

IEEE ComSoc
IndoChina Roadshow Report
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1. Hanoi, July 14th, 2008 – Meeting at the Radio Frequency Directorate

The COMSOC delegation met with Vietnam Leaders from the

- Vietnam Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC),
- Voice of Vietnam (VoV),
- Vietnam Post and Telecommunications Group (VNPT),
- National Institute of Information and Communications Strategy,
- Viettel Telecom Cooperation, Vietnam Multimedia Cooperation (VTC),
- Vinaphone,
- Mobifone,
- Universities in Hanoi

and was welcome by Mr. Doan Quan Hoan, Director General of RFD who underlined the importance for Vietnam to have strong relations with IEEE-COMSOC.

This was followed by a welcome address from Prof. Nguyen Hong Vu, VP of REV, one of the COMSOC Sister Societies. He pointed out the long standing relationship of REV with COMSOC and praised the initiative of COMSOC to engage in this Indo-China Roadshow.

These greetings were responded by Doug who pointed out that this meeting represents a further proof of the commitment of the Communications Society throughout the world. The current number of COMSOC members in Vietnam is very low, less than 20, and this of course does not reflect the importance of Vietnam and its active role in an expanding telecommunications environment.

One of the goal of this meeting is to increase awareness of COMSOC in the various organizations represented as a means to increase cooperation and the number of members.

Byeong gave a presentation of the Communications Society emphasising the core values and the benefits for members. He also offered support for forming a Chapter in Hanoi.

The morning was attended by 35 Vietnam officers representing the above mentioned institutions. A list is given in Annex 1. We will be adding these participants to our COMSOC mailing list and send a half year free membership. The host will send the emails of all participants.

The following discussion pointed out that language is an issue, however nowadays most engineers are studying English. A task force can be set up with REV to translate papers, tutorials from English to Vietnamese. One or two students may help and there may be a need to support them. However, Doug received information in HCM City that the Government intends to have English as the official language at the University to help positioning Vietnam as a global player. This means that translation can only be required to address present engineers.

In the morning and afternoon Roberto gave a presentation on Telecommunications Ecosystems Evolution, emphasizing the role of COMSOC in facilitating discussion and understanding of this very complex area that has seen an involvement from industry and university alike. The morning audience was the one listed above, the afternoon one was with people from the Ministry, around 30 people attended.

A repeated theme in the follow up discussions was that chapters in Hanoi and/or HCM City would be like a “seed” for future industry and academic growth, also a “magnet” for attracting participation (e.g., through DLTs). Also, found out in Ho Chi Minh City that the IEEE Vietnam Section leadership is already actively pursuing creation of one or two ComSoc chapters (several RIVF 2008 organizing committee members are also IEEE Section officers).

It is proposed to follow up with a personal letter to all morning attendees offering a free half year membership in COMSOC. We feel that it can be very much appreciated and it would provide a way to continue the dialogue and to ask them to proselytise. Also that can be used as a starting point to create a Chapter in Hanoi. The same thing should be done for the contacts we had in HCM City, although it may be more appropriate in the beginning to have only one Chapter covering all of Vietnam. This may require further interaction with the “locals”.

Clearly the new COMSOC members need to be also IEEE members and therefore there is a need to get support from IEEE and COMSOC staff to execute the follow up plan.

2. Ho Chi Minh City, July 15th

The visit was organised in conjunction with RIVF Conference where Doug and Byeong gave two invited keynote presentations.

We met with the Home Department of Posts and Telematics, with the Department Manager, Mr. Nguyen Anh Tuan and his staff.

As COMSOC we emphasised the value that can be derived at Country-wide level by having key people in Institutions and Government joining and interacting in the COMSOC Community. Institutions and Government should become the driving force in the evolution of the overall production, delivery and retail environment. This requires the capability to drive innovation at a global level. It is not sufficient to invest in deploying modern infrastructure it is essential in growing at the same time the capabilities to use these infrastructures.

Standards are considered very important by the Post and Telematics Home Department.

