

**International Affairs Department**

Dear friends,

My 10th newsletter is about Progress Report and Vietnamese New Year (Tet.)

1. PROGRESS REPORT MEETING

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Recently, a progress report meeting was held in Nam Dinh City. Vietnam Investment Consulting and Construction Design (CDC) reported the progress of the sector master plan development in the pilot project to the related parties of Nam Dinh City, including Mr. Chinh, a chairperson of the Commune People's Committee (CPC) of Nam Dinh City and Mr. Chi, a vice chairperson, etc. (Photo 1&2.)

In the sector master plan of sewage works, the primary points, including geography, landscape, social and economic conditions, the existing sewerage system, and urban planning, are investigated. Then the numbers that impact the master plan significantly, such as population and precipitation, are specified. Based on the above requirements, locations and dimensions of facilities, including sewer, pumping stations, WWTP, etc., are determined. Finally, calculating



Photo 1: Progress report meeting #1



Photo 2: Progress report meeting #2

approximate expenses, prioritizing operations, and setting conditions are required. The progress report included the results of prediction analysis on population and precipitation and the investigation of information/figures for sewage works extracted from other projects. Before the meeting, CDC and JICA had a prior discussion. We verified an English version of the Progress Report and asked CDC to modify it as required (Nam Dinh City will receive its Vietnamese version.)

I don't know if the prior discussion worked or if Nam Dinh City had little interest in the "Progress" (not final) Report, but the meeting successfully finished.

The project team will focus on the rest of the development toward submitting the sector master plan in April.

## 2. VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR (TET)

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Do you know Tet?

Tet is Chinese New Year in Vietnam. Because of the influence of bordering China, Vietnam has importance on a lunar calendar by tradition, not a solar calendar.

Since the date of the Chinese New Year changes every year, it is February 16 in 2018 of the Gregorian calendar with which we are familiar. Vietnamese authorities set New Year's holiday from February 14 to 20, and the government offices are closed. The official announcement was made in the middle of December (on such short notice!).

During Tet, people go home all at once to celebrate New Year with their families.

Companies have the custom of paying a bonus recognized as the payment of the thirteenth month to their employees before Tet. I've heard some employees never come back after getting a reward.

When Tet is getting closer, Vietnamese people make offerings to their ancestors. They clean up their houses and furniture to kick out the bad fortune of the previous year; and decorate flowers of pink peach and yellow plum and kumquat (cold-hardy citrus) in their living rooms (Photo 3.) Because pink peach and yellow plum bloom just in early spring, and kumquat are prolific, they are essential to wish good fortune



Photo 3: New Year's decoration



Photo 4: Red envelopes for "lucky money"

for New Year.

Like Japanese "Osechi," traditional New Year foods, Vietnamese people prepare long-life foods such as Banh Chung or Banh Tet and sticky rice dumplings. People spend New Year's Day only with their families. On the second and third days, people visit neighbors, friends, and teachers each other to celebrate New Year.

They also have a tradition not to clean up for the first three days of New Year. People believe if they

swept the dust, the god of wealth hiding in the dust would get away. Also, just like in Japan, people have a custom giving money (lucky money) as New Year's gift to children. A slight difference is who receives "lucky money." In Japan, minors (college students at the biggest) usually get it. Still, in Vietnam, many people, including children, families, and relatives, and in their neighborhood, grandparents, parents, followers at work, drivers, domestic workers, etc., benefit. While Tet has many common traditions with the Japanese New Year, it is not always happy for foreigners like us. Many shops and restaurants are closed, and various services, including food and drink, get more expensive during Tet, so many people spend their holidays out of Vietnam.