

Tee the third Malaysian to head regional contractors body



MY SPACE BY
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A 70-strong delegation from the Master Builders Association Malaysia (MBAM) travelled to Seoul early this month to attend the 43rd Convention of the International Federation of Asian and Western Pacific Contractors' Associations (IFAWPCA).

The delegation was there to show its support for the new IFAWPCA president — MBAM immediate past president Datuk Matthew Tee Kai Woon, who took over from Construction Association of Korea chairman Yoo Joo-Hyun.

Tee is the third Malaysian to be appointed as the head of IFAWPCA, and the 42-year-old also earned the distinction of being the youngest to do so. Tan Sri Yeoh Tiong Lay was picked to lead the federation in 1983 while the late Siah Kwee Mow was selected in 1998.

A Malaysian is heading IFAWPCA after 20 years and the next time this happens again will be in another two decades because succession is by rotation.

This good news and a proud moment to fly the Malaysian flag found scant publicity in the local mainstream media, which is understandable. But the significance of what transpired at the Seoul convention is worth mentioning here.

MBAM fills top three IFAWPCA posts

Not only was Tee elected as IFAWPCA president at the convention but MBAM vice-president Chuan Yeong Ming was elected as IFAWPCA's secretary-general while I was appointed as a board member and chairman of the IFAWPCA finance committee. These three key positions in IFAWPCA, a prestigious regional organisation, marked another milestone for MBAM.

Having Tee at the helm will provide many opportunities for the Malaysian construction industry and develop it on a global scale. He will assist in fostering international fellowship, forge cooperation between various key international construction organisations and cultivate beneficial relationships between governments and contractors in the region.

I am confident that Tee, with his dynamism, will be able to establish mutual working arrangements between civil and building construction projects in the region.

A year ago, Tee handed the MBAM leadership over to me after having led the association for two consecutive two-year terms. His energetic and active involvement helped to actualise what MBAM sought to do — attain respect as the “prime mover” and become the “recognised voice” of the Malaysian construction industry.

I dare say Tee can bank on his extensive business exposure as the group executive director of public-listed Bina Puri Holdings Bhd — a diversified multinational with joint ventures in Thailand, Brunei, India, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Pakistan, Nepal and Indonesia — to pull off the feat.

I understand that at the top of his list of priorities now is his desire to help IFAWPCA bridge the gap in construction convergence with IT, bringing together diverse societies in the region with MBAM playing a leading role in facilitating discourse and devising an action plan.

We can expect about 1,000 local and foreign delegates to attend the 44th IFAWPCA convention in Kuala Lumpur on Nov 12 to 16, 2018, to deliberate on the theme, “Strategic Alliance with Innovation & Human Capital”.

As the host of that convention, MBAM drummed up support for the theme at the Seoul convention, as reflected in the address of its vice-president and IFAWPCA chief delegate Oliver Wee.

Embrace technology or lose out

With Malaysia in the limelight, Wee believes the time is right for the country's construction industry to show what it has to offer in terms of value-added services through innovation and functional sophis-



Yoo (left) and Tee posing for a photo at the 43rd IFAWPCA Convention in Seoul

tication that incorporates information technology.

The objective is to create a high-value construction industry through convergence with IT, which has proved to be the path for further growth in the construction business, opening up new markets and expanding existing ones.

But before we can do that, local contractors must strive to adopt new technologies, such as building information modelling. We are still developing a pool of practitioners and creating a framework for the industry to implement BIM into the construction value chain.

Not a ‘talk shop’

I am confident that Tee will share his vast knowledge and experience in nation building to benefit IFAWPCA members. His credentials and proven leadership will help elevate the umbrella body into an effective regional lobby group and dispel the negative notion that regional gatherings, in this case IFAWPCA, are mere “talk shops”.

I would like to congratulate the new office bearers and various committees of IFAWPCA and am confident that they will work tirelessly to engage the various ministries, government agencies and international organisations to debate and consult on issues affecting the region's construction industry.

I would also like to commend the Contractors Association of Korea for successfully organising the convention in Seoul and we eagerly wait to showcase Malaysian hospitality to the delegates of 18 Asian and Western Pacific countries attending the 44th convention in Kuala Lumpur.

E-card enforcement

Most local contractors have taken heed of the ongoing enforcement crackdown by the Immigration Department to contain the bane of illegal foreign workers working and overstaying in the country.

But there are also laggards who have yet to apply for the E-card. Some fear being blacklisted for admitting to hiring illegal foreign workers but they need not worry. It is better to be on the right side of the law than suffer the burden of being summoned and penalised.

With the June 30 deadline fast approaching, I urge all employers who have hired foreign workers without work permits to register their employees or face severe penalties.

The E-card is only available to illegal workers from 15 countries that supply foreign workers to Malaysia — Bangladesh, Philippines, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. ■

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