- for countries like Vietnam it is probably appropriate to develop a program targeted to Government and Institutions. This may be studied in cooperation with our related Society, ITU, and specifically with the Training Department. We could aim at supporting, in conjunction with ITU and the World Bank, the development of telecommunications. Whilst ITU is targeting Country as a whole, the World Bank the financial support structure, COMSOC may target individuals through Institutions and Government Agencies.
- We were asked by the Department Manager for an MOU or proposal for an Industry Now (or Institution Now) type program of bundled services and memberships. They asked us to coordinate the chapter activities with the university but were also interested in the Institution Now concept – **Action item** –for Shri and Bob.

Doug was able to stay two more days in HCM City and the following:

- 1) The ministry recently changed its top leadership and is now committed to moving all telecom R&D from the ministry over to universities – and has lots of funding to make this happen (previous leadership wanted to hang onto it).
- 2) The universities are rapidly growing but are concerned about not having enough professors and feel work is needed to bring their quality up to world standards – seeking visiting professors.
- 3) Doug met Intel’s Vietnam and Indochina Country Manager at the Gala Dinner. He had strong interest in seeing WiMAX deployment, since it would mean more laptop sales, more WiMAX chips, and thus more business for Intel (which has a plant in Vietnam associated with these chips). He also listed a handful of recommendations to Vietnam for how they can become an India-plus or a China-plus, i.e., serve as an “alternate” or “back up” to India and China development for global companies.
- 4) Doug met US Army Lt. Colonel stationed in Singapore at the US Embassy, who’s job is to seek out and support research at universities in Asia-Pacific that may have application to the Army (e.g., robotics). He was interested in learning more about the IEEE Grand Challenges, and I subsequently introduced him via email to Mary Ward-Callan for follow up. Note, the US Army was a patron for RIVF 2008.
- 5) Doug’s keynote on “Shaping Technology – The Next Generation” was well received. Most of the Q&A after the presentation centered on how ComSoc could help Vietnam development, especially through university involvement. Chapters were seen as the key.
- 6) RIVF (Research, Innovation and Vision for the Future), is technically cosponsored by ComSoc and viewed as strategically important to scientific development in this region. RIVF would like to add a track on “applications” to help provide some focus to the already covered “research” perspective.
- 7) Doug was invited (and accepted) to be Honorary General Chair for RIVF 2009 in Danang next July.
- 8) ICT 2008 will be taking place this December in Hanoi and would like a ComSoc keynote speaker on telecom futures – Doug mentioned several times that Roberto would be perfect (but we are awaiting further details before forwarding any requests to Roberto). This would be an opportunity to continue our relationship building with the Vietnamese. It may also be the opportunity to execute the second part of the Roadshow, closing deals and visiting Indonesia.
- 9) Vietnam is much different from India, in that a) the government is driving development through both policy and funding, b) industry is much less mature, c) telecom infrastructure is significantly more rudimentary and d) there are fewer than 20 ComSoc members (versus the huge number of ComSoc members in India). For Vietnam, a possible strategy for ComSoc may be to work through the government to influence academia towards engaging more industry involvement.

3. Cyberjaya, Malaysia, July 16th

Cyberjaya is located approximately one hour North of Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, and is the location of many technology and telecommunications companies and government institutions related to telecommunications.

We (Roberto and Bob) gave a presentation of COMSOC and a lecture on telecommunications ecosystems and a presentation on services that can be provided by COMSOC at the Institute for

Telecommunications Regulation of Malaysia (SKMM) to an audience of about 100 people 50% coming from industry, 10% from government and the rest from university. The talks were well received and generated many questions, part in public, most through direct contact.

We gave another presentation at the Telekom Malaysia Research Centre to an audience of engineers and a presentation of Industry now.

We had lunch with the Telecom Malaysia Managing Director and a couple of managers and it be appropriate to follow up with an Industry Now proposal similar to Celcom.

4. Kuala Lumpur, July 16th

We (Roberto, Bob and a local Comsoc member, Daniel) met with Kevin Henry, Vice President of Celcom and head of Business Innovation Division. It was an opportunity to explain the benefit deriving from an active participation in COMSOC by their engineers. The Industry now program was presented and Kevin showed an interest in it asking to receive more detailed information and indicating he would be willing to act as a sponsor for the program at Celcom. We followed up sending information by email and involving Shri who will keep open the link with Celcom.

5. Kuala Lumpur, July 16th

In the evening dinner was organised by Daniel with representatives from DiGi (mobile Operator) our Sister Society in Malaysia, IEM, 3G Wireless and Software Industry and Telekom Malaysia.

