

EARTHQUAKES NOT A SERIOUS THREAT AT THE MOMENT

**“But We Need to be Prepared as
the Situation May Change”**

Editor’s Note: In response to the article “Are We Ready for an Earthquake?” which appeared in The Sun newspaper on 8 March 2012, IEM issued the following statement which was published on 14 March 2012.

In view of the perception that the occurrences of earthquakes have become more frequent, there has been, understandably, a corresponding increase in people voicing their concerns on how prepared we are if a “big one” were to strike us. The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM) would like to assure the public that, based on current evidence and studies, the danger of earthquakes to buildings and other engineering structures in Malaysia is relatively small.

All major earthquakes have originated outside our country, and within Peninsular Malaysia, only a few minor quakes were recorded. The effects from all of these earthquakes have caused relatively minor damage to our buildings and other structures. This is because buildings which are properly designed to meet the Malaysian Standards (previously the British Standards) using the “in-situ, reinforced concrete framed” construction method popular in this country would have some degree of resilience against earthquakes inherent in the structure. They will not be easily damaged or collapse from minor shocks.

However, the IEM understands that earth conditions may change and previously inactive geological fault lines may become active, as has happened before in other parts of the world. If such changes are confirmed to be happening, the engineering design practice would then need to adapt to the changing environmental conditions, and so will the corresponding need to adopt more stringent standards and codes of practices. To be prepared for such potential concerns, the IEM in collaboration with Standards Malaysia and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), is leading a study to determine if there is a need for a national standard for the earthquake design of building structures in Malaysia. However, as a non-profit professional organisation, the IEM needs the support and funding from the government and other organisations to sustain its efforts. ■