

Ir. David Lai Kong Phooi (2019/2020)

Ir. David Lai Kong Phooi is the President of The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM), Board Member of the Board of Engineers Malaysia (BEM) for 2016-2017, currently Board Member of Malaysian Standards and Accreditation Council and Past Chairman of the IEM Perak Branch. He held the position of Chairman of BEM IT Committee, Alternative Chairman of the BEM Application Committee, Member of the BEM National Monitoring Committee and is currently the Chairman of BEM Scale of Fee.

Ir. David Lai obtained his Bachelor of Science Degree with Honours in Civil Engineering from The City University, London in 1980. He later pursued the Executive Finance & Management Programme at the Golden Gate University, San Francisco USA (1987) and the Project Management Programme at the School of Housing, Building and Planning at University Sains Malaysia, Penang (2000) and Legal Studies External Programme at the University of London (2010).

Ir. David Lai is a Chartered Professional Engineer with Practising Certificate (PEPC) registered with the BEM as well as the Board of Engineers Australia. He is an Honorary Fellow of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations (AFEO), ASEAN Chartered Professional Engineer (ACPE), Fellow of IEM, Fellow of The Institution of Engineers Australia and Registered Foreign Professional Engineer RFPE (Myanmar). He is also an APEC Engineer and an International Professional Engineer (IntPE). He has served as Senior Member of the Advocates & Solicitors Disciplinary Board of The BAR Council Malaysia since 2008, as an Adjunct Lecturer to University Technology Petronas in 2008 and currently served as the Industry Advisory Panel Member, Faculty of Civil Engineering at Monash University Malaysia.

Ir. David Lai has served IEM in the following positions:

1. Deputy President (2016 - 2018)
2. Vice President (2013 - 2016)
3. Council member (2002 - 2018)
4. Chairman of Finance Committee (2016 - 2018)
5. Chairman of Standing Committee on Welfare and Service Matters (2014 - 2015)
6. Chairman of Standing Committee on Information & Publications (2013 - 2014)
7. Vice-Chairman of Standing Committee on Corporate Affairs (2010 - 2012)
8. Member of the Standing Committee on Professional Practice (2010 - 2011)
9. Member of the Standing Committee on Education & Training (2008 - 2011)
10. Member of Standing Committee on Qualifications & Admissions (2004 - 2006)
11. Board Chairman of IEM Training Centre Sdn. Bhd.
12. Board Chairman of IEM Academy Sdn. Bhd.



Ir. David Lai started his working experience as a Highway Design Engineer with a United Kingdom-based Civil and Architectural consultancy firm in London and later served with the Government as a PWD District Engineer in Ipoh and Taiping, Perak. Thereafter, he served as the Project Director of a Civil Engineering firm majoring in Design and Built packages in main water supply projects and elevated water retaining structures and as the Project Director of a Developer Company. He is currently the Director of Perunding Muhibbah, a multi-civil, structural and project rehabilitation consultancy firm.

Ir. David Lai served as the Senior Ipoh City Hall's (MBI) Councillor for 7 years (2009 - 2016) and had served as the Deputy Chairman for the Project Privatisation, Road and Traffic and Community Committees; as well as Member of the Tender, Planning OSC, Finance, Town Cleanliness and Special Project Task Force Committees. He represented MBI in the ASIAN Mayor Conference in Nanning, China in 2015 and was accorded the winner of the Outstanding City Councillor KPI Achiever Award, MBI in 2013.

Ir. David Lai's hobbies include golf, swimming, mountain tracking, hunting, travelling, reading and playing musical instruments.

ENGINEERING THE NATION

Respected Past Presidents, Immediate Past President, Deputy President, Council Members and fellow engineers.

Twelve months ago, I addressed you in this same auditorium in conjunction with IEM's 59th Annual General Meeting. I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the IEM Council for the trust and confidence all of you have placed upon me and I shall strive to carry out this honourable responsibility with utmost care and diligence.

I am indeed grateful to the IEM Executive Committee and Council for their support over the past year. During this period I had the opportunity to meet with many IEM members both at the headquarters and the branches. At every instance, I was amazed by your co-operation, kind understanding and encouragement. For this, I wish to thank each and every one of you for your unceasing support for IEM.

