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THE INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERS, MALAYSIA
Bangunan Ingenieur, Lots 60 & 62, Jalan 52/4, P.O.Box 223, (Jalan Sultan) 46720 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.
Tel: 03-7968 4001/4002 Fax: 03-7957 7678 E-mail: sec@iem.org.my Homepage: http://ww.iem.org.my

We Destroy our Environment and Cannot Control the Present, so What is our Future Like?

by ***Engr. Khew Swee Lian,*** *MIEM, P. Eng.*
Chairman, Environmental Engineering Technical Division

YOU will see the ugly side of Klang Valley if you take public transportation such as the bus, monorail or LRT in our capital city. On one hand, we are heading towards Vision 2020 with well-known landmarks such as the Petronas Twin Towers, KL Tower, Berjaya Times Square, Pavilion and Mid Valley Megamall. On the other, abandoned and unfinished buildings are scattered throughout the city. There are also many properties with peeling or faded paintworks and empty lots left unattended with overgrown bushes.

Rapid and unplanned development has brought deterioration onto Mother Nature. Unlike other developed nations, our public transportation is not the responsibility of local or state governments (except for a handful of local authorities such as Putrajaya). Flash floods and traffic congestions have become the norm, especially in hotspots such as Kampung Baru, Dataran Merdeka, the LDP Sunway toll and other major roads in the city. Unfortunately, engineers are usually the ones who get the blame.

There is a way for us to change the situation. Recent report shows a sharp increase in the number of commuters using public transport in major cities partly due to the surge in fuel price. But most importantly, there is some improvement in our public transportation thanks to the Public Transportation Trust Fund setup by the Federal Government in 2006.

The cost of travel on public transport can be as low as RM2 for a return trip to work every day. As such, they are packed with commuters during peak hours, but not all of us are lucky enough to live or work along the 'right' route. However, if a majority of those who have access to the route do make a pledge to change, we can reduce the number of private cars on the road, sustain our national crude oil reserve for a longer period, and minimise air pollution and global warming.

We have to be prepared to spend a little extra time on the road in order to achieve that goal. In the long run, and if many decide to embrace this idea, the Government may save the allocation intended for widening the LDP and other expressways for a better purpose. In return, the nation will benefit from long term sustainable development if we care for other aspects of development as well.

It does not cost a lot to protect our surroundings, but it will definitely cost us more in the future if we ignore the environment. The only option we have is to act now. Let us learn from the past, take charge and do it now, and we can build our future together! ■