

## **CEPSI 2018: Developments in utility sector pose new challenges**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20 (Bernama) -- Embracing big data could help power supply industry players maximise profits while employing advanced utility technology could reduce costs, the Conference of the Electric Power Supply Industry 2018 (CEPSI 2018) heard yesterday.

In his presentation titled 'Two Sides of the Same Coin', Brad Gammons, global managing director for IBM Energy, Environment & Utility Industry, encouraged businesses to create revenue out of the market place and noted that regulatory bodies have limited ability to reuse data out of what he referred to as a commercial environment.

Speaking from the customer management perspective, he suggested that utility be used to monetise the business based on the customer data size to create a better understanding of customer behaviour.

"Consumer data management can help to expand and retain returning customers while creating bigger demand.

"What you have experienced with that customer will be recorded and analysed using analytic support and it is invaluable in building a set of future clients towards providing new services," he said.

On the operational side of the business, Gammons said the collected data could be used beneficially to provide deeper insights from the equipment used by understanding how the company was maintaining its assets or equipment to produce maximum profit.

He cited Google which put thermostat in a house or business unit where it would collect

data to record the consumption pattern to detect changes in the pattern of usage, which could indicate if any of its utility or equipment is running properly or otherwise and requiring repair.

Yesterday was the second day of the six-day conference from Sept 17 to 22 which was officially opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The session was themed, 'Future Utility and Sustainable Development'.

The second panellist, Group CEO of Sarawak Energy, Sharbini Suhaili spoke on 'Digitalising Our Business: A Sustainable Energy Future for Sarawak & Beyond'.

"The key thing for us is to ensure we can become more efficient and effective as a company and using big data is one area we can advance in," he said.

Citing remote monitoring and control, Sharbini believed it was another area that Sarawak Energy needed to focus on so that they could further reduce costs and improve efficiency of the organisation.

Another panellist, head of Product Management at BMW i, Dr Alexander Kotouc, said: "The future is already here. Electric and hybrid vehicles are no longer something from the future, as these are already here, even in Malaysia. This is the new normal," he said.

To a question from the moderator, Kotouc said hydrogen-powered car had been developed in the last 10 years and the technology was already available. However, it might still need to have an infrastructure built to support its production while a few issues had to be looked into, such as hydrogen supply in order to ensure sustainability.

"All three vehicle options (hybrid, electric, hydrogen-powered) are relevant and interesting for the future as the infrastructure have to be made available for car producers to embark on mass production to ensure affordability for the consumers," said Kotouc.

The final speaker for the session, Dr Ken Koyama, chief economist and managing director of the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan (IEEJ) shared his views on future challenges of the global electricity market and industry based on IIEJ analysis.

“Energy, in particular electricity, is an essential commodity for human activity. And while electrification is expected to continue, electricity supply security will become a critically important challenge,” he said.

He also noted that the four Ds -- deregulation, digitalisation, decentralisation and decarbonisation – could turn out to be the new keywords for the future as some of the field experts had already started talking about and studying these four elements.

“The look for the future in utility and sustainable development is challenging,” said Koyama. “Many companies aim to be flexible and innovative to accommodate the upcoming market change. However, the electricity supply industry will face new challenges, thus requiring flexibility to adapt to the emerging markets to ensure survival and profit growth.”

The CEPSE 2018 keynote sessions feature 15 high-profile speakers from across the globe to share their views and practices on topics such as global trends and shifts, future utility, sustainability, innovation, digitalisation and more.

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