Delegates, speakers give thumbs up to organisers

KUCHING: Delegates and speakers for the just concluded ASIACRYPT 2007 conference were unanimous in their praise for the organisers and their experience during their stay here.

During the conference there were several local delicacies during the break and the night before the event started. They were treated to a banquet, and entertained with traditional music and dance. Each of them was presented with a local handicraft as a memento.

That treatment went a long way in making the conference and their brief stay here memorable ones.

One of the participants, Antoine Jaja gave the thumbs-up to the host for the success of the conference and giving participants a pleasant stay.

Antoine, who is one of the directors of International Association of Cryptographic Research (IACR), said the conference was smoothly run and a great success.

“The conference is simply perfect...organised in a nice environment, and in a new part of the world. I declared it a very successful event. The response was good and I guessed most of the participants enjoy their time in Kuching,” said Antoine, who is also a professor at Université Catholique de Lille, France.

Gaetan Leurent, a student from École Normale Superiéure in France, echoed Antoine’s remarks, adding: “I’m pleased with the way the conference is held.”

“Everything went smoothly. It’s really great, the host is doing a good job. I declared it the best I have been on my first visit to Asia.

“There are many foreign participants coming here. Like me, I guess the others also enjoyed their stay here. Personally, I found Kuching a nice place to visit. It is quite different in terms of landscape, people and weather. There are many interesting places to visit here like the museum,” he said.

Cédric Jeanjean, a student from the University of Louisville, United States, said he simply loved the colourful multi-ethnic culture of Sarawak.

“Kuching is a very interesting place, and it has interesting people and culture. I find the conference unique as the participants were treated to unique cultural performances during the banquet. Overall, everybody was taken care of, it’s very good. The conference is well organized, the location is very good...there is a shopping mall outside the hotel,” he said.

Jeanjean, who also attended the conference in China last year, said he would love to come back for more visits to the city in the future.

Our top worry had been the weather. Before the event started, it was raining the whole day in Kuching. It was lucky that it stopped on the second day so the participants were able to take their day off to visit some places,” he said.

“We are happy that there was no major hiccup during the conference. Everybody seems to be happy with the venue, the facilities and the treatment from the host,” he said.

However, Phan said they would not claim credit for the good response from foreign participation, as international participants already knew about the conference two years ago.

ASIACRYPT is currently one of the top three cryptology conferences in the world and it is already established internationally, he added.

“Our main objective of having it here is to attract the locals. In fact, IACR sponsored US$5,000 to help the locals to get into the conference. This came from various parts of the country participated in this conference,” he added.

 Altogether, 176 experts from universities and industry players from 30 countries including United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, China, Korea and Japan attended the conference.

Another co-chairperson Rosalind Wong from SDI said ground handling of the conference was rather easy as the staff were highly prepared.

“We are only taking care of the arrangement at local level like how to make the event or their stay here interesting.

“We try to localize the environment so that they can enjoy a new experience and have a memorable stay in Kuching,” she said.

ASIACRYPT 2007 is an international conference on the Theory and Application of Cryptology and Information Technology.

Cryptology is the practice and study of hiding information and is considered to be a branch of both mathematics and computer science. It is affiliated closely with information theory, computer security and engineering.

It is used in applications present in technologically advanced societies. Examples of cryptology usage include the security of ATM cards, computer passwords and electronic commerce.

LOCAL ORGANISERS: (From left) Dennis, Rosalind and Phan.

University of Technology said they had been preparing to host the conference over the last two years.

He said Raphaël Phan, who was then the director of SECURE, together with Sarawak Tourism Board and SDI, made the bid for Kuching to host the conference in Korea in 2004.

“After we got it, we contacted the State government and Tourism Ministry of Malaysia for sponsorship. The State government allocated US$20,000 (RM76,000) to fund the organizing of the event,” he added.

Phan, who is a lecturer at Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Switzerland, said the conference was being held in different locations worldwide and bidding was normally done three years in advance.

He said Kuching was the 13th location while Australia and Japan would host the conference in 2008 and 2009.

“Jeannot: Simply loves the local culture.

GAEATAN: Kuching is a nice place to visit.

ANTOINE: The conference is simply perfect.

DANCE ‘Rejang’ and treated to local food.

The four-day ASIACRYPT 2007 at Hotel Crowne Plaza Riverside which ended last Thursday was organised by Information Security Research (SECURE) Lab of Swinburne University of Technology (Sarawak Campus) and the Sarawak Development Institute (SDI), with support from the Sarawak government.

Co-chairperson Dennis Wong from Swinburne
PAYING ATTENTION: A section of the participants at the conference.