

ISM-1 2012 in Brief

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Despite the chairman being reluctant to take the helm initially.

Despite having the committee running riot organising, delegating, arranging venue, and grovelling for sponsorships.

Despite turning the committee into frenzy after being told by the hotel management to reschedule, one month prior to the conference, then having to pull some 'cables' so that the show could go on.

Despite having been told that the wife to one of the keynote speakers passed away a few days before the conference and a replacement had to be found.

Despite being given the word that everything is going to be fine on the day, but the venue still looked as if a bulldozer just crashed into it seven days prior to the impending day.

Despite having to listen to abuse from some quarters.

Despite going through more than one year of endless preparation.

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The Department of Mathematical Sciences played host to the inaugural conference of Institut Statistik Malaysia (ISM) i.e. Malaysia Institute of Statistics, the country's only association of statisticians. The conference is the **1st ISM International Statistical Conference (ISM-1 2012)**, held at Persada Convention Centre from the 4th to the 6th September 2012. In the course of these two days, over 130 papers were presented involving more than 160 participants.

The day started with Murphy's Law adage, 'anything that can go wrong will go wrong'. It began with several power sockets found not working and several requested signage boards all wrong and non-existence. When prodded, the response from the venue's event management was executed but at a gentleman's pace along with a smile that literally said 'Anything for you Doctor', much to our consternation.

At about 8pm, participants started trickling in. Queues were formed and everybody started to assemble at the ballroom concourse while enjoying their welcoming drink, the Malaysian way—"teh tarik". Whilst waiting, participants browsed through the abstract book included in their conference bag. Excerpts slides of conference schedules, announcements and reminders were put up on the huge screen inside the ballroom similar to a movie-trailer in a cinema so that participants could

get attuned to the program set out for them. At about 9 am, Dr. Fadhilah Yusof, the Chair of ISM-1 2012, gave a warm welcome to the participants before they dispersed to the parallel sessions. A majority of the participants were statisticians from academic institutions, whereas the rests were practitioners that include researchers from various local government agencies and other bodies such as Department of Statistics Malaysia, Malaysian Cocoa Board, Italian National Statistical Institute and the Indian Statistical Institute. The international participants came from various countries such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, India, Bangladesh, Australia and Italy.

Each day, three parallel sessions of invited and contributed speakers presented their findings on various topics such as engineering, environment, finance in advanced statistical methods. The rooms for these sessions are adjacent to



each other making it convenient for participants to move in and out of one room to another to catch the presentation that may interest them. These parallel sessions were interspersed with a forum on the first day and keynote lectures on important topics. Interestingly, one of the keynote speakers is an hotelier- a statistician and incidentally a Malaysian who is the CEO of a chain of hotels in Turkey called the Caprice Group. He highlighted some of the achievements made through statistical innovations to optimize the management of his hotels.

Another highlight is the officiating ceremony cum conference dinner that was held on the first night of the conference. The event was officiated by state EXCO. , Y.B Encik M. Asojan a/l Muniyandy, who is also the Johor State Chairman of the Integration, Human Resource, Science, Technology and Innovation. Whilst waiting for the honoured guest to arrive, we had to round up everybody who was supposed to sit at the main table to mingle in the VVIP room. Anything to do with the state government, protocols had to be adhered to. Personal aides to the VIP arrived an hour earlier to make sure the 'setting' is all right.

However, last minute changes had to be made to the dinner-seating plan, as several accompanying state officers who were supposed to come were not able to attend. When everything is set, the aide then signaled the arrival of Mr. Asojan.

After the officiating ceremony, the guests were invited to dinner. The spread of food served was plenty and heavenly (courtesy of the Johor State Government). *I would so personally recommend we do our Department annual dinner there!* Unfortunately some of us were too caught up with some of our duties that we did not get to sample all the delicacies. While enjoying the international buffet, the guests were highly entertained by adorable little boys *zappin* dancers especially the international participants.

On the second day, the conference seemed to run on well-oiled machine but not without some minor technical hitches. Then, on the last day, after the closing ceremony, the participants had the opportunity to go on a trip to Tanjung Piai and the Johor Premium Outlet.

All in all, as one of the committee member, I would personally say that this conference was a success. Although, there were some grouses for instance on the fees of which some participants thought to be a tad exorbitant, nonetheless, we do receive complimentary

comments such as, this is one of the most smooth running conference they have ever attended. Kudos to the committee for managing to keep all the drama under cover. Another factor perhaps is the commitment and cooperation shown by everybody in the team headed by Dr. Fadhilah.

Everyone seemed all drained out as the conference draws to a close. The effort taken for organising this kind of event is very tiring but can be rewarding in many aspects. For the record, over the last 10 years, this is the fourth conference (if you count *MISG* workshop) of such scale that the members of this department had organized i.e. "*membanting tulang*". We had *SKSM-10* in 2002, *ICOMS* (co-organized with RAFFS) in 2007, *MISG* in 2011, and now *ISM-1 2012* marked its way into the department's diary. I heard that another one is coming our way next year. ... ("*can't wait.. NOT!*")! ■

Pictures from the conference will be uploaded at www.utm.my/ism-1 in due time