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PROFESSOR TO LEAD PROJECT WITH FACEBOOK

Dr M. Amin Azimi, research scientist with the Louisiana Tech University Trenchless Technology Center and adjunct civil engineering professor, has earned a grant to help Facebook increase the amount of fibre optic cable around the world. Azimi serves as principal investigator on the grant (FERRET=FibER installation via Robotic Excavation & Trenching), through which he will lead a team of 20 researchers to develop a robot capable of installing fibre networks via excavation and trenching. The team includes four other Louisiana Tech faculty members, three graduate students and five undergraduate students, as well as eight high-ranking employees from the Facebook Department of Engineering. Azimi expects the interdisciplinary team of Louisiana Tech faculty and students and Facebook employees to expand over the next nine months. The Trenchless Technology Center (TTC) will lead a group of civil engineering and construction engineering technology faculty and students in this project as they collaborate with a mechanical engineering group led by Dr Kelly Crittenden, programme chair and associate professor of Tech's mechanical engineering programme.



Dr Azimi stands outside the headquarters of Facebook.

Facebook is one of the largest organisations in the fibre optics connectivity field in the world. In recent years, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft, have all invested in submarine cables to keep pace with increasing demand. The team plans to design an autonomous 'trenchless' underground fibre-laying robotic system to help Facebook reduce the costs and complexity of conventional fibre-installation techniques. Azimi said this project will create opportunities for Louisiana Tech students and faculty to network and build skills. "I would like to express my special thanks to Dr John Matthews (director of the TTC and associate professor of civil engineering), Chris Morgan (TTC lab manager) and the TTC team for their support of this project. I would also like to thank Dr Hamid Hemmati and Dr Hamidreza Bolandhemmat from Facebook for their kind cooperation and support; it is a great honour for me to work with them. I am confident that Louisiana Tech and Facebook will have a long-term relationship through this project, which establishes a connection between the University and Facebook's Department of Engineering, and future joint ventures. Students can practice their skills and challenge themselves in this unique project." Azimi said. Website: www.latech.edu

PROMOTING TRENCHLESS IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia has taken great strides in the past few decades in adopting more and more trenchless solutions to meet its infrastructure challenges. There are great trenchless opportunities in the immediate, medium and long-term future in Malaysia, especially as trenchless meets many of the Green objectives embedded as a priority in much the Government's infrastructure development agenda. There is also recognition of the importance or training and knowledge transfer, to raise standards and improve use and application of Trenchless. The establishment of the Malaysia Association for Trenchless Technologies (MATT) represents a significant step in the evolution of the trenchless sector in Malaysia, since Trenchless Asia was first hosted in Kuala Lumpur in 2016.



Signing of the Affiliation documents making MATT the latest addition to the ISTT family.

MATT, recognised by Malaysia's Registry of Societies (ROS) as the national association for the representation, recognition and promotion of all aspects trenchless, creates a board-based platform to inform the market and provide networking opportunities nationally and internationally for all stakeholders, as well as to encourage the transfer of knowledge, experience and technologies and commercial opportunities.

MATT - ISTT's newest affiliated association, is excited to be working with ISTT and Westrade - the organiser of Trenchless Asia 2020. TA2020 will incorporate for the first time ISTT's 39th International No-Dig conference, building on the spectacular successes of 2016 and 2018.

Jurutera Ir. Mohd Zuki Muda - Head of Capital Works at Indah Water Konsortium (IWK) wrote: "The past decade in particular marked the beginning of new thinking Trenchless technology is promoted as a Green and Low Carbon Footprint construction practice... and, is now increasingly

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more important and it will be the way to move forward.” Further to this move, Trenchless Educations is also moving forward in Malaysia.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair when asked what his top priorities were, before his successful 1997 election, responded ‘Education, education, education!’ And so it remains for the continued successful development and deployment of Trenchless Technologies in Malaysia. Alongside the usual commercial introduction and use of available trenchless solutions, a key and repeatedly stated priority for stakeholders in the sector, from Ministry level and including Utility operators and private contractors, is indeed knowledge transfer and education.

It was therefore a welcome opportunity for JBP’s Managing Director Börje Persson to be invited to join with Dr Dec Downey - past Chairman of ISTT and Principal of Trenchless Opportunities Ltd, Indah Water Konsortium’s CEO Mr Faizal Othman and Mr Martin Shaw from Xylem, to participate in a Trenchless Technologies Technical Seminar in Kuala Lumpur, earlier this year. The invitation was issued by the recently established Malaysia Association of Trenchless Technology (MATT. IWK’s Mr Othman is MATT’s first serving president.

This inaugural event for MATT - ‘Trenchless - Current Trends, Developments & Opportunities’, was generously supported by ISTT and sponsored by Westrade Group Ltd. Trenchless Asia events have also provided an excellent and important platform for education and knowledge transfer within the trenchless sector. The day-long seminar was hosted by Indah Water Konsortium (IWK), in the conference suite at their very impressive state of the art Pantai 2 Regional Sewage Treatment Plant - a must on any Trenchless tourist’s visit to Kuala Lumpur. Seriously!

It is hoped that similar technical seminars will become a regular part of MATT’s annual programme of events, fulfilling one of the organisation’s key stated objectives - ‘to provide a platform for education and training of trenchless professionals’, and will be excellent forums for local, regional and international participation and networking.

JBP, through one of its group companies in Malaysia - JBP Consultancy Services Asia Sdn. Bhd., has worked closely with IWK, other key Ministry departments and private contractors to offer a range of trenchless training programmes. An example of this is that over the last two years, through exclusive co-operation with WRc in the ASEAN region, over 100 engineers have been educated and certified in Sewer Pipeline Condition Assessment Classification.

Prior to the MATT seminar, JBP was delighted to be joined by Dr Downey, in providing a two day course to over 40 engineers from IWK, JKR (the Public Works Department of Sabah) and private contractors. The course gave an in-depth insight into current trenchless methods and technologies, benefits and limitations, and effective assessment and decision making. The success of this course is an excellent example of the importance of education and training, in increasing awareness of the potential and opportunities of trenchless, raising standards and helping to improve effective decision-making, use and deployment of technologies.

JBP is committed to continue extending its offering of its trenchless courses throughout the ASEAN region, and will do this in conjunction with technology providers, technical experts and other interested stakeholders in the sector, to meet the demand for knowledge transfer. The priority of JBP’s trenchless training programmes, in helping to promote use for trenchless, will remain education, education, education. Website:

www.matt.org.my



JBP Trenchless Training Course Participants, June 2019 at IWK’s Training Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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