations to the government to address such issues as a service to the nation and community. The IEM could make representation to the relevant government ministries or agencies either through their members in their respective individual capacity as high ranking officers in the public and private sector or through IEM as a 'learned society' and 'Standards Writing Organisation'

It has been two interesting and challenging years of being the Editor for the IEM Bulletin, Jurutera. This was especially so during the last few months when there was a storm brewing in my teacup. Though many would have put it down as a sore point, I look at it to be as part of the learning curve in our daily lives and hope that the storm remains in the teacup and does not spill over and scald someone or taint someone's clothes. It has been encouraging that there has been some concerted effort between the Editor and the Geotechnical Engineering Technical Division to sit down and discuss how to resolve such matters in the best possible way. But it will still be left to the maturity of members to cooperate in the spirit of 'forgive and forget' to end such 'disputes'. We sincerely appeal to all to adopt the attitude of "To err is human, To forgive is divine"

and let matters rest with some frank and mature discussion leading to a final cordial reconciliation and closing the matter maybe with a firm handshake if not a good hug during the making up process.

An Editor can do that much to the best of his endeavour with his limited resource both in human capability and expert knowledge. How could one question the authority, authenticity and accuracy of the articles contributed by distinguished members of the IEM but to rely on their professionalism on such matters with a benefit of the doubt of their sincerity to share their knowledge and experience among the members of the engineering fraternity? This is especially so for articles reporting on talks and seminars as not all members could find the time to attend but might be interested in the topic of discussion. In fact, the Editor wishes to thank all contributors for their time and effort to sustain the publication of the monthly Bulletin month after month for so long.

As any Editor would face, one will always be walking on a tight rope, trying to tread on the fine line. Each step has to be painstakingly considered and timed to avoid any untoward nasty fall if one mistakenly steps over on either side of the line. If one totally ignores any issues with the slightest controversial contents, then the Bulletin is not much better off than any school magazine as someone has pointed out in one of the letters to the Editor.

In IEM, being a learned society with matured professional members, the Editorial Board has ventured into uncharted territory of deciding to publish some letters that has (have) been considered as controversial in trying to stimulate constructive discussion on

such matters, hoping that engineers will speak up and every one will learn from the process without any untoward unpleasant attendant consequences. Everyone considers himself or herself an expert in one's own field, discipline and work and therefore is entitled for his or her comments and feedback. It is best hoped that we, as matured professionals, should exercise some restraints, diplomacy and tact in dealing with the situation at hand or topic of discussion so that everybody benefits from the outcome of the discussion without getting nobody offended.

So far only the IEM Journal has peer review, though there was proposal that this should be extended to the Bulletin articles. It is

encouraging to note that the Geotechnical Engineering Technical Division has offered its assistance to review articles before they are considered for publication. This is definitely a very positive step towards improving the quality of the articles that will eventually uphold the image of the IEM. On the way forward, it would be much better if they could get members from respective Technical Divisions to propose interesting themes to the Editorial Board and contribute articles, together with the necessary peer-vetting process, towards the monthly Bulletin. This will definitely be something to look forward to for the good of the IEM.

In the President's message, it is time for the traditional change of guards and he has advocated that the 'Post should seek the Person' which will hopefully ensure that the right person most suited for the post be selected and appointed to hold the post. With this I wish that there will be many new blood who will come forward and volunteer to be counted and take over the baton from the old guards.

With this, as Bulletin Editor, I wish to thank everyone for their support, cooperation and understanding in getting the monthly Bulletin published month after month and hope that the same good gesture will be extended to whoever taking up the post. ■

## LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Reference is made to the "Letters to the Editor" column in the JURUTERA Feb 2007 issue. The discussion on the topic of the need or otherwise of the regular printing of the IEM directory seems to miss the point.

The listing of the members under the various grades does not include any information on contact details. Is not the most important purpose of a directory for other members and the public to know how they may locate and contact a particular member?

Without the basic contact information, the directory is an exercise in futility. It is instructive to refer to the Bar Council's directory of lawyers, which contains comprehensive contact details of the members, and this directory is in great demand and is sold in the bookshops for a handsome price.

It would be good if future editions could provide details, on an opt-in basis, of (a) employment address, and (b) telephone/fax/e-mail contacts. For the next billing for subscription fees, a form can be included for members to

fill in their desired details to be included in the directory. This new feature will surely make the IEM Directory a most valuable resource, and it will no longer be consigned, upon receipt, to the deepest corner of the office shelf, never to be referred to again.

Yours faithfully,  
Engr. N.D. Gong, *F.I.E.M., P.Eng.*

## BULLETIN EDITOR'S REPLY

We thank Engr. N. D. Gong for his letter. The initial intention of printing the IEM directory was mean to provide some form of members information to facilitate networking. There were feedback from some of our members that they would not want their personal information to be published to prevent their e-mails from overloading with spam messages and advertisements. Previous invitations to members to indicate their preferences did not get much response to chart the way forward.