



# Newsletter

No. 12 September 2003

## **“Civil Engineering” Jun. 2003 Feature Article: “The Prospect for Transportation for Elderly & Disabled in Japan: Through Comparison with Other Countries.” (Summary)**

Transportation planning for the elderly & the disabled is not complete by providing taxi and special transport services. It is indispensable that local governments plan it comprehensively, including bus and community-based services in their considerations.

### **1. *Respect for human rights and the challenges that Sweden met***

The Swedish planning is based on the principle of “the promotion of the rights of elderly and disabled citizens and the equality for all.” As a result, in 1979, special transport service (ST service) started operations in 280 communities nation-wide, with the government providing 35% in subsidy.

Until 1983, transportation system that fills the gap between ST service and the regular bus service did not exist. The service route was developed for the elderly citizens who could not benefit from either of the former services. In 1983, service routes started operation in which the distances between bus stops, which were previously approximately 100 meters, were shortened in order to make it accessible for the elderly.

In 1998, Flex Routes without any set routes and intended for the elderly also came into operation also. The Flex Routes were developed in order to hold down the costs for ST service, which is already used by 5% of the Swedish population. The impact of these services for Japan is significant.

### **2. *Cooperation between the public and the private sectors for ST services in the U.K***

We cannot neglect the roles that volunteer groups play in ST services in the U.K. In Japan, according to the Road Transport Law, volunteer groups cannot receive passenger fares when transporting the disabled. On the other hand, in the U.K., since the Minibus Act of 1977, volunteer groups can be reimbursed for the fare, the insurance and the petrol, when transporting the elderly and the disabled. As a result, many volunteer groups

entered the transportation market. Moreover, in under-populated areas, several Community Car Schemes are in place, in which family cars are used to transport the neighbours who would pay the fare that amounts to the expense of transportation.

### **3 . *ST service in Japan***

Barrier-free measure for road and transportation in Japan is by no means inferior to the international standard. However, Japanese ST service is well behind its international counterparts.

In order to support the volunteer groups that run the ST service for the elderly and the disabled, the Japanese government is in midst of easing the regulation set forth by the Article 80 of the Road Transport Law, forbidding revenue transportation except for the common welfare and disaster prevention.

In recent years, a new system was introduced with the support of the nursing care insurance for the elderly of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and the aid for the disabled. This system allows the elderly and the disabled to take advantage of the transportation systems such as the taxi by bearing just ten percent of the cost.

The situation surrounding ST services in Japan might be chaotic for the next few years. However, I have an impression that we have finally made a step forward towards a new direction of ST services.

### **References**

Matsuo, Nakamura, Koike, and Aoki: Transportation and Welfare, Bunshindou, Apr. 1996, 61-64.  
Akiyama, Tetsuo (ed.): Housing and Transportation for the Disabled, Nihon Hyouronsya, May 1993, 222-225.

*By Tetsuo AKIYAMA*  
(Tokyo Metropolitan University)

## The 5<sup>th</sup> International Summer Symposium



*Opening Ceremony at JSCE Auditorium*

The Fifth International Summer Symposium organised by the International Activities Committee of JSCE (Chair: Prof. S. Kusayanagi, Kochi University of Technology) was held at the JSCE Headquarters in Yotsuya, Tokyo, on 26 July, 2003. The Summer Symposium is held annually so as to provide an opportunity to exchange information and ideas concerned with various aspects of civil engineering among international students and engineers, including Japanese. The objective of the symposium also includes the promotion of international exchanges and mutual understanding between international communities and Japanese students and engineers. The Summer Symposium started in 1999 and has had a high reputation as a valuable opportunity for exchanges among students and engineers in English.