It was an opportunity to present the Industry Now program and to get a feeling of the needs of the industry. IEM is the point of reference for all engineers in Malaysia, however most of its focus is on civil engineers and very little is being done to support telecommunications and information technology engineers. IEM welcomes the opportunity of organising events jointly with COMSOC specifically targeted to telecom engineers.

DiGi has about 1,800 people, 90% of which are engineers. They are mostly involved in operation and maintenance. There is an interest in broadening their expertise and technical culture and the Industry now program may be an opportunity for doing so. Action point for Shri.

6. Singapore, July 17th , Nanyang University

A lecture was given by Roberto at the Nanyang Technology University. It was followed mostly by professors since students are on vacations.

It was followed by a presentation given by Bob on COMSOC. Interestingly, only few people were aware of COMSOC: This shows that there is a need for much more communications. In Singapore this may be particularly important since there are a number of Universities attracting many students from many developing countries (20% of the student population). Having a good local communications may create an attention to COMSOC that is fertilising the new generation of engineers in many developing countries.

- It is proposed to develop a focused communication project for Singapore Universities. We have a local IEEE office that can help and we could work with some professors to create a suite of presentations, as an example there can be a general overview on the future of the biz of communications where technical and biz aspects are tied together followed by focused technical lectures on hot topics. These can also be expanded through a series of video

conference lectures and webinars. We can set a goal of having 500 students' members in Singapore, out of the 5000+ students in the technical areas related to telecommunications, electronics and information technology, after this program and to have a 10% of these continuing as Gold Members. By focussing on a single location we can be much more effective and by doing that in Singapore we could nevertheless achieve the result of hitting many developing countries.

7. Singapore, July 17th, dinner with key people

We had dinner with a number of key people thanks to C.K.Toh effort.

- Mr. John Leong, Deputy Director of EE Temasek Polytechnic
- Prof. S.K. Chou, VP IES / NUS
- Dr. Dave Chong, Director of EE Singapore Polytechnic
- Mr. Mark Chong Chin Kok, Executive VP, Singtel
- Prof. Desa Narasimhalu, VP SCS, Associate Dean of Singapore Management University
- Mr. Henry Heng, Deputy Principal, Nanyang Polytechnic
- Prof. K.C. Yow, NTU Singapore

The discussion was about telecommunications, local culture and what IEEE and COMSOC goals are. There was an expression of interest in establishing relations between IES and COMSOC and the Singapore Computer Society and COMSOC. We will follow up on that.

Singtel can be an important company to involve on Industry now program since they have a customer base of over 180 million in the whole region but it will take some more visits to come to the point of getting down to business, as it is customary in this area of the world. This meeting has served the purpose to open the discussion channel.

8. Singapore July 18th, Bob meeting with Fanny Su

Bob met with CK Toh, Fanny Su and Serena Dhing for lunch on July 18th before returning home and discussed the follow up needed in Singapore and the region. Discussion was on the currency exchange issues, the need for a focused view in Singapore, the Industry Now opportunities in KL, and the Institution Now opportunities in Vietnam. Bob did not ask for a commitment from Fanny and Serena as he wanted to check with Carole and Jack first since they are considered staff.

9. Closing remarks

As we did last year in India there is a need for a second round to close up on some on the opportunities identified. Particularly in this area of the world it is important to establish personal relations and give time for thinking on next steps.

We propose to send a thank you note summarising specific points raised during the meetings and then to follow up with a specific proposal (Industry Now, something similar targeted to Institutions...) and take that opportunity to set up a follow up meeting.

Originally we planned to organise the second part of the Roadshow in conjunction with the Sister Society meeting in Hanoi but now this has been moved to Tokyo to be in synch with the Asia Pacific Regional Chapter Meeting.

We can therefore postpone the second part of the Roadshow in December, if there will be a request for giving a keynote in Hanoi at the REV Conference.

That will also provide with some more time for strengthening the relationships.

Also, it is important to synchronise our actions with those that might have resulted from a recent IEEE visit in the area with Roberto de Marca.

A final word of thanks to our local friends who have proven invaluable to set up the various meetings: Daniel Wong in Malaysia, C.K. Toh in Singapore and prof. Nguyen Van Ngo in Vietnam.

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