

MACHO BRAVADO IN THAILAND

International Affairs Department

สวัสดีตอนเช้า ("Hello" in Thai)

I revisited Thailand as a member of "Team Saitama." As I mentioned in my previous newsletter, Saitama prefecture has supported WMA (Wastewater Management Authority) of Thailand as a grassroots project of JICA.

This newsletter includes everything about the "Wastewater technical seminar," which is the primary purpose of this time's visit.

THE LONGEST DAY

It is three in the morning. The bedside clock showed one when I glanced at it just before I slept. So, I've had only two hours' sleep. Since there is a time difference of two hours between Thailand and Japan, it is five in Japan now when I am usually out of bed. Though my sleep time seems to have adjusted to the local time of Thailand, my wake-up time still stays in Japan. My half-jet lag does not allow me to sleep anymore.

Today, we will have a "Wastewater technical seminar." Yesterday, we had to make a significant adjustment because Mr. Chira, Deputy Director General for technical and planning of WMA, who was scheduled to talk in the afternoon, became unavailable. His presentation moved to the morning, and this change required the rearrangement of the whole timetable of the seminar. I understand that any project tends to need reform, but I can say this is flip-flopping.

My mission today is to deliver a presentation. The rearrangement, as mentioned above, has also changed my time. It is lucky for me to finish mine before lunch. Like a wedding reception, it is hard to have a big meal without worrying about coming own speech. I am sure I can have a good lunch today. As the early bird gets the worm, I wisely use my time rehearsing and reviewing the script.

I always go to a restaurant for breakfast at its opening time. While restaurant staffs uncover plastic wraps on food in a hurry, I get inside by saying,

"สวัสดีตอนเช้า." After the meal, I review my script and check out before eight. Rama Gardens Hotel of Bangkok, where the seminar is held and I stay, is a bit of an inconvenient place; the closest convenience store is a ten-minute distance. This environment encourages me to focus on my work, or I have nothing to do other than



The author delivers a presentation.

do my job. When I go down to the seminar room at eight, some WMA staff have already started setting up.

After opening remarks at nine-thirty, Mr. Chira speaks for ninety minutes. His lecture using many news and PR videos includes issues of sewage works in Thailand, PR of WMA, and government policy. Their problem is the shortage of funds, human resources, and sites required for WWTPs. Mr. Chira explains that WMA prioritizes issues to fix them along with government policies.

After Mr. Chira, Mr. Wako from Saitama prefecture talks about grassroots projects of JICA and the point of the seminar. Then, it is my turn. My careful preparation with many rehearsing and reviewing relaxes me. But when I start talking, my brain goes almost blank. After getting through until the last page, I find myself in a cold sweat.

The morning session is over before twelve, and then it is lunchtime. In Thailand, I always overeat because the food is incredible. I'm sorry for overeating. Rama Gardens Hotel has an excellent lunch buffet with fantastic various local dishes. I'm sure I'm getting on weight right now. As I spent more days in Thailand, my trouser became tight, and I had to lose my belt on my way back to Japan. The too excellent food is always a problem.



I had Gai Yang (Grilled marinated Thai chicken) on the first day. This is a rare photo I did not forget to take before eating.

In the afternoon session, some private companies in Saitama Prefecture from Japan deliver their presentations. Most people stay to join the afternoon session, and their eagerness always impresses me.

After the seminar, some municipal staff speaks to "Team Saitama." According to their talk, their city has a wastewater treatment plant, but it does not work well because the improvement of sewers is behind.

I'm sure the grassroots project should develop its third phase to overcome the country's problems.



Mr. I, the winner of the macho game (front)

Now I am writing this newsletter on a car heading to Si Racha. The van with eight of us, including a driver, flies down the highway. Since rough road surfaces bump us often, I have

trouble writing. I will close my laptop before getting car sick.

PS We stopped over a rest area one more hour to Si Racha. From there, we had a rock-paper-scissors game to show our macho bravado with a rule that a winner gains the honor of buying McFlurry for all. It was terrifying for a person who has no masculinity like me. A winner was Mr. I from Saitama Sewage Systems Agency. Thank you for McFlurry. I enjoyed it!

PPS Si Racha has an island beach, and there is a can get to the island by again stopped over the happened to meet a "hot" rudeness) Goddess of healed us at the end of

After washing ourselves, dinner downtown in Si is over. It was a long



The Goddess of Mercy in the small island

close to its footbridge we walking. We island and (forgive my Mercy, and she the hard day.

we finally go to Racha. My report day.

All members of Team Saitama played full out for working, eating, and preparing for the next day during their stay.

It is the last visit to Thailand of the project's second phase. In the previous meeting, a WMA employee said: "I cannot find any word that expresses my appreciation to you." His word reminded me of the past things that happened in the project and made me cry.

During the WMA project, I joined nine events, including three training programs in Japan and six visits to Thailand. I had many exciting experiences and a valuable relationship with the people of WMA, JICA, Saitama Prefecture, Saitama Sewage Systems Agency, and private companies, which is a priceless asset for me.

I will take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the project.