

WMA STARTS ITS TRAINING PROGRAM

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International Affairs Department

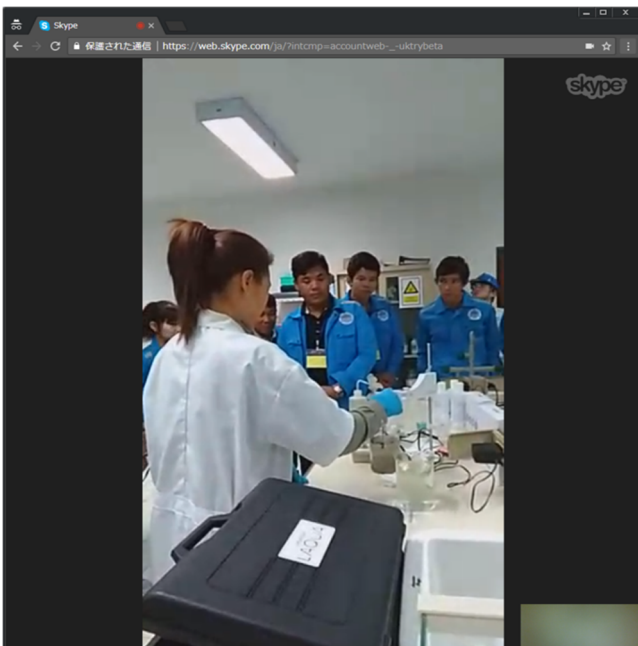
I visited Thailand for a week in February, and it was my fourth visit to Wastewater Management Authority (WMA) project. The party I joined included people from the Public Sewage Works Bureau of Saitama Prefecture and Saitama Sewage Systems Agency.

The purposes of our visit are to verify the performance of the first independent training program of WMA, arrange the technical seminar scheduled in July, and consider the public educational activity of sewage works.

In Si Racha, where WMA has its training center, we are divided into two groups to deal with many jobs. We spent much time in the meetings taking side glances at a technical seminar. I had a busy week delivering an unscheduled presentation during the program in addition to the meetings. I will mainly report to the training center of Si Racha this time.



Bangkok and Si Racha



Live video of the training session using Skype

The seminar WMA held this month is for its young staff. WMA engineers who had completed a training program in Japan debuted as master trainers. Their first practical program was excellent, which includes the additional unique ideas that WMA has developed besides things its staff has learned in Japan. Notably, their presentation that uses many videos was impressive, from which we should learn a lot. The program was successful, with many questions and active discussions.

In assembling electronic circuits, students divided into some teams and

raced. Since the chief of Si Racha WWTP would give a prize of 100 baht (about 3 dollars) to a winning group in the assembling game, students looked very excited. It might be a Thai tradition that people like gambling.

I had another impression that the internet technologies such as Skype worked in the program. WMA received the live message from the manager of the Public Sewage Works Bureau of Saitama prefecture and sent the live video of the training session to Japan.

I, personally, had the opportunity to make a presentation for the public educational activity of sewage works. Thailand adopts a combined sewerage system, and tons of garbage people throw away into street drains, travel to WWTPs, and shorten the service life of treatment facilities. Besides, most municipalities cannot collect user charges for political reasons. I represented some examples to improve such problems: enlightening activity for public sanitation is critical, and a basic idea of sewage works even if it is time-consuming.

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On the last day of our visit, I found a water fountain in Bangkok. In Japan, we often see it in such parks, but what I found in Bangkok was on the sidewalk. Though I was curious, I did not try to drink it because I knew tap water was not potable in Thailand. I returned to Japan with a remaining mystery that the water is drinkable or what happens after drinking it.

I wonder if Thai people directly drink water from the fountain, and I confirmed water came out when I opened the faucet. Let me know if you want to try. I will send you a map to access it there.



Water fountain on the sidewalk in Bangkok

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WMA has a policy that utilizes Si Racha training center as many as possible in the future. Besides, the organization has a plan that makes Si Racha a hub of sewage works training for Southeast Asian countries. I expect sewage works training centers will spread over all Southeast Asia nations.

This year is the seventh year of the Grassroots Technical Cooperation Project for WMA. The project will continue to the next fiscal year. WMA and Saitama's project members became closer and built a steady relationship. I strongly feel the importance of long-term support.

JS will continue to support WMA as a member of Team Saitama.