

As a professional body and learned society, the main aim of the Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM) is to promote the advancement of science and engineering technology in the country since its formation in 1959.

Our institution is a not-for-profit organisation representing engineers for all disciplines and our total membership is about 25,000 currently with branches in all states.

The southern branch, which represents members in Johor and Singapore, is now the largest branch and one of the earliest, set up in 1971.

We engineers take pride in our work as prime movers of nation-building, having contributed significantly to the nation's development since pre-Independence days.

What is the public perception and image of engineers?

By nature of the profession, engineers are generally known as the backroom boys and persons behind the scene.

When people look at the iconic buildings such as the Petronas Twin Towers, they will always want to know who the architect is.

But when some disasters happen such as the collapse of buildings, landslide or floods, people will first ask who are the engineers responsible!

Such an image painted of engineers is one of the challenges we engineers must overcome. I believe professional bodies such as the IEM must play a greater role to correct this perception.

As a professional body, our societal activities are not only constrained to technical matters alone.

We are committed in developing future generations of engineers, and it is reflected in the IEM, whereby half of our members are graduates and young inexperienced engineers.

We conduct activities that allow our members especially young engineers and engineering students to interact with the society.

Interaction with society also means

# Prime movers of nation building



MOHD KHIR MUHAMMAD

instilling our members, especially the young engineers and students, with the spirit of volunteerism and doing charitable work.

Our Young Engineer section and the student chapters of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) have been very active.

Last year, together with Tadika Xaris, they organised charity work at the Johor Cheshire Home in Johor Baru.

They held a gotong-royong to clean up the lawn and perimeters of the home, and organised an interactive programme in which they mingled with senior citizens there.

Our young engineers also managed to solicit donations from the public and local supermarkets for food items to be donated to the home.

Together with the Young Lawyer club, our young engineers have also organised a fund-raising dinner where all proceeds went to associations of children with special needs.

Our members also do charitable work and give donations-in-kind with our engineering expertise.

For example, we helped to upgrade the Spastic Children Association of Johor's workshop.

Some of our members provide charitable services by lending their expertise in the construction of houses of worship.

Our annual dinner is a get-together session not within the engineering fraternity as our guests also include



Sultan Ibrahim at the IEM southern branch's 37th annual dinner.

people that we regularly interact with such as architects, surveyors, contractors, developers, contractors, as well as local authorities and technical agencies.

Last year, we were extremely honored to have the Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, and Raja Zarith Sofiah Sultan Idris Shah for gracing our 37th annual dinner.

This is the first time in our branch history where the royalty

was present.

This year, our branch will be celebrating our 40th year anniversary.

As engineers, we would continue to be the prime movers of nation building in Johor by participating, for instance, in the current development of Iskandar Malaysia, touted to be the new economic region in this country.

And like those who reach 40, we are all excited about our coming to

this middle age — after all as the famous saying goes, life begins at 40!

■ Mohd Khir Muhammad, 48, is the chairman of the Institution of Engineers Malaysia, Southern Branch. He and his wife stay at Bukit Japun, Jalan Mariamah, Johor Baru.



Members of the IEM southern branch doing charity work at the Johor Cheshire Home.



Student chapters of the IEM are also actively involved in charity work.