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USE OF LIGHTWEIGHT FILL MATERIALS IN CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD EMBANKMENTS ON SOFT PEATY CLAY

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This thesis was submitted to the Department of civil Engineering of the University of Moratuwa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Geotechnical Engineering

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DECLARATION

The work included in this thesis in part or whole has not been submitted for any other academic qualification at any institution.

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CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | i |
| CONTENTS | ii |
| List of Figures | vii |
| List of Tables | ix |
| Abstract | xiv |
| | |
| 1.0 INTRODUCTION | |
| 1.1 Difficulties in construction on soft ground | 1 |
| 1.2 Improvement of peaty clay | 1 |
| 1.2.1 Removal and replacement method | 2 |
| 1.2.2 Stage construction | 2 |
| 1.2.3 Preconsolidation by preloading | 2 |
| 1.2.4 Electro-osmosis consolidation | 3 |
| 1.2.5 Deep mixing method | 3 |
| 1.2.6 Dynamic consolidation | 4 |
| 1.2.7 Vacuum consolidation | 4 |
| 1.3 Another possible solution | 4 |
| 1.3.1 Expanded and extruded polystyrene blocks | 5 |
| 1.3.2 Pulverized fuel ash | 5 |
| 1.3.3 Expanded clay | 5 |
| 1.4 Need to develop a material locally and objectives of the project | 6 |
| 1.5 Arrangement of the thesis | 7 |
| | |
| 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW | |
| 2.1 Artificial fills | 8 |
| 2.2 Waste materials as fills | 9 |
| 2.2.1 Civil engineering applications of recycled rubber from scrap tyres | 10 |
| 2.2.2 Importance of soil tyre mixtures in civil engineering applications | 12 |
| 2.2.3 Environmental studies of recycled rubber | 13 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 2.2.4 Other general studies of recycled rubber | 14 |
| 2.2.5 Concluding comment | 16 |
| 2.3 Use of finite element techniques for modelling construction of embankments | 16 |

3.0 DEVELOPMENT OF LIGHTWEIGHT FILL MATERIALS

| | |
|---|----|
| 3.1 Introduction | 19 |
| 3.2 Development of a lightweight fill material with tyre chips | 19 |
| 3.2.1 Testing of mixes and density analysis | 20 |
| 3.2.1.1 Particle size distribution | 20 |
| 3.2.1.2 Specific gravity | 21 |
| 3.2.1.3 Proctor test properties | 22 |
| 3.2.1.4 Saturation and swelling characteristic of the lightweight fill | 23 |
| 3.2.2 Compressibility characteristic of fill material | 25 |
| 3.2.2.1 Consolidation tests on as compacted fill | 26 |
| 3.2.2.2 Consolidation tests under saturated condition | 30 |
| 3.2.3 Determination of shear strength characteristics of fills material | 33 |
| 3.2.3.1 Unconsolidated undrained triaxial tests | 34 |
| 3.2.3.2 Consolidated drain test results | 36 |
| 3.2.4 Concluding comments | 37 |
| 3.3 Development of a lightweight fill material with sawdust | 38 |
| 3.3.1 Testing of mixes and density analysis | 38 |
| 3.3.1.1 Specific gravity | 41 |
| 3.3.1.2 Particle size distribution | 41 |
| 3.3.2 Swelling characteristics of the mixes | 42 |
| 3.3.3 Compressibility characteristics in as compacted condition | 46 |
| 3.3.3.1 Compressibility characteristics of 3: 2 mix | 46 |
| 3.3.3.2 Compressibility characteristics of 1: 1 mix | 47 |
| 3.3.4 Compressibility characteristics under saturated condition | 48 |

