

One Belt One Road Initiative: Opportunities for Engineers

URBAN ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

reported by



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Front row (from left): Ir. Yap Soon Hoe, Dr Ngeow Chow Bing, Ir. Prof. Dr Ruslan, Dr Wang Hong Kok, Dr Zhang Miao, Ir. Yam Teong Sian

The One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative seminar on 29 March 2017 was organised by Urban Engineering Development Special Interest Group (UEDSIG) with the collaboration of the Malaysia Institute of Transport (Mitras). OBOR is a grand plan proposed by China's President Xi and supported by more than 100 participating countries along the route.

It was timely too as evidenced from the number of participants and the ability of the organisers to bring in speakers who are high-level experts familiar with OBOR.

To start the seminar, Dr Wang Hong Kok gave a warm welcome speech. He emphasised on the visions of UEDSIG and the expected skills for acquisition by engineers in the fields of urban planning, economics and housing. This was followed by Ir. Prof. Dr Jeffrey Chiang who highlighted the two objectives of the seminar: To explore the contributing factors leading to OBOR and to explore the potential benefits for Malaysian engineers.

In the first paper, Dr Ngeow Chow Bing of Universiti Malaya, presented One Belt One Road Initiative: The Rationality and Historical Context. He named three uncertainties as contributing factors to OBOR: Geopolitical uncertainty, geo-economic uncertainty and domestic political economic uncertainty.

In the second paper, Dr Zhang Miao, also of Universiti Malaya, presented One Belt One Road Initiative: The Economic Impacts. He focused on China's investments

around the globe in general and in Malaysia in particular. She also touched on five dimensions of connectivity as important: Policy, facility, trade, financial and people-to-people.

In the third paper, Mr. Ramesh Balakrishnan of Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) presented Malaysia's Land Public Transport Master Plan Towards 2030. He gave examples of key public transport developments in the Greater Kuala Lumpur, as well as presented the development status of East Coast Rail Link.

In the fourth paper, Mr. Sim Ooi Kok of MyHSR and Mr. Tony Watson of CH2M jointly presented Planning of Kuala Lumpur - Singapore High Speed Rail: Lessons Learnt from Past Similar Projects. They pointed out five challenges they faced as designers, ranging from siting of stations, synchronising of co-ordinates and cross border HSR to future proofing and lessons learnt from across the world in HSR.

In the last paper, Ir. Prof. Dr Ruslan Hassan presented Economics & Environmental Impacts of Railway: A Case Study. Drawing on his experience in the 98km-long Seremban-Gemas electrified double track rail line, he discussed its environmental and economic impacts.

Judging from the enthusiastic questions raised for the speakers at the end of their presentations, the seminar was a success and met its objectives. A participant from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) suggested that more seminars of this nature should be organised in the future. ■