

CLAIR Singapore Newsletter

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• Delegation from Thailand taking a group photo

With the aim of gaining knowledge pertaining to the local autonomy system in Japan, municipal officers of Thailand have participated in a 7-day training programme in Tokyo, Ichikawa City in Chiba Prefecture and Koriyama City in Fukushima Prefecture from 17th May (Sunday) to 23rd May (Saturday) 2009.

This training programme was organised by Thailand's Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, and was coordinated by CLAIR. Specifically, CLAIR Singapore functioned as the contact point whereas CLAIR's headquarters in Tokyo coordinated with the respective organisations in regards to the training schedule and contents.

Through the training programme, municipal officers from Thailand were able to enhance their knowledge pertaining to not only the local autonomy system in Japan, but also formulation of strategic policies and leading programmes implemented by Japanese local governments. Started this year, this training programme is a new initiative with the objective of contributing to the development of local administration in Thailand, in addition to strengthening the network between CLAIR Singapore and local governments in Thailand.

A total of 31 delegates from Thailand (29 municipal officers and 2 officials from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University) participated in a series of lecture conducted by Japan's Local Autonomy College and National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies. This was followed by visits to Ichikawa City and Koriyama City, whereby the delegates observed new initiatives such as 'Electronic Administrative Service' and 'One-stop Service'.

The following is a summary of the training programme conducted at the various organisations:

Local Autonomy College

Two lectures, namely 'Local Autonomy System in Japan' by Professor Sakamoto and 'Training System for Local Government Officials in Japan: The Roles of Local Autonomy College' by Professor Shishido were conducted. Explanations on Local Autonomy Law, Chief Executive System, Decentralisation Reforms, and Regional System were conducted. In addition, the roles and establishment of Local Autonomy College and training programmes provided were also explained. Delegates from Thailand have asked questions concerning the tenure of Chief Executive, relationships between Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the 23 wards, relationships between Prefectural Governments and Municipalities, acceptance of foreigners in the training programmes provided by Local Autonomy College.

National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

The following 4 lectures were conducted:

- 1) 'Administrative & Financial Reforms of Local Government in Japan' by Professor Ikawa
- 2) 'New Public Management and Reform of Government' by Professor Horie
- 3) 'Creative and Strategic Policy Formulation' by Professor Yokomichi
- 4) 'Public Participation' by Professor Kimura

During the lectures, explanations on Japanese local government and their finances, administrative and financial reforms brought by municipal merger and private outsourcing, necessity for reforms, theories and strategies of administrative and financial reforms, forms of public participation which include formulation and amendment/abolishment of by-laws, by-laws on public comment, etc. were conducted. Questions on the system of income and expenditure of Japanese local governments, actual procedures for municipal merger, etc. were asked by the delegates from Thailand.

Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture

Ichikawa City in Chiba Prefecture is one of the leading local governments in Japan that has proactively incorporated the use of IT in providing information services to its citizens, for example, computerisation of resident services and enhancement of the city hall's website. Due to its continuous efforts in the promotion of IT, Ichikawa City has been ranked as the 'Top e-Local Government' for 4 consecutive years. In terms of cooperation between citizen and local government, Ichikawa City has implemented a '1% Regulation' system. Under the system, citizen can choose to have 1% of their tax payments to be donated to a volunteer group or NPO that promotes the overall good of the local area.

During the visit, explanations on the framework, effectiveness and issues of e-administrative services, '1% Regulation', and policies of encouraging public participation implemented by Ichikawa City were made. This was followed by an active exchange of opinions concerning the local tax system.

Koriyama City, Fukushima Prefecture

'Administrative One-stop Service' is a project pioneered by Koriyama City in Japan which aims at increasing the efficiency of public services and also local citizens' convenience in accessing those services. During the visit, explanations on the vision and framework of the service were conducted, after which the delegation from Thailand exchanged their ideas and opinions.

The delegation also visited Koriyama Regional Fire Department, which is jointly established by local governments in Fukushima Prefecture and serves as a leading example in cooperation among local governments. During the visit, explanations on the establishment and current condition (merits and issues) of Koriyama Regional Fire Department were conducted. The delegation also has a chance to visit the Disaster Prevention Exhibition Hall and other related facilities.

After completion of the training programme in Japan, delegates from Thailand expressed their gratitude on being able to learn meaningful lessons concerning both the theoretical and practical aspects pertaining to the leading policies of Japan.