| | | |
|------------|---|----|
| 3.3.4.1 | Compressibility characteristics of 3: 2 mix | 48 |
| 3.3.4.2 | Compressibility characteristics of 1: 1 mix | 48 |
| 3.3.4.3 | Comments on the compressibility characteristics | 49 |
| 3.3.5 | Determination of shear strength characteristic of fill material | 52 |
| 3.3.5.1 | Unconsolidated undrained triaxial tests | 52 |
| 3.3.5.2 | Consolidated drain test results | 54 |
| 3.3.6 | Concluding comments | 56 |
| 3.4 | Development of lightweight fill material with paddy husk | 56 |
| 3.4.1 | Testing of mixes and density characteristics | 56 |
| 3.4.1.1 | Specific gravity | 58 |
| 3.4.1.2 | Particles Size distribution | 58 |
| 3.4.1.3 | Swelling characteristics of the mixes | 59 |
| 3.4.2 | Compressible characteristics of the developed lightweight fill material | 60 |
| 3.4.2.1 | Consolidation tests on as compacted fill | 60 |
| 3.4.2.2 | Consolidation tests under saturated condition | 63 |
| 3.4.3 | Determination of shear strength characteristic of fill material | 67 |
| | | |
| 4.0 | CONSTRUCTION OF EMBANKMENTS WITH LIGHTWEIGHT FILL | |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 70 |
| 4.2 | Conventional process of preloading in road embankments | 71 |
| 4.3 | Proposed process using a fill material | 73 |
| 4.4 | Need for accurate modelling | 73 |
| 4.5 | Selection of a finite element program | 74 |
| 4.6 | Critical state programme (CRISP) | 75 |
| 4.6.1 | Finite element formulation | 76 |
| 4.7 | Modelling process | 82 |
| 4.7.1 | Mesh generation | 83 |
| 4.7.2 | Boundary condition | 84 |
| 4.7.3 | Selection of models | 84 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.7.3.1 Plasticity | 85 |
| 4.7.3.2 Critical state | 86 |
| 4.7.3.3 Cam clay | 88 |
| 4.7.3.4 Modified cam clay | 90 |
| 4.7.4 Soil constitutive models for the proposed embankment | 92 |
| 4.7.5 Evaluation of modified cam clay model parameters for peaty clay | 93 |
| 4.7.6 Derivation of original Mohr column elastic perfectly plastic model parameters | 99 |
| 4.7.7 Insitu stresses | 101 |
| 4.7.8 Method of analysis | 102 |

5.0 SIMULATIONS OF THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION PROCESS USING CRISP CONSOLIDATION MODEL.

| | |
|--|-----|
| 5.1 Conventional construction process and its simulation | 105 |
| 5.1.1 Insitu stage. | 106 |
| 5.1.2 Filling stage 1 | 106 |
| 5.1.3 Consolidation stage 1 | 107 |
| 5.2 Proposed construction process using lightweight fill material. | 109 |
| 5.2.1 Using tyre chips soil mixture | 109 |
| 5.2.2 Using sawdust soil mixes | 109 |
| 5.2.3 Using paddy husk soil mixes | 111 |
| 5.3 Proposed construction process 2 | 112 |
| 5.3.1 Using tyre soil mixes | 112 |
| 5.3.2 Using sawdust soil mixes | 114 |
| 5.3.3 Using paddy husk soil mixes | 114 |

6.0 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| 6.1 Construction process 1 | 116 |
| 6.2 Construction process 2 | 118 |
| 6.3 Parametric study performed | 120 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 6.3.1 Influence of the embankment height | 121 |
| 6.3.2 Influence of the thickness of peaty clay layer | 122 |
| 6.4 Analysis with a preconsolidation pressure | 125 |
| 6.5 Analysis with polystyrene blocks | 127 |
| 6.6 Concluding comments | 129 |
| 7.0 CONCLUSIONS | 130 |