MY FELLOW ENGINEERS,

It is indeed an historical moment for IEM as we celebrate our 60th year. Our Institution has grown from a humble beginning with 60 members in 1959 to more than 50,000 members today. As it grows both in strength and stature, IEM has gained recognition both locally and internationally as a respected professional organisation and has continued to engineer the Nation.

This being our diamond anniversary, it is opportune to review the accomplishments of the institution and to offer recognition to those who have laid the foundation for what the institution is today. An understanding of our past will assist us to charting a plan of action towards a healthy, vibrant and prestigious profession, contributing towards the progress and success of our country.

IEM was first established in 1959 by The Late Ir. Tan Sri Yusoff Haji Ibrahim who became the first President. This was just 20 months after the country achieved independence in 1957. Thereafter, thirty-three distinguished and eminent engineers from different segments of the engineering fraternity including the public, private and academic sectors have served as Presidents of IEM. Among their many outstanding qualities, IEM's Past Presidents are remembered as persons of high integrity and strong principles, which are qualities that form the moral backbone of our Engineering profession.

Over the last 60 years, IEM has maintained a growing membership of engineers in Malaysia with the objective of promoting professionalism amongst members of the engineering fraternity in the country. Engineers have contributed substantially to the development of the country and are expected to continue playing a pivotal role in the future.

Members of IEM have in one way or another contributed to the development of the nation, as their work are involved in all sectors of the economy and of society. They have been the prime movers for the world class infrastructures,

the utility networks and the production facilities that have been the foundation of our nation's development and which have made our lives convenient, safe and comfortable. In many cases, our engineers have achieved the capability to undertake international projects thus playing a significant role in the export of engineering services.

MY FELLOW ENGINEERS,

I would now like to share with you my continued mission and vision for the Institution.

1. STRENGTHENING THE BOND WITH IEM BRANCHES

Last year, I had deliberated at length the issue of strengthening our bond with the IEM Branches. As we are all aware, in addition to the Headquarters in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, IEM has twelve branches throughout Peninsular Malaysia as well as Sabah and Sarawak. Therefore, during the past session I have taken the opportunity engage with the Branches with the objective of aligning their aspirations, agenda and activities with those of IEM Headquarters. My target is to build in them the trust and esprit de corps that is the basis of a strong, united organisation.

I believe that the IEM Branches and the IEM Headquarters share the same objectives and challenges. For IEM to succeed and to be able to serve the needs of our members and the engineering fraternity, we must work together as one and not as disparate entities. We must integrate holistically the workings of Branches and the Headquarters. This will be achieved not through greater control but through dialogue, transparency and collaboration which will pave the way for greater autonomy at the Branch level in a rule-based system of management.

Since taking office, I have visited all the twelve IEM Branches namely IEM Sarawak, Miri, Sabah, Kedah-Perlis, Penang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Pahang and Southern; while being mindful to incur minimal costs. On each visit, I found that engagement with members was productive and memorable, due largely to the dedicated purpose of each visit. At each Branch meeting, I focused on four important areas of engagement:

1. To listen to the views and opinions of the Branch committees.
2. To consolidate all Branch and HQ accounts as required by the Registrar of Societies. This will require all Branches to shift their financial year to end on 31 December, to be in line with the HQ financial year. To facilitate this, a common accounting software system, MYOB, will be used in the HQ and all Branches.
3. Subscription income: This has been identified as a major contributor to the financial well-being of IEM. Increasing subscriptions through new memberships and arresting arrears of current members are therefore, major issues that must be addressed. Branch committees have been requested to assist in collecting arrears which have been increasing at an alarming rate.

4. Due to the prevailing economic conditions, IEM's cash flow has dipped into negative territory due to reduced income and rising expenses. Under such circumstances, there is a compelling need to re-examine our operations to increase income and reduce expenses wherever possible.

One key message brought to the Branches was the urgency to exercise extreme prudence in expenditure and to think of new ways to generate income. The enormous task of dealing with IEM's current financial situation means very tight resources are left for other important matters.

