

### International Affairs Department

Dear Friends,

How are you? I'll send you my third Vietnam Journal as a JICA expert. The third journal is about a visit to Nam Dinh City and *Hoa Lo Prison Historical Relic*.

#### 1. VISIT NAM DINH CITY

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As I reported in my previous newsletter, my main operation, "Project Implementation Support," targets Nam Dinh City. I visited the city recently. Wikipedia says Nam Dinh City, the capital of Nam Dinh Province, is 90 km southeast of Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. The city has an area of 46 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 380 thousand.



Photo 1: Kickoff meeting

I visited Nam Dinh to join a kickoff meeting of the project. Representatives from the Ministry of Construction (MOC), JICA (me), and the city said hello to each other and confirmed the procedure and cooperation for the project (photo 1). After the meeting, we visited a pump station (photo 2).



Photo 2: Channel to pump station

Since the meeting was scheduled at 10:00 am, I left Hanoi at 7:30 well in advance. After arriving on time, I met a person from the Department of Construction (DOC) of Nam Dinh Province. The meeting attendees were five from Nam Dinh DOC, two from MOC, and four from JICA, including me. The request and proposal of Nam Dinh Province were as follows:

1. They need sewage works master plan or sector master plan and expect JICA's full support.
2. They can provide existing sewage works and related documents, including general master plans and World Bank projects.
3. DOC is ready to assign people to the project.

JICA expert Mr. Wako, a chief adviser of the project, will send an official letter asking for the cooperation of DOC of Nam Dinh Province. We will have more meetings to develop the specifics of the sector master plan.

## 2. VISIT HOA LO PRISON HISTORICAL RELIC

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*Hoa Lo Prison Historical Relic* (photo 3) is one of the must-see landmarks in Hanoi.

The facilities were used as a prison to hold Vietnam political prisoners during the French colonial era. Later in Vietnam War, North Vietnam locked up captured American here.

French called it "Maison Centrale," Central House, a traditional euphemism for prison.

French colonists imprisoned Vietnamese who agitated for independence as political prisoners. Many of them were tortured or executed. Despite the harsh and cruel conditions, the Vietnamese never gave up and kept fighting for freedom until the end of French rule in 1954.



Photo 3: Panoramic view



Photo 4: Cell

While the facilities are almost demolished, some are left to be opened to the public as a museum. The day I visited the prison was beautiful weather, but it was dark inside. The exhibits that described many shackled inmates in the damp and shady room were shocking (photo 4). The exhibitions included rooms for female inmates, French guillotines, and dungeons.

The visit to Hoa Lo Prison gave me an impression that the Vietnamese have great patience that enabled them to endure such inhuman treatment and fight with the tenacity to win independence.

Here is the answer to the previous question. My question was, "It is about 7 km from my house to the office. How much do you think the taxi fare is?" The answer is 500 yen for number 2. How was yours?