| LIST OF FIGURES | Page |
|---|-------------|
| 3.1 Particle size distribution of tyre chips mixes and lateritic soil | 21 |
| 3.2 Proctor compaction test result | 23 |
| 3.3 Swell in 1:2 tyre soil mix | 24 |
| 3.4 Swell in 1:3 tyre soil mix | 24 |
| 3.5 Swell in lateritic soil | 24 |
| 3.6 Compressibility of as compacted lateritic soil | 26 |
| 3.7 Compressibility of as compacted 1:2 mix | 26 |
| 3.8 Compressibility of as compacted 1:3 mix | 27 |
| 3.9 Effect on tyre mixing on m_v for lateritic soil | 28 |
| 3.10 Settlement Vs root (time) curve | 29 |
| 3.11 Effect on tyre mixing on c_v for as compacted lateritic soil | 29 |
| 3.12 Compressibility of saturated of lateritic soil | 30 |
| 3.13 Compressibility of saturated of 1:2 mix | 30 |
| 3.14 Compressibility of saturated of 1:3 mix | 31 |
| 3.15 Effect on tyre mixing on m_v for saturated lateritic soil | 32 |
| 3.16 Effect on tyre mixing on c_v for saturated lateritic soil | 32 |
| 3.17 Deviator stress Vs Axial strain for Lateritic soil | 34 |
| 3.18 Mohr circle Plot for Lateral soil-UU test | 34 |
| 3.19 Deviator stress Vs Axial strain for 1:3 mixtures | 35 |
| 3.20 Mohr circle Plot for 1:3 mixtures-UU test | 35 |
| 3.21 Deviator stress Vs Axial strain for 1:2 mixtures | 35 |
| 3.22 Mohr circle Plot for 1:2 mixtures-UU test | 35 |
| 3.23 Deviator stress Vs Axial strain for Lateritic soil | 36 |
| 3.24 Mohr circle plot for lateritic soil-CD test | 36 |
| 3.25 Deviator stress Vs Axial strain for 1:3 mix | 36 |
| 3.26 Mohr circle Plot for 1:3 mix-CD test | 36 |
| 3.27 Deviator stress Vs Axial strain for 1:2 mix | 37 |
| 3.28 Mohr circle Plot for 1.2 mix-CD test | 37 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 3.29 Proctor compaction test results | 40 |
| 3.30 Standard Proctor Curves for 3: 2 mix | |
| 3.31 Standard Proctor Curves for 1: 1 mix | 40 |
| 3.32 Particle Size Distribution | 41 |
| 3.33 Swell Characteristics of paddy husk mixes | 44 |
| 3.34 Swell Characteristics of Lateritic Soil | 44 |
| 3.36 e vs. $\log(\sigma)$ plot for 3: 2 mix at as compacted state | 47 |
| 3.37 e vs. $\log(\sigma)$ plot for 1: 1 mix at as compacted state | 47 |
| 3.38 e vs. $\log(\sigma)$ plot for 3: 2 mix at saturated state | 48 |
| 3.39 e vs. $\log(\sigma)$ plot for 1: 1 mix at as saturated state | 48 |
| 3.40 m_v vs. $\log(\sigma)$ for as compacted fill | 49 |
| 3.41 m_v vs. $\log(\sigma)$ under saturated fill | 49 |
| 3.42 C_v vs. $\log(\sigma)$ for as compacted fill | 50 |
| 3.43 C_v vs. $\log(\sigma)$ for under saturated fill | 50 |
| 3.44 Graphical representation of settlement Vs time of 3: 2 by Casagrande method. | 50 |
| 3.45 Graphical representation of settlement Vs time of 3: 2 by Taylor method. | 50 |
| 3.46 Graphical representation of settlement Vs time of 1: 1 by Casagrande method. | 51 |
| 3.47 Graphical representation of settlement Vs time of 50%: 50% by Taylor method | 51 |
| 3.48 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 3: 2 mix design | 53 |
| 3.49 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 1: 1 mix design | 53 |
| 3.50 Mohr circle plot for 3: 2 mix design-UU test | 53 |
| 3.51 Mohr circle plot for 1:1 mix design-UU test | 54 |
| 3.52 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 3: 2 mix design | 54 |
| 3.53 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 1: 1 mix design | 54 |
| 3.54 Mohr circle plot for 3: 2 mix design-CD test | 55 |
| 3.55 Mohr circle plot for 1: 1 mix design-CD test | 55 |
| 3.56 Proctor compaction test results of sawdust mixes | 57 |
| 3.57 Particle size distribution curve for lateritic soil, soil-paddy husk mixes | 58 |
| 3.58 Swelling for 1:1 mix | 60 |
| 3.59 Swelling of paddy husk | 60 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 3.60 e vs log (σ) plot for 1:1 mix at as compacted state | 61 |
| 3.61 e vs. log (σ) plot for 1:1.5 mix at as compacted state | 61 |
| 3.62 Effect on paddy husk mixing on mv for lateritic soil as compacted | 62 |
| 3.63 Effect on paddy husk mixing on C_v for lateritic soil as compacted | 63 |
| 3.64 e vs log (σ) plot for 1:1 mix at saturated state | 64 |
| 3.65 e vs log (σ) plot for 1:1.5 mix at saturated state | 65 |
| 3.66 Effect on paddy husk mixing on mv for lateritic soil as saturated | 66 |
| 3.67 Effect on paddy husk mixing on C_v for lateritic soil as saturated | 66 |
| 3.68 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 1:1 as compacted mix | 68 |
| 3.69 Mohr Circle plot for 1:1 compacted mix from UU test | 68 |
| 3.70 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 1:1.5 as compacted mix | 68 |
| 3.71 Mohr Circle plot for 1:1 compacted mix from UU test | 68 |
| 3.72 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 1:1 saturated mix | 69 |
| 3.73 Mohr Circle plot for 1:1 saturated mix from CD test. | 69 |
| 3.74 Deviator stresses Vs Strain for 1:1 saturated mix | 69 |
| 3.75 Mohr Circle plot for 1:1 saturated mix from CD test. | 69 |
| 4.1 The soil profile and the embankment geometry | 72 |
| 4.2 Tangent stiffness methods | 82 |
| 4.3 The soil profile and the shape of the embankment | 83 |
| 4.4 Finite element mesh | 84 |
| 4.5 Plastic potentials and plastic increment strain vectors (Wood, 1990). | 86 |
| 4.6 (a) True unload-reload behaviour | 88 |
| (b) Idealised unload-reload behaviour of speswhite kaolin in v. In p' space (Al-Tabbaa, 1987). | 88 |
| 4.7 Cam clay yield surface | 89 |
| 4.8 Modified Cam clay yield surface. | 89 |
| 4.9 Determination of modified Cam Clay parameters | 93 |
| 4.10 Critical state line | 94 |
| 4.11 Critical state void ratio | 95 |
| 4.12 Large scale setup | 97 |
| 4.13 Finite element mesh of large scale | 97 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.14 Comparison of observed settlement and settlements computed with CRISP. | 98 |
| 4.15 Detail of determination of young's modulus | 100 |
| 4.16 Consolidation test for soft peaty clay | 101 |
| 4.17 Behaviour of toe | 104 |
| 4.18 Behaviour of the point 5m beyond the toe | 104 |
| 5.1 Insitu stage mesh | 106 |
| 5.2 Deformed mesh after the stage 1 filling | 106 |
| 5.3 Deformed mesh after the stage 1 filling and consolidation | 107 |
| 5.4 Final finite element mesh | 107 |
| 5.5 Final deformed finite element mesh | 108 |
| 5.6 Graphical representation of construction of 3m embankment by lateritic soil | 109 |
| 5.7 Graphical representation of construction of 3m embankment by tyre chips: soil mix-process 1 | 110 |
| 5.8 Graphical representation of construction of 3m embankment by tyre chips: soil mix-process 1 | 113 |
| 6.1 Construction results of 3m embankments over 8m depth peaty clay-process 1 | 116 |
| 6.2 Construction results of 3m embankments over 8m depth peaty clay- process 2 | 119 |
| 6.3 Construction results of 3m embankments over 8m depth peaty clay | 126 |

