

### FLOODS IN SHAH ALAM – A 'WAKE-UP CALL' FOR ENGINEERS!

The massive flood which hit Shah Alam on 26 February 2006 was a despicable event confronting us engineers. Where were the voices of our engineers? The fact that engineers were overshadowed by administrators and decision makers, speaks for the low standing of engineers in our society.

The flood in Shah Alam caused hardship and frustration to the lives of people in the capital city of a developed state. Poor and uncontrolled planning, excessive development, siltation, high and long intensity rainfall, tidal influence, obstructions, squatters, low lying land, rubbish, abnormal weather, natural disaster – all these are the 'common' reasons given for the flooding. Engineers too, have conveniently joined the 'blame-game' bandwagon by pointing to things like upstream development instead of taking measures to prevent the floods in the first place.

The flooding problem has been there for more than a decade now and engineers currently speak about 'early warning systems' – this implies that we accept flooding as a norm and will 'warn' the people of Shah Alam before the next flood arrives instead of alleviating it. This is simply pathetic. With all due respect, this kind of bunkum is no less than contempt for mainstream science and technology, as well as for the professionals who have devoted their

lives to it. It now appears that attempts to solve the flooding woes is mere 'guesswork' and 'the stuff' written today about flooding is a bit like the usual nonsense about climate change – written by people who know nothing about it.

People landed on the moon 3 decades ago, and we are still struggling to solve our recurring problem in urban centres. Engineers are involved in different aspects of urban development – planning, design, construction, approval, enforcement, maintenance, etc. So the big question is: Why does flooding still occur and who is accountable for it? Engineers should continuously plan and implement flood mitigation measures to fulfill the inspirations of the people – not wait and then blame others.

Being technically competent is not good enough. Engineers must also be convincing in their arguments to ensure that the interest of the society is being protected. Engineers are trained to serve the interest of the society at large. If the voice of engineers is not heard by authorities, it must reflect the low caliber of our current breed of engineers. Engineers must be 'leaders' in their own areas of work. Flooding in Shah Alam and the rest of the country will only be resolved when we engineers 'wake-up' to the call of duty and uphold the dignity of our distinguished and honourable profession.

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Shah Alam submerged @ 26 February 2006



Citizens in the capital city under duress