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National disaster situation discussed

The national disaster situation was addressed at an emergency council meeting of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka, [IESL]. President of the Institution, Eng. (Prof.) L. L. Ratnayake, addressing the members summoned for the emergency session, said: "As a responsible professional institution, the IESL must help the government and the public to carry out rehabilitation work efficiently and in a planned manner.

It is the general consensus that the IESL should

help at a professional level by providing professional advice and by coordinating the activities of engineering organisations in the affected areas rather than by trying to collect food items and so on as there were many other organisations doing that." Eng. (Ms.) a Karunartane of the Centre for Housing Planning & Building (CHPB) and

Eng. R. M. S. Bandara [National Building Research Organisation-NBRO] explained the activities of the Disaster Mitigation Project and the

NBRO. They said that during the recent disaster that it had been possible to prevent many casualties because of the success of the awareness campaign carried out by them earlier. If not for this, the number of casualties would have been much higher.

Eng. (Gp. Capt.) Mervyn Gunasekera, a past president, suggested that a team of IESL engineers should immediately visit the affected areas, and with local engineers on the spot, to assess the situation and decide on the specifics of

IESL action to help. Eng. (Prof.) Jayawardene stressed the importance of immediately carry out a publicity campaign to raise public awareness of the dangers from earthslips.

Eng. Mallawaarachchie said that the NBRO and the Disaster Mitigation Project carried out many useful studies but did not have the necessary legal teeth to implement their recommendations. The IESL decided that these aspects should be addressed in the short and long terms in the interests of the pub-

lic.

Short-term measures: 1. To be coordinated and implemented through the respective Provincial Centres and a committee was established to coordinate actions in this regard;

2. To request the members to make voluntary contributions to a fund now established by the IESL, and

3. Approval was granted to a request made by the IESL Central Province Centre to meet the expenses of preparing a book of study notes to be delivered

to school children in the affected areas.

Similarly, the long-term measures would consist of: 1. Launching a sustained publicity campaign in order to create public awareness;

2. Requesting the government to prepare the necessary legal framework to establish a National Disaster Management Authority, and for the Development and Professional Activities Committee to immediately look into measures to be taken in the event of an earthquake.