Therefore, it is incumbent for Branches to exercise empathy with and to stand by the IEM Headquarters in tackling the daunting tasks ahead. It requires no less than a shift in mind-set to understand that all activities, wherever they are held, are part of our overall aspirations towards a common goal. It is my ardent hope that together, we will make that happen.

MY FELLOW ENGINEERS,

2. VOLUNTEERISM – A VITAL KEY TO THE INSTITUTION'S SUCCESS

IEM's success for the past sixty years is made possible by our dedicated members who serve on the Council, Committees and Technical Divisions both at the IEM Headquarters and IEM Branches. IEM volunteers work together as a team, sharing their skills and sacrificing their time to work for the benefit of other members. Sixty years on, I am happy to observe that the spirit of volunteerism is very much alive in IEM.

This calls to my mind the words of the 19th century American novelist and poet of the American Renaissance period, Herman Melville:

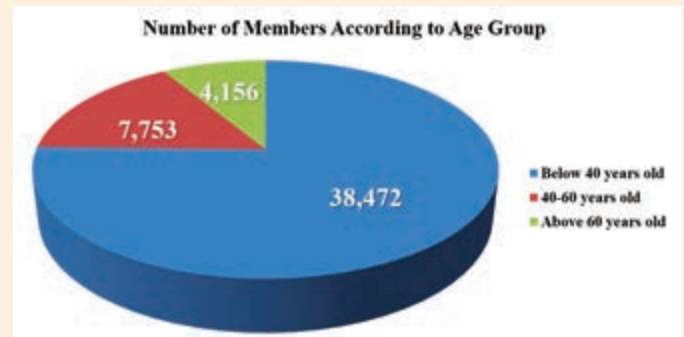
**"We cannot live only for ourselves.
A thousand fibres connect us with
our fellow men."**

By volunteering to serve in IEM, members are able to be proactive in effecting positive changes for the good of the engineering profession in the country. The various Committees and Sub-committees in the IEM will always welcome such participation, commitment, and enthusiasm from its members. The basic criteria needed are to be sincerely committed to the betterment of the Institution, and subscribing to the basic noble values of excellence, creativity and professionalism. By participating actively in the running of the Institution too, members could train themselves in leadership and management skills, apart from the non-technical skills mentioned above.

Through volunteerism, members would be able to meet engineers of all disciplines, from various sectors, of all levels and age, and from all over the world, as the activities of IEM are not confined to Malaysia or Asia alone. These are means of developing a broader outlook, sharpening their communication and social skills.

With this in mind, it is crucial for us to inculcate the spirit of volunteerism in young engineers who will be taking over the leadership of IEM to move it further in the future. I am also happy to inform that since the last Annual General Meeting held last year, IEM's Constitution and Bylaws have

been amended to allow for five (5) Companion/Graduate members and One (1) Woman Engineer to serve in Council. Therefore, I call upon more YES Members to volunteer and to help shape the institution and the profession at large.



A majority of YES members belong to younger age group of mostly below 40 years of age. With their participation in main committees of IEM, they will be able to rejuvenate and bring in new ideas to IEM. This in turn will help IEM to attract and cater for the younger generation of engineers.

I am inspired by the words of Dinesh Paliwal, President and CEO of HARMAN, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Samsung Electronics:

I believe that we all have a responsibility to give back. No one becomes successful without lots of hard work, support from others, and a little luck. Giving back creates a virtuous cycle that makes everyone more successful. Giving back to the communities and institutions that helped us achieve success is a value we share and a privilege we embrace.

In the same vein, I would like to invite our elder engineers to share their wealth of experience with the Institution. Such senior members may have retired from active service, but many continue to be active and make significant contributions to the engineering profession and the society which can be tapped by the Institution in the many areas where volunteers are needed.

MY FELLOW ENGINEERS,

3. IEM AS A STRATEGIC PARTNER FOR LOCAL AND FOREIGN ORGANISATIONS

In terms of liberalisation of engineering services and engineering mobility, IEM is a good platform for engineers to market themselves abroad. IEM under its various committees have embarked on many initiatives to facilitate business networking between our members who are engaged in business locally and overseas.

