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ITS Seminar to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

It was easily 35 degrees Celsius on a very hot and sunny day in the middle of February but some 500 of us ITS professionals were oblivious to this. We were all gathered in the well air-conditioned main hall of Connexion@Nexux, a new convention centre just south of the Kuala Lumpur city centre, listening attentively to the Malaysian Minister of Works during the opening ceremony of the ITS Seminar on February 21-23, 2017, organized by our international partner ITS Malaysia.

“The six components that support a strong foundation to construct a Smart City are Smart Economy, Smart Environment, Smart People, Smart Government, Smart Transport, and Smart Living,” said the Malaysian Minister of Works Dato’ Sri Haji Fadillah Haji Yusof. He then went on to relate to the audience contributions of ITS in the past and upcoming ITS activities in Malaysia, including multi-lane free flow tolling and ITS applications in public transport.

The 3-day event featured 70 presentations in 17 plenary and technical sessions by ITS experts from Malaysia and 10 other countries. A wide variety of ITS topics were discussed but prominently featured were big data, ITS applications in public transport, weigh-in-motion technologies and electronic tolling, as the country is preparing itself for the adoption of multi-lane free flow operation on all of its tolls roads.

Although the Canadian delegation attending the seminar is a really small one, it has a rather high profile participation. Travelling with me was Rish Malhotra from IRD Inc. Together, we moderated and spoke in 2 plenary and 4 technical sessions, including the Opening Plenary with seasoned ITS experts from Malaysia, Canada, Singapore, Taiwan and the USA. In addition, we were credited in organizing the international component of the conference and received numerous acknowledgments of our help to and support for ITS Malaysia in the past.

We were also able to arrange and conduct many side meetings with ITS Council Malaysia members, senior government officials and company executives to discuss potentials and opportunities for our members.

The gathering also included a multi-faceted exhibition of local and international ITS products and services, and it easily qualifies as an international conference. Yet it was humbly referred to by the Malaysian as a Seminar, based on an interesting theme of “Driving to the New Normal”.

Ever since ITS was invented in Toronto, where the first computerized traffic control system was implemented, we have broken many technology barriers and what seemed



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impossible before has become a new normal in the transportation community. With most, if not all, of us carrying a mobile phone, with more power and functions than the computer that sent man to the moon, the issue is no longer one of the enabling technologies for ITS but rather their integration and social acceptance and how they are applied collaboratively across agencies and industry sectors.

“Our future hinges on our ability to nurture ITS eco-system by bringing in wider participation from cellular service providers, broadband providers, vehicle manufacturers, logistic companies, academic/R&D institutions, transport technology innovators and service providers, “ said Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa, Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia in his Keynote Address on the seminar opening day.

Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa believes this year’s ITS Seminar could inspire, excite and energise younger delegates to look at the current transportation challenges more innovatively and holistically. According to many people I talked to during the conference, the Chief Secretary was right on.

According to the Minister of Works, the Government of Malaysia has taken steps through the ITS Council Malaysia and its members to reinstate efforts towards implementing the ITS Strategic Plan and ITS System Architecture published for Malaysia in 2007. “One of the many responsibilities undertaken by the ITS Council is the development of the Malaysian ITS Blueprint which emphasizes on the need for interagency collaboration in 9 ITS sectors.

It is interesting to note that Canadians contributed our expertise and experience greatly to the development of the Malaysian ITS Master Plan and Architecture in the last decade. The architecture has now been adopted as a basis in the development of The Malaysian Intelligent Transport System Blueprint 2017-2022. The Blueprint reinforces the need to progress in the 9 ITS sectors identified and it acts as a launching pad for all related agencies to plan and implement ITS under their very own areas of expertise.

We offered our help and support to ITS Council Malaysian in their development of the country’s ITS Blueprint, which will provide an overview of the ITS technology path taken by the ITS community in the country. Such information will provide a glimpse of opportunities and prospects for our exporting members.

All in all, it was a week well spent in Malaysia. We learned a lot about what and how ITS technologies are being considered in this country and obtained a good understanding of local requirements and preferences. Thanks to funding assistance by GOA (Global Opportunities for Associations) of Global Affairs Canada, we were able to network with a large number of Malaysian Government decision makers and private ITS enterprises.



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For a small expenditure, we were able to fulfill our information gathering and networking objectives while achieving a high and respectable profile for ITS Canada. The trip also enhances our relationship with ITS Malaysia and this will bode well for our membership for the future.

Our next international effort will find us in Hong Kong for the Asia Pacific ITS Forum at the end of June, following closely an ITS Expo in Shenzhen just across the border in China. Again, this mission will be funded by GOA and a much larger delegation is envisaged this time. The mission participants will be able to network with ITS agencies and corporations from all over Asia and gather information on prospects there while marketing Canadian ITS technologies to this important ITS growth area. For further information, please contact Joe Lam at 416-892-8396 or joe@josephklam.com





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