



Prof Bujang Kim Huat, left, and Datuk Michael Parker (co-chairman of the organising committee) at the press conference PHOTOGRAPH: J CHAN

Soft soil utilisation prompts need to stimulate research

By Fraser Barui

KUCHING — The need to utilise soft soils, which occupies about 13 per cent of the State's land area, for development has prompted the need to stimulate research into the matter.

This was stated by Professor Dr Bujang Kim Huat of University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), an organising chairman of an international conference on 'Recent Advances in Soft Soil Engineering' to be held here on March 5-7.

"The prevalence of soft organic soils in the lowlands, particularly peat, as a continuous corridor along the entire coast and an interregnum between the natural outlet to the sea and the hinterland makes their development inevitable."

He added: "the objective of the conference is to provide a forum for engineers, contractors, academicians and those in related fields to share

their experiences in soft soil engineering."

It is also hoped that the conference would bring about the advancement in the development of regional awareness and knowledge in the subject and to encourage the development of links between those involved thus leads to the evolution of appropriate technologies in the utilisation of soft and peat soils.

Disclosing that the present technologies in developing soft soils, such as geo-textile, as time-consuming and expensive, Dr Bujang said: "It is hoped that the conference would bring about new ideas and techniques on how to develop such areas efficiently and economically."

Meanwhile, more than 100 participants from Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore and Australia are expected to attend the conference. It will be jointly organised by UNIMAS, Institution of Engineers Malaysia

(Sarawak) and Public Works Department, while the sponsors are Cahaya Mata Sarawak Berhad (main sponsor), Sarawak Economic Development Corp (SEDC) and the Association of Consulting Engineers Malaysia (Sarawak).

Focus would be given to such topics as characteristics, testing and fundamental behaviour of soft mineral and organic peat soils; engineering analysis and design methods particularly in organic peat soils; construction procedures and appropriate technologies; and land use and environmental issues.

Professor Peter Jarrett from Royal Military College in Canada is to be the keynote speaker at the conference.

The conference official opening is to be officiated by the Chief Minister while the closing ceremony is to be officiated by Minister of Infrastructures Development Datuk Wong Soon Koh.