As the permanent secretariat of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Institutions (AFEI) and the ASEAN Engineering Register (AER), IEM opens up opportunities for our members to joint-venture with ASEAN engineering firms and expand their network overseas. As a constituent member of FEIAP, WFEO, and FEIIC, IEM is able to facilitate cross-border mobility of engineering services of Malaysian engineers globally.

IEM has also embarked on bilateral relations with various overseas engineering institutions. To-date, IEM has signed 25 MoUs with engineering institutions with a view to promote, facilitate and extend professional and social links between the foreign engineering institutions and IEM, to the benefit

of members of the signatory organisations and to assist in advancing the mobility of engineering practitioners and the quality of engineering practice worldwide.



Taking this one step further, IEM could serve as a strategic partner for overseas engineering organisations. One possible aspect for such collaboration is the provision of training and capacity building for the international engineering fraternity. As engineers, we play an important role in leading and transforming the quality of people's lives. Globalisation of our economies and integration of Engineering Services cross-border will play a dominant and decisive role in meeting this goal.

With proper capacity building, training and skills, engineers and engineering technologists in the region and beyond will be able to bridge the development gaps in their respective countries and ultimately play an instrumental role in the cross-border development that will enhance the quality life for not only the their people but also those beyond.

Thus, as a strategic partner for training and capacity building, IEM together with its overseas counterpart would become an important vehicle in elevating the engineering skills amongst its respective members as well as the wider engineering populace in both countries.

MY FELLOW ENGINEERS,

4. CONNECTING WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND MINISTRIES

Over the past 60 years, IEM has continued to Engineer the Nation by providing engineering and technical advice to the relevant government agencies and authorities both at state and federal levels. Indeed, our membership has provided a good avenue for federal and state governments to source for professional opinions, commentary or advice on various engineering issues.

This premise holds true even with the recent change in government. Premised on the principles of good governance, strong institutions and integrity, the new Government has affirmed the goal for Malaysia to become a developed and inclusive nation. Therefore, to ensure engineers have a crucial part to play in the new Government's development goals for the country, during the past session, my team and I have initiated dialogues

with the following Ministries and government agencies and several more are in the pipeline for this Session:

- Prime Minister of Malaysia YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad
- Minister of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment & Climate Change (MESTECC) YB Yeo Bee Yin
- Minister of International Trade and Industry (MITI) YB Datuk Ignatius Darell Leiking
- Chief Minister of Penang YAB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow
- Secretary General of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Datuk Seri J. Jayasiri
- Secretary General of the then Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA) Datuk Seri Ir. Dr Zaini Ujang
- Chairman of the Construction Industry Development Board Malaysia (CIDB) Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Dr Ir. Ahmad Tajuddin Ali
- Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu (DBKK) Director General Datuk Ir. Hj Amrullah @ Amrullah Kamal
- Finance Minister Y.B. Lim Guan Eng
- Minister of Youth, Y.B. Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman
- Minister of Primary Industries, Y.B. Puan Teresa Kok

To continue Engineering the Nation, engineers must work hand-in-hand with government agencies to develop new or enhance existing guidelines and regulations pertaining to engineering matters. As the champion and mouthpiece of the engineering fraternity, IEM must constantly work in collaboration with experienced engineers, industry players, various government departments, institutions and universities.

It is pertinent that our engineers get involved in forums initiated by the Government and relevant Institutions when called upon for negotiations and exchange of ideas and strengthening capacity building in sustainable construction and development. In essence, we should improve the mechanisms to facilitate effective implementation of sustainable development strategies.

CONCLUSION

MY FELLOW ENGINEERS,

For an Institution that will last for generations, 60 years is just a milestone. Without a doubt, it is through our collective efforts and support that our beloved Institution has withstood the test of time. It is also because of the hard work and dedication of our volunteers, members and secretariat that our membership has been able to grow and our Institution to develop over the past six decades.

Now we need to look to the time to come. To continue our focus on Engineering the Nation way into the future, we need to continue enhancing the engineering capabilities of our members and a thriving engineering ecosystem, with the Government, the private sector, academic institutions working closely together with IEM. Therefore, I call upon all of you to join forces with me as we embark on the next course of our journey together in The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia.

May our efforts towards this mission shall prevail.

Thank You.

Ir. David Lai Kong Phooi

IEM President, Session 2019/2020