| LIST OF TABLES | Page |
|---|-------------|
| 3.1 Specific gravity of tyre soil mixes and lateritic soil | 22 |
| 3.2 Compaction properties of tyre soil mixes and lateritic soil | 22 |
| 3.3 Swelling characteristics of fill | 25 |
| 3.4 Compressibility characteristics of as compacted fill | 27 |
| 3.5 Compressibility characteristics of as saturated fill | 31 |
| 3.6 Undrained shear strength parameters | 34 |
| 3.7 Drained shear strength parameters | 37 |
| 3.8 Compaction properties of tyre soil mixes and lateritic soil | 39 |
| 3.9 Specific gravity of sawdust soil mixes and lateritic soil | 41 |
| 3.10 Details of Selected Mix Designs | 42 |
| 3.11 Swell Characteristics of 1: 1 mix | 43 |
| 3.12 Swell Characteristics of 3: 2 mix | 43 |
| 3.13 Swell details of selected mixes and lateritic soil | 44 |
| 3.14 Swell pressure detail | 45 |
| 3.15 Compression details of 3: 2 mix and 1: 1 mix as compacted state | 51 |
| 3.16 Compression details of 60%: 40% Mix and 50%: 50% Mix Under Saturated state | 52 |
| 3.17 Compressibility characteristics of sawdust soil mix | 52 |
| 3.18 Shear strength parameters of sawdust: soil mixes | 55 |
| 3.19 Proctor compaction test results on lateritic soils with paddy husk | 57 |
| 3.20 Details of specific gravity | 58 |
| 3.21 Swell data for the mixes | 59 |
| 3.22 Compressibility characteristics of as compacted fill | 62 |
| 3.23 Compressibility characteristics of saturated fill | 65 |
| 3.24 Shear strength parameters | 69 |
| 4.1 Permeability with stress range | 98 |
| 4.2 Cam clay parameters for peaty clay | 99 |
| 4.3 Elastic perfectly plastic model parameters for fill materials and dense sand. | 100 |
| 4.4 Insitu stresses for the sub soil | 102 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 5.1 Detail of conventional construction techniques for 3m high embankments | 108 |
| 5.2 Detail of tyre shreds construction techniques for 3m high embankments | 110 |
| 5.3 Detail of sawdust construction techniques for 3m high embankments | 111 |
| 5.4 Detail of paddy husk construction techniques of 3m embankments | 2 |
| 5.5 Detail of tyre soil mix construction techniques for 3m embankments-Construction process 2 | 113 |
| 5.6 Detail of sawdust soil mix construction techniques for 3m embankments-Construction process 2 | 114 |
| 5.7 Detail of paddy husk soil mix construction techniques for 3m embankments-Construction process 2 | 115 |
| 6.1 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Tyre chip mixes- Construction process 1 | 117 |
| 6.2 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Sawdust mixes- Construction process 1 | 117 |
| 6.3 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Paddy husk mixes- Construction process 1 | 118 |
| 6.4 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Tyre chip mixes- Construction process 2 | 119 |
| 6.5 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Sawdust mixes- Construction process 2 | 120 |
| 6.6 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Paddy husk mixes- Construction process 2 | 120 |
| 6.7 Effectiveness of the process 1 with the variation of embankment thickness over 8m thickness soft layer. | 121 |
| 6.8 Effectiveness of the process 2 with the variation of embankment thickness over 8m thickness soft layer. | 122 |
| 6.9 Effectiveness of the process with variation of the thickness of the peaty clay layer for 3m embankments - Construction process 1. | 122 |
| 6.10 Effectiveness of the process with variation of the thickness of the peaty clay layer for 4m embankments - Construction process 1. | 123 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6.11 Effectiveness of the process with variation of the thickness of the peaty clay layer for 5m embankments - Construction process 1. | 123 |
| 6.12 Effectiveness of the process with variation of the thickness of the peaty clay layer for 3m embankments - Construction process 2. | 124 |
| 6.13 Effectiveness of the process with variation of the thickness of the peaty clay layer for 4m embankments - Construction process 2. | 124 |
| 6.14 Effectiveness of the process with variation of the thickness of the peaty clay layer for 5m embankments - Construction process 2 | 124 |
| 6.15 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Tyre chip mixes over peaty ground with stiff crust. | 126 |
| 6.16 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Sawdust mixes over peaty ground with stiff crust. | 126 |
| 6.17 Construction of the embankment with Soil: Paddy husk mixes over peaty ground with stiff crust. | 127 |
| 6.18 Construction of the embankment with polystyrene blocks | 127 |

