

I was more than thrilled to jet off to Kuala Lumpur for the Asia Liberty Forum to escape the arctic vortex in Toronto, Canada where I am on exchange studying. I entered the plane in Toronto all suited up in my thermals, appropriate for the -25 degrees Celsius (minus another 10 to include the wind chill factor) and exited the plane in Kuala Lumpur into the fine mid-twenties weather. I made the rookie mistake of not changing out of my extreme winter gear and sweated my way to meet the Uber.

Within 1 hour of being in Kuala Lumpur I had a local, my Uber driver telling me about the problems in Malaysia. One problem that resonated with me was that Uber is currently illegal in Malaysia (at that point I realised I was probably committing my first criminal offence). The reason I chose Uber over the Taxi service at the airport was because even though taxi stated on their car there is no bartering, taxi drivers were still illegally bartering with their customers and unfairly charging customers. In comparison, the Uber is priced at the beginning of the trip at a competitive rate. I also generally felt safer in the Uber because I could track where it was going on my phone and the state of the car was much better than the run down taxis.

The conference began with a cinematic and interesting video history of liberty in Asia, confirming that Asian values are compatible with liberty (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdJJJaHoZOek>). I met various people all around the world including countries like Kyrgyzstan where the population is only 5.7 million. It was interesting to meet people and listen to anecdotes about their culture, social and economic environment and mainly their fight for basic rights that I took granted for in Australia.

During the conference, it was interesting to hear about an app called i-torney founded by Baladevan Rangaraju (founder and director at the India Institute). The app i-torney is an app to promote rule of law by empowering the common man with knowledge of the law, making police conduct accountable and making it easy to seek help in emergency situation. The idea is that it educates ordinary citizens so that they know when they are being treated unfairly by police.

In the second day of the conference an interesting topic of 'having the right to be offline' was addressed by Premesh Chandran (CEO and co-founder of Malaysiakini - a leading NGO news agency in Malaysia). This idea of having the right to be offline was new to me. For example, Chandran addressed the idea of catering to people who don't want to use social media to be connected or people who do not want to pay by credit card to use or obtain services. There was much intellectual discussion between the panel and audience which I absorbed and thought about later.

Overall, the Asia Liberty Conference was a great eye-opening experience and awakened new ideas to my mind. I would like to thank Ron and Jenny Manners for the experience and also the other scholars who I joyfully shared it with. I am now back to the cold in Canada where streets aren't as hustling and bustling as they were in Kuala Lumpur.