The number of attendants of the symposium was 128 (international students/engineers: 83; Japanese students/engineers: 19; chairpersons/keynote lecturer/committee members: 26). There were a total of 91 technical presentation from 7 areas in civil engineering, including the keynote lecture given by Prof. K. Tsunokawa, Saitama University. The technical presentation sessions were followed by the Get-Acquainted Reception where there were lively exchanges between the participants. The "Certificate of Excellence" was awarded, during this reception, to 15 speakers for their outstanding papers and presentations. The award winners are: Sapon Ritdumrongkul (University of Tokyo), Ali Alaghebandian (University of Tokyo), Kanako Usui (Tokyo Institute of Technology), Danijel Kukaras (Okayama University), Mulyo Harris Pradono (Kyoto University), Paola Mayorca (University of Tokyo), Govinda Raj Pandey (Saitama University), Muhammad Waheed Sarwar (University of Tokyo), Assela Pathirana (Chuo University), Mohammed Fazlul Karim (Saitama University), Aliakbar Golshani (Saitama University), Pa Pa Win (Saitama University), Chamroon Tangpaisalkit (Ministry of Transport, Thailand), Riaz Ul-Islam (Saitama University), and Xiaofeng Wu (Kokusai Kogyo Co., Ltd.). The Summer Symposium closed with a promise to meet again in the Sixth International Summer Symposium to be held in next year.

*By Yasunao Matsumoto  
(Saitama University)*

## "The Gift for the Future"

Everyone loves to receive gifts. However, gifts come in many forms and they are not limited to something we receive directly from others. As in the expression, "Gift from the Sea," a gift could also be a benefit or a favor from others or the environment. In this article, I would like to present three stories about gifts in this sense that are related to our neighbors. Then, I would like to introduce you to JSCE activities as we enhance our international cooperation.

### ◆ "I thought Japanese were barbarians..."

The first story is about the accomplishment of a Chinese woman named CHANG Li Ling<sup>1</sup>.

She first came to Japan as a student from China and produced and filmed a documentary series on Chinese students in Japan. The film was a sensation to both Chinese and Japanese audiences and was one of the most acclaimed programs of Fuji Broadcasting Station since its foundation. An elderly Chinese man commented, "I thought Japanese were barbarians but I was wrong." A young Japanese did not hide his emotion when he said, "...What was most moving was the attitudes of the students who try to understand Japan and to live side by side with Japanese. I am so glad to have seen this show." The People's Daily (Japanese version), in reporting on the influence of this program in Japan cited an employee of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying, "For a long time, Japanese government has worked on promoting friendship with China, but its influence is far weaker than that of the program that Ms. CHANG created."

Ms. CHANG first came to Japan at the age of 22. When she graduated from Tokyo Gakugei University with a Master's degree, she started working at Okura Shoji, a trading firm. One day she approached a Fuji TV producer to borrow a video camera so that she could realize her long time plan of creating a documentary film on Chinese students in Japan. During the next four years, she filmed over 1000 tapes. With the help of her family and volunteers, she edited the tapes into 10 episodes and at the end of 1999, she managed to have them aired in Beijing. The program was a mega hit in China. The following year, a part of the program was aired in Japan under title "A Gift from China". Ms. CHANG explains that her motivation for creating this documentary was to let people in China know of the hard work and positive attitude of Chinese people abroad in overcoming language and cultural barriers. She must have had another ambition too, which was to wipe out the ignorance

<sup>1</sup> I first learned of this in "Gift from China" which was aired on Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> 2002 on Fuji TV. Please visit the Fuji TV website for more details:

[http://www.fujitv.co.jp/jp/rvugakusei2/total\\_top.html](http://www.fujitv.co.jp/jp/rvugakusei2/total_top.html)

and misunderstanding that Japanese and Chinese people have for each other. I believe this gift from a young Chinese has surely shortened the distance between Japan and China.

◆ “We must apologize to the Japanese?”

Next story was what I heard on the radio (I believe it was on FM Setagaya).

In a bar in South Korea, a group of Japanese was drinking while talking about soccer. Overhearing their subject and noticing that they are Japanese, a Korean man approached the group. “For the first time, I felt that I must apologize to the Japanese. Japanese people supported Korea during the World Cup finals but we were applauding when Japan lost one of their first matches against Turkey.”

