

SOUTH-EAST ASIA TOUR VOL.1: INDONESIA, PHILIPPINES

International Affairs Department

This summer, we visited some countries in Southeast Asia. Our visit aims to achieve cooperation from governmental officials for AWaP (Asia Wastewater Management Partnership), a framework of international collaboration between five Southeast Asian and Japan related to wastewater management.

I will report the first half of our trip.

INDONESIA

The Republic of Indonesia, with the fourth highest population in the world, is an important market for many automobile manufacturers. With major automobile manufacturers having factories in this country, Jakarta, the capital, has heavy daily traffic. However, many drivers seem not so interested in safety, leading to aggressive driving such as tailgating, sudden lane changes, and jackrabbit starts and stops, which seem to be a standard driving technique here.

After surviving the deadly road crossing, we finally arrived at the Japanese Embassy and JICA office. At the meetings, we shared information about the state of public infrastructure, including wastewater facilities. According to their report, Indonesia has trends such as increasing foreign currency restrictions, general development plans leaning towards the economic foundations, back-and-forth improvement of environmental infrastructure with lack of coordination between ministries, public awareness being familiar with poor water quality, etc. These issues seem to have become a high barrier to wastewater improvement. On the other hand, the governor of Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta, Special Capital Region, aims to achieve 100% wastewater treatment service throughout the city by 2030. The situation made, there may be significant potential for the wastewater treatment market in Jakarta.

After then, we visited the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MPWH) to ask for their cooperation toward AWaP operation, and to share information about the current status of wastewater management, while we introduce the business of JS. The Chief of MPWH was very forward-thinking in the development of wastewater treatment. He welcomed the assistance of construction and O&M of wastewater treatment facilities and the training program JS could provide through JICA. He hoped to gain cooperation for a wastewater project in Bali. The Chief agreed to send their section chief of the technical planning department to the steering committee of AwaP. It was one of the best achievements of this visit.

In Jakarta, we chose a restaurant named "OOTOYA" with what I believed to have local taste. As it happens, we have a chain restaurant with the same name in Japan. However, somehow I think that the name of this restaurant must have a deep cultural meaning in Indonesia, though I am not sure why. My choice is "Tori Kurozu" from its ethical menu. Unexpectedly, the dish was of sweet and sour chicken and vegetables with sweet black vinegar sauce, which tasted familiar to me, and I wondered why.

I felt a little nervous about the local cuisine before arriving, but it turns out, that it was nothing to worry about. We left Indonesia to visit the Philippines in good shape.

THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines has some factory of Japanese automobile manufacturers. While Japanese cars enjoy popularity, unique Jeepneys, a modified small-size truck (in the center of the photo), contribute to creating a distinct traffic culture in this country. The Philippines may have rough driving culture close to those of Indonesia. A crossing with a broken traffic light forced me to stand on a busy street under the blazing sun for a while. Thanks to the chaos, I could make an emotional reunion with my old friend by the name of "heat stroke."

In the Philippines, our representative from the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism (MLIT) met the representative from the Philippines Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to ask for their cooperation in the AWaP operation. Though DPWH signed the consensus document to join AWaP, they insisted that they are no longer in charge of this framework. The turn in their attitude confused us, which

taught us that we need a tough negotiation when negotiating with the authority of this country.

After the puzzling meeting between MLIT and DPWH, we reviewed the jurisdictions of each ministry in the Philippines at the JICA office. We found out that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the provincial governments are respectively in charge of environmental regulations. We now understood the need to negotiate with three authorities to achieve cooperation towards AWaP.

Despite the shortcomings in the last negotiation, the Philippines government has the executive order to complete the wastewater system improvement in the significant metropolis by 2030. It shows the country has a high demand for the advancement in wastewater infrastructure. The meeting with the Philippines gave us a new issue, and we should reconsider how to deal with and approach their demand for public works in the future.

While the visit was less than successful, I would like to switch our mindset and deliver some restaurant reviews.

To deepen our understanding of the country, we tried to find a restaurant with local taste. We chose a restaurant with a woody appearance and a spicy scent. The name of the restaurant turned out to be "Tokyo Camp Curry" with a sign of "Tokyo No.1 Curry Shop." However, I thought it must be a local shop despite saying "Tokyo" since we, Tokyo residents, have never heard of the name.

Anyway, the dishes we ordered were something like a soft curry. I think all the meals I had during the visit tasted familiar, which I wonder why. The dish tasted like Japanese curry, but I firmly believe it is different. I insist that we have tasted the soul of the Philippines' food.