



# The Call to Refresh: IEM Must Remain Relevant

by Ir. Choo Kok Beng FASc

**TIME** waits for no one – we must keep up with the times in order to remain relevant. When even a second's wait while surfing the Internet is frowned upon, it is unquestionably important for IEM to remain relevant in our fast-paced society.

Recognising this indispensable need to remain relevant, I believe that the call to refresh IEM should be taken seriously.

With IEM's strong framework, I believe that my effort would be to refresh everything we have been doing in the past.

Don't get me wrong – for a learned society like IEM to have lasted 53 years is quite an amazing feat. Many other bodies might have crumbled in the sands of time. During my presidential term I want to change the culture of IEM so that we are not as conservative as we were before. It is time to take risks. We need to innovate and change our approach in doing things so that we remain relevant to the industry as well as to our members.

I write as one who has seen IEM grow for over 34 years. My roots in IEM go a long way back to 1978 when I was still a drainage engineer in Johor. In a way, I had already set my foundation in IEM many years ago. I have also been able to encourage a lot of engineers who have the same mindset to be active in IEM. A ship cannot run with only the captain on board. If you are the captain and the sailors do not support you, the ship cannot sail.

## EVERYONE WILL BE HEARD

Sailing in the same ship that is IEM, part of my plans to refresh IEM is to ensure that everyone is heard. I believe that everyone deserves to be heard.

One of the things I promised when I took over the presidency is that I want to listen a lot before I can do anything more. I have a lot of ideas about what I can do. But before I go into the details of implementing these 'refreshments', I must learn to listen.

To execute my 'listening plan', I have set a target to visit all the IEM branches by the end of July 2013. So far, I have gone to Pahang, Malacca and Negeri Sembilan and will be covering Kedah, Perlis and Sarawak in the coming weeks.

In a turn of events, I found myself at the site in Penang where the freak storm in June caused horrific damage. There, I met Ir. Addnan Mohd Razali the Head of Engineering of Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang and past Chairman of IEM branch and we discussed what could be done to solve the damage and to prevent further damages from occurring.



Ir. Choo Kok Beng FASc with  
Ir. Addnan Mohd Razali



Damage at the site

During my visits to the other branches, I will hold dialogues with the members to inform and educate them further about IEM.

Many members of IEM do not know what the institution is all about. Many do not know how strong the institution is nor do they know the opportunities they have within the institution. For example, we have created an ideal platform for them in the ASEAN Engineering Register (AER). They will be registered with the AER and recognised all over the ASEAN countries with a total population of 600 million people – so they do not have to restrict themselves to Malaysia's population of 29 million people.

I founded the AER in 1998 under the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organizations. The goal of AER is to have a database of all engineers in the ten ASEAN countries. From here, I hope IEM can facilitate the mobility of engineering within the country.

## LOOKING BEYOND

Realising the brevity of my presidency term, I have set my mind to make as many positive changes as possible during my term.

As President of IEM, I only have a two-year term. That is all the time I have to play this role. So I have taken the opportunity to introduce a seven-year plan, rather than the usual five-year plan. The seven-year plan will bring IEM to the year 2020, coinciding very nicely with the country's goals Vision for 2020.

The call to refresh goes beyond IEM and the present time. I believe that IEM's role is paramount in national development.

After being involved in the engineering fraternity for so many years, I find that the only way that a nation can be harmonious and peaceful is through the input of the engineering fraternity. That is what we hope to facilitate. ■

## CONGRATULATIONS

The IEM would like to congratulate **Ir. Choo Kok Beng** for being elected a Fellow of the Academy of Science Malaysia.