"The participants all agreed that the training programme both in Thailand and Japan was very unique and they were impressed by the strong support of CLAIR in this training programme. They also commented that they wish to have this kind of training again in the future." A comment by Dr. Pathan Suvanamongkol, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University

CLAIR hopes that the municipal officers from Thailand will be able to fully utilise the knowledge gained through the training programme in Japan at their respective local governments, and at the same time, it is also hoped that exchanges between local governments in Japan and Thailand could be leveraged further in the future.

Japan –Cambodia Local Administration Seminar 2009

Annually, the Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) holds the Local Administration Seminar in various ASEAN regions as part of the international cooperation programmes.

This time, with the full cooperation and support from CLAIR Singapore, the seminar jointly organised with Cambodia's Ministry of Interior (MOI) was held in Phnom Penh, in an effort to understand the recent major reforms of its local administration system. The 2-day seminar held from 29 July to 30 July was attended by 5 members from MIC, led by the Deputy Director-General of Minister's Secretariat, Mr. Takashi Hosoda as well as approximately 100 participants from Cambodia including officials from MOI, led by H.E. Prum Sokha, Secretary of State, MOI, and the local governments. The seminar was conducted successfully with a lively exchange of ideas after a series of presentations about the local administration systems and policies of decentralisation from both countries.

The overall contents are as follows:

Venue: Raffles Hotel Le Royal (Ballroom)

Emcee: Mr. Toshihiko AKAMATSU, Director of the International Affairs Office, Local Administration Bureau, MIC

The schedule is as shown below:

29 July 2009 (Wed)

- 09:00 ~ 09:45 Opening ceremony
- 09:45 ~ 10:00 Photo Session
- 10:00 ~ 10:15 Coffee Break
- 10:15 ~ 11:00 Keynote address "Local Administration System in Japan – Past, Present and Future" by Mr. Takashi HOSODA, Deputy Director - General of Minister's Secretariat, MIC
- 11:00 ~ 11:45 Keynote address "Decentralisation and Deconcentration in Cambodia's Local Administration" by H.E. Leng Vy, Director General of General Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior
- 11:45 ~ 13:00 Lunch (at Hotel, café Monivong Restaurant)
- 13:00 ~ 14:30 Presentations and Q&A session Part 1 "Policies and Issues on Local Administration System in Japan" by Satoshi EBIHARA, Director of the Policy Planning for Aged Personnel Office, Local Public Service Personnel Department, MIC
- 14:30 ~ 14:45 Coffee Break
- 14:45 ~ 16:15 Presentations and Q&A session Part 2 "Local Finance System in Japan" by Yoshiaki MOROHASHI, Director of the Financial Management Division, Local Public Finance Bureau, MIC
- 18:00 ~ 19:30 Reception (at Hotel, Empress Room)

30 July 2009 (Thu)

- 09:00 ~ 10:30 Presentations and Q&A session Part 3 "Decentralisation and Deconcentration in Cambodia" by Mr. Yin Malyna, Director of Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior
- 10:30 ~ 10:45 Coffee Break
- 10:45 ~ 12:00 Concluding Session (Exchange opinions, Q&A)
- 12:00 ~ 12:30 Closing ceremony

As Cambodia has recently implemented some new local administration structures including the setting up of Councils, the Cambodian government has given high appraisal to the Japan-Cambodia Local Administration Seminar, noting it as a meaningful platform and good learning experience for consideration towards their future policies.



• The seminar in progress



• The leaders from Japan MIC and Cambodia MOI during the photo session



JET Alumni Association Singapore is now in action!

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme is one of the projects that CLAIR conducts, which is administered by local authorities in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and CLAIR.



The Programme was established in 1987 with the purpose of increasing mutual understanding between the people of Japan and the people of other nations. It aims to promote internationalisation in Japan's local communities by helping to improve foreign language education and developing international exchange at the community level. The programme has seen significant growth and in 2009, 4436 participants from 36 countries are currently active in different localities within Japan. Participants are selected to be either Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) who provide language instruction in elementary, junior and senior high schools; Coordinators for International Relations (CIR) who work in communities on international exchange activities; or Sport Exchange Advisors (SEA) who promote international exchange through sport. Participants are placed within local authorities throughout Japan in every locality including large cities, small and medium-sized towns, and rural farming and fishing villages.

The first batch of JET Programme participants from Singapore was in 1999. After which, the number has been increasing every year, and in recent years, there are about 20 participants annually. Out of about 80 participants who have completed their tenure on the Programme so far, about 35 past participants voluntarily formed the JET Alumni Association Singapore (JETAA) with the objective of deepening friendship ties between Japan and Singapore at the grassroots level. JETAA had been set up in 16 countries, however JETAA Singapore is the first in the South-East Asian region. Its inaugural party was held at the Residence of Ambassador of Japan in Singapore on May 26.

