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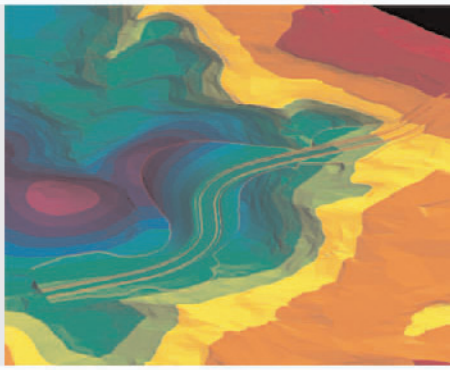

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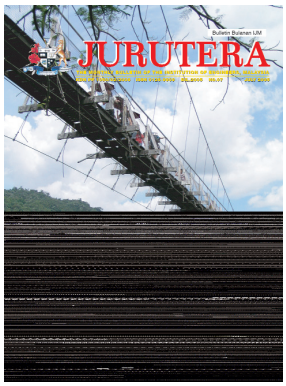

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Nurturing Future Leaders

I must confess I am not as prolific a writer as the Immediate Past President Ir. Prof. Abang Abdullah bin Abang Ali. In carrying out my duties, it is my privilege to share with members what happened since I took over from Ir. Prof. Abang Abdullah bin Abang Ali. The Honorary Secretary and I had a meeting with the President of The Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES), Assoc. Prof. Foo Say Wei, the very next morning after the annual dinner. Our discussions focused upon the common subjects which is faced by both institutions namely membership loyalty and an ageing membership. Being largely a volunteer based society, IEM or IES has to make itself relevant so that members find it worthwhile to join and continue to become members. My presidential address at the 46th Annual General Meeting highlighted many issues some of which have been re-produced in the previous edition of this bulletin. My experience is that our learned society has provided and should continue to provide the platform for networking, leadership training and leadership identification for its future survival besides creating opportunities for its members to go forward.

It has always been on my mind that any member of the institution (whatever the grade) should be permitted to sit in at any of IEM's meeting, perhaps invited to introduce himself/herself to the meeting and to listen to the proceedings. Other than confidential votes that may be taken from time to time, these observers may be excused prior to the votes being counted, they could be invited to give some opinion as well at the meetings. Being present during the progress of a meeting provides opportunities for these young members to appreciate the comprehensiveness of the discussion, a need to weigh carefully upon a subject before a decision is taken and to be responsible for that decision. Participation in the discussion could be by invitation from the Chair otherwise the observers should not interrupt the proceedings unnecessarily. In this way we shall be indirectly exposing future leaders to IEM's practices and council members at the meeting could identify potential future leaders to be enlisted into the institution.

The President of Engineers Australia (formerly named: The Institution of Engineers, Australia); Prof. Andrew Downing who made a courtesy visit to IEM, two days after the Annual Dinner, found the dinner programme of introducing the Executive Committee to the dinner participants something worth emulating. I could only do the initial formalities and had to leave early, soon after doing a brief presentation about IEM to him. Vice President, Ir. Prof. Ishak bin Abdul Rahman took over the chair from me to complete the meeting.

The last count of the number of volunteers who served in various committees at the IEM headquarter is six hundred. Employer recognition was acknowledged at the Annual Dinner following the AGM. We must not forget those employers who supported and urged their empoyees to contribute both time and money towards advancing the science and practice of engineering. More than fifty percent of our employers have less than two employees in the volunteer list of IEM, some of the volunteers are bosses of their own companies as well. I hope the new initiative of introducing these employers to the members at the annual dinner will continue for a long time to come. I am glad that we managed to give out 4 awards for the evening. The winner of the IEM Award for Contribution to the Engineering Profession in Malaysia 2005 was Y. Bhg. Tan Sri Dato' Ir. Muhammad Radzi bin Haji Mansor, who truly deserved the award. So too was Ir. Prof. Dr Siti Hamisah binti Tapsir who was given the IEM Lady Engineer Award 2005. On the project category, we are proud to have a winner each for the IEM Outstanding Engineering Achievement Award 2004 given to Perunding Mahir Bersatu Sdn Bhd jointly with Sinclair Knight Merz Engineering Sdn Bhd on the structural design of Putrajaya Convention Centre and the 2005 IEM outstanding Engineering Achievment Award to M.E.I. Consultants Sdn Bhd for the successful design and completion of Stevian Biotechnology facilities in Enstek, Negeri Sembilan respectively. I also took the liberty to recognise the contributions by two individuals that same evening for their distinguish volunteer service, namely Ir. Ti Lian Kong for having organised the annual dinner for the past 5 years and Ir. Oon Chee Kheng, Immediate Past Honorary Secretary of the Institution.

The Negeri Sembilan Branch Annual Dinner was graced by Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri Utama Hj. Mohamad bin Hj. Hassan, Menteri Besar of the state and it was truly an honour for me to address the branch members in his presence. Another meeting was arranged soon after between the Chief Minister of Penang, Yang Amat Berhormat Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Ir. Prof. Dr Chuah Hean Teik, Vice President and Chairman of Qualifications and Admissions, Ir. Vincent Tan Huei Meng, IEM Penang Branch Chairman and his Committee Members and me. The meeting provided us with more opportunities to highlight IEM's role in nation building to the Honorable Chief Minister. The Vice President and Chairman of Standing Committee on Corporate Affairs, Ir. Choo Kok Beng and I also paid a courtesy visit to the NSTP in between those functions and a statement on that meeting appeared in the press. ■

CS Ow

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Bridging The Chasm Of Complacence

By: Ir. Mah Soo

The Wednesday, 18 May 2005 issue of the New Straits Times (NST), published a photograph titled "Daily Crawl" on its front page with the caption of "Pupils of Sekolah Kebangsaan Binyu in Kota Samarahan tread cautiously on logs to cross Sungai Jerang after their morning classes. They have been forced to do this as the only bridge linking Kampong Binyu to the outside world collapsed due to old age two months ago. This bridge was built by a local contractor about three years ago and is now dilapidated and unsafe". The Chief Political Secretary to Sarawak Chief Minister, Datuk Idris Buang, should be commended for the timely response that the State Government had approved the construction of a 60-metre long RM500,000 Bailey bridge. Construction would take a few months as a feasibility study had to be carried out first, and the contract tendered out."

Again, NST on page 24 of its Friday, 27 May 2005 issue highlighted the Kuala Terengganu Kg. Cina jetty being in bad condition.

Timely and appropriate action plans have to be implemented to prevent such rapid deterioration of our country's bridges. IEM, as a learned society, could take this opportunity to show progressiveness in contributing pro-actively as a responsible corporate citizen in this situation. Using crisis management, threats could be turned into opportunities. IEM has members, who are experts in their respective disciplines and hold respectable positions in their various capacities, could study these issues and approach the relevant authorities with proposals on how to nip these issues in the bud. For the safety of the daily commuters using the above-mentioned bridge, urgent action has to be instituted from now till the completion of the new Bailey bridge. IEM members could make representation to entities such as the Public Works Department (JKR) or any other Government agencies with various options like closing the bridge for further usage, providing alternative route, requesting the Army to put up a temporary bridge or carrying out temporary repairs or rehabilitation. Safety must be ensured no matter which option is implemented. If need be, well-to-do Malaysians or large organisations could be approached for some financial assistance. I think it would not be much of a problem for them to contribute towards such a worthy cause.

It should be on everybody's mind that safety should always come first and prevention is better than cure. Appropriate regular maintenance can contribute towards the durability and reliability of any structure, equipment and plant. IEM could come up with position papers on the regime of inspection, maintenance and rehabilitation of bridges. ■