Indeed, there were many Japanese who supported the Korean team despite the feelings of rivalry and jealousy. One of the reasons might have been the sense of affinity towards our neighbour. Another reason might be a certain incident, which many soccer fans might remember. Five years ago, during the qualifying match for the World Cup in France, a banner saying, “Let’s go to France together!” appeared in the soccer stadium in Seoul during Japan vs. Korea match. At that time, the Korean team was already qualified but the Japanese team had to either win the match or draw with the Korean team in order to go to France. Eventually, Japan won 2-0 against Korea, but the Japanese people have not forgotten the warm blessings of Korean people at that time. This time, Japanese people supported the Korean team as a natural response. It is said that one young soccer fan came up with the idea of the banner but his action surely represented the feeling of a large number of young Koreans. The World Cup Tournament and the pleasant gift from Korean youth enlarged the circle of friendship in the hearts of Japanese and Korean people.

◆ A Civil Engineer who represents the spirit of Japanese people.

The third story is about a civil engineer. The front page of the morning edition of Sankei Newspaper on November 19<sup>th</sup> 2002 was devoted to the script of a lecture by Mr. Li Teng Hui, which was supposed to take place at Keio University. It never took place because his visa to Japan was not issued. Surprisingly, its content from beginning to end was about Yoichi Hatta<sup>2</sup>, a Japanese civil engineer who made a great contribution in Taiwan before the World War II. Mr. Li’s message to Japanese youth in this lecture was the spirit of public service, which Japanese people once

<sup>2</sup> Detailed information can be found in “Taiwan wo Aishita Nihonjin” by FURUKAWA Katsuzo (Aoba Publishing: 2002). For a brief history, please refer to an article by FURUKI Moriyasu, which appeared in *Civil Engineering* “About Engineer Hatta and Wu Shan Tou Dam”(JSCE: Vol.87, 2002.5) or to an article by JSCE titled “Hatta’s dream that flourished in Chianan River” (*Civil Engineering*, Vol.88, 2003.1)

possessed and which is represented by the undertaking of Yoichi Hatta. Mr. Teng Hui described this as the spirit of Japanese people.

Yoichi Hatta was greatly influenced by the virtues of Isamu Hiroi while he was a student at the Civil Engineering Department of the Tokyo Imperial University and in 1910, upon graduation, he entered the government-general of Taiwan. There, he worked on a great civil engineering project to turn the Chianan plains in the southern region, which was suffering an extreme poverty at that time, into a rich farmland. The project was to construct the Wu Shan Tou dam, the largest dam in Asia at that time and to build waterways as long as 16000km. This project, which required 10 years for completion, improved dramatically the lives of the people. Engineer Hatta, who treated everyone with fairness and who led this project to completion was admired and appreciated by all. He was always remembered after his death at the battlefield. Even today, 60 years after his death, Taiwanese people hold annual memorial service at the grave by the dam where Engineer Hatta lies with his wife.

Engineer Hatta’s high aspiration created the fertile plain, a gift to the Taiwanese people. But at the same time, it has turned out to be a precious gift to Japanese people beyond time and space.

◆ Our gift

We are blessed with many gifts and our duty now is to create a better future by adding new things to the gifts we have received so far. As the last story in this article, I would like to introduce the contribution of JSCE, as the organization responsible in building the foundation for a better future.

Next year, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Civil Engineering Conference in the Asian Region (CECAR) will be held in Seoul for four days starting from August 16<sup>th</sup> 2004. CECAR is alternately hosted by the constituents of Asian Civil Engineering Coordinating Council (ACECC), which is operated by Japan, Korea, and Taiwan as its main members. Once in every three years, CECAR provides an occasion for civil engineers and researchers to exchange information. The last conference was held in Tokyo.

Asian researchers and engineers have countless issues in common which must be dealt with in cooperation. In technical fields, yellow dust, urban environmental pollution, marine pollution, and the future of technical cooperation are just a few examples from the heap of problems that we must tackle together. I hope that in the future, tangible results will be seen in CECAR and in ACECC activities. At JSCE, it is our dream that such structures and their activities would be our gift to the Asian people and to the next generation.

By Moriyasu FURUKI  
(Executive Director, JSCE)

First appeared in No. 724 (March 2003) of “Kokkenkyo Jyoho,” from the Infrastructure Development Institute-Japan.

## Foreign Engineer Trying to Fit into the Japanese Society



C. Murugaboopathi

Studying and working in foreign countries was a distant dream during my university days in India, and I never thought even once that I would