JET Programme Orientation 2009 was held at the Embassy of Japan in Singapore on July 10. 4 JETAA members attended to speak of their own experiences in Japan to 22 new JET participants. After the orientation, many of the new participants approached the JETAA members personally to get further information.

In addition, the farewell party for the new participants was held at the Japanese Association in Singapore on July 30, where JETAA members sent their final hearty cheers and encouragement.

Furthermore, JETAA members took part in "Summer Festival" organised by the Japanese Association in Singapore on August 22, and introduced JET Programme to visitors and answered specific inquiries about it. They also had a booth where visitors could play some familiar Singaporean games including "five stones" and "matching game." People of all ages constantly dropped by their booth and everybody had a good time.



JETAA Board Members

[New Staff]

Masahiko
SATA



My name is Masahiko Sata, and I am from Fukuoka Prefectural Government. As a representative of each local government of Japan, CLAIR Singapore plays an important role to create ties of local government between Japan and your country. At the same time, I'm trying to promote business, products, technologies and cultures from Fukuoka, including Japanese pop culture. Please visit the website "asianbeat" <http://asiabeat.com/> for more information.

Yo IGUCHI



Hello! My Name is Yo Iguchi. I came from Hyogo Prefectural Government. Hyogo Prefecture has beautiful nature, famous spas such as the Arima hot springs, Himeji Castle (one of the World Cultural Heritage sites), and a rich variety of food that attracts the world's gourmets, making it possible for you to enjoy authentic Japan.

I will do my best in this opportunity which I can work towards connecting the network between ASEAN region as well as India, and local regions in Japan.

If you have any questions about Hyogo, Please feel free to contact me, or drop by the website:
<http://www.hyogo-tourism.jp/english/>

Mikinori
KOMATSU



Hello, my name is Mikinori Komatsu, and originally I am a civil officer of Nagano Prefectural Government in Japan. I have been dispatched to CLAIR Singapore office under a term of two years. I strongly believe that this period will give wonderful and exciting moments to my life, as I look forward to meeting lots of people and experiencing things from the ASEAN region and India.

For your information, my hometown "NAGANO" is abundant in beautiful nature, which fascinates all visitors. We would love to welcome you with the warmest hospitality!!

Kengo
OTSUKA



I'm Kengo Otsuka, dispatched from Nagasaki City. Nagasaki is located on the west side of Japan, surrounded by mountains and sea.

Since the opening of its port in around 1570, Nagasaki has been building friendly relations with many countries such as Portugal, the Netherlands and China.

The city has fully recovered from the tragedy of the atomic bombing in 1945, and has developed into an international city of culture. Nagasaki also continues to campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the realisation of lasting world peace.

Yuji YABE



My name is Yuji Yabe. I was dispatched from Miyagi Prefectural Government.

Miyagi prefecture is located in the north of Japan, and is famous for Matsushima (one of the nation's three most famous scenic areas), Grilled Beef Tongue, Sasakamaboko (Fish Cake), and so on. It takes 1 hour and 36 minutes from Tokyo to Sendai (in Miyagi) by Tohoku Shinkansen.

You are always welcome to Miyagi Prefecture. Please see the following:
<http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/kankou/EN/index.htm> for more information.

Kosuke
YAJIMA



I am Kosuke Yajima and I was dispatched from Ota City in Tokyo Metropolis to work in CLAIR Singapore. Ota City is rich in lush greenery, cultural heritage, and is home to Haneda Airport that serves as the gateway to metropolitan areas. This is a great opportunity for me to learn about the politics, economy and culture in ASEAN countries. I would like to take this chance to contribute towards local level exchanges between Japan and ASEAN countries.

About CLAIR

CLAIR is a joint organisation founded in 1988 by 47 prefectures and 12 major cities in Japan in order to assist Japanese local authorities with the implementation of their international exchange policies. With its headquarters in Tokyo, CLAIR has seven overseas offices in New York, London, Paris, Singapore, Seoul, Sydney, and Beijing.

CLAIR SINGAPORE office was set up in April 1990. It supports and promotes international activities and friendly relations between local authorities in Japan and their counterparts in Singapore and the ASEAN countries as well as India.

For further information on our activities of Japanese Local Authorities, please contact CLAIR Singapore office.

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