

# Report on the ASEAN Australia Engineering Congress 2011

IEM MIRI BRANCH



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**THE** ASEAN Australia Engineering Congress is an initiative by Engineers Australia (EA) to foster engineering fraternity and collaboration between ASEAN and Australian engineers. It is held every four years at various locations in the region. Last year's theme was "Engineering Sustainability" and was jointly organised by EA, the Malaysian Chapter, Swinburne University Sarawak and the Sarawak Development Institute (SDI). Kuching City and the River Majestic Hotel, Kuching had the honour of playing host to many distinguished speakers and some 250 participants from around the region. The 3-day congress, from 25 to 27 July 2011, was opened by YAB Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, Sarawak's Chief Minister.

## KEY DRIVERS

Sustainability is an imperative, not a choice, and engineers need to step up with solutions as only engineers can. The key drivers for sustainability are all too obvious: climate change, population growth, and spiralling increase in green house gases (GHG) resulting from growing wealth and the technologies that engineers co-produced.

## AND THE CONGRESS' ANSWERS

Part of the answer may come from Sarawak as it has plenty of renewal energy resources such as hydropower. Some are already being developed as key economic and environmental differentiators for SCORE in the next 20 years. The Malaysian and Singaporean governments have various new or existing incentives or mandatory regulations for energy efficiency and renewable energy including the Green Building Index and Feed In Tariff (FIT) although the latter is currently only applicable in West Malaysia. Natural gas together with bio-ethanol may also be an immediate practical alternative for lessening GHG pending the future maturity of biofuel based on non-food fibre. As for waste disposal management, there is an increasing shift from traditional landfills to a controlled and engineered version, and to target the 3Rs as is the case in Miri. Although growing wealth poses the main sustainability challenge in many parts of the world, poverty in the developing countries poses no less of a risk (think of slums and polluted waters and the Miri river). This is aggravated by the lack of human resource

capacity for engineering since engineers tend to migrate to the developed world. Here, a proven underutilised reserve might be found among military engineers.

For Sarawak residents though, sustainability here and now could mean good building foundation design (due to prevailing peat soil), which is quite remote from the pervasive climate change focus of the congress.

## TECHNICAL SITE VISIT

About two-thirds of the participants went on a technical visit to the new centralised sewage system that caters to Kuching's core business district area on 27 July. Construction was still in progress and the system was modelled after the systems in Taipei and Singapore. The former will see all black and grey waters within the scope



to be channelled and treated centrally in phases starting in 2012. Much of Kuching City, however, remains out of the current scope although the system is designed for future expansion.

## NETWORKING DINNER WITH IEM SARAWAK BRANCH, EA AND PUJA BRUNEI

There were plenty of networking sessions especially among the IEM Sarawak, PUJA Brunei and EA amid an enthralling cultural show at the gala dinner on 25 July, and the purposely held networking dinner on 26 July at the Kuching Hilton.



The next AAEC would be hosted by Singapore in 2015. Until then, so long! ■