Abstract

Number of proposed highways in Sri Lanka are to be constructed over sites underlain by soft peaty clay, due to scarcity of land. In order to ensure that the in-service settlements of these roads are small enough and the road could function satisfactorily, number of special ground improvements techniques are to be adopted. An alternate approach that could be considered is the use of a lightweight fill material in the construction. Extremely lightweight fill material such as expanded and extruded polystyrene blocks were used in a number of developed countries in the construction of road embankments over soft ground and in landslide repair. However, these materials are to be imported to the country and would be very expensive. As such, from a local point of view, a process involving the use of such materials would not be economically competitive. In order to find an economically feasible solution, the lightweight fill materials should be developed with the locally available inexpensive raw materials.

As such, lightweight fill materials were developed locally by mixing with different proportions of tyre chips with lateritic soil, sawdust with lateritic soil and paddy husk with lateritic soil. Tyre chips were obtained by shredding discarded motorcar tyres. Sawdust was obtained from wood mill waste and paddy husk was obtained from rice mill waste. The developed fill material should of sufficiently low density and workable. Different mix proportions were tried out to get several suitable mixes. The developed material should be sufficiently incompressible and should possess adequate shear strength. Further detailed tests were conducted on selected mixes to establish their engineering characteristics in relation to strength and stiffness.

The effectiveness of the use of lightweight fill material in the embankment construction was studied in detail by the finite element package CRISP. The set criterion was that the in-service settlement of the road should be less than 50mm. This was achieved through the preloading process. In this study a comparison was done for two different approaches; one constructed with lateritic soil and the other incorporating the developed lightweight fills in the preloading process. The placement of the fill layers, the settlement of the peaty clay, the effect of the removal of the preload and the application of the pavement and

traffic load was studied with a fully coupled Modified Cam clay constitutive model. Parametric analyses were also done varying the thickness of the embankment and the peaty clay. The process was found to be helpful in reducing the construction period and consumed fill volume. The advantages were more prominent with the increase of embankment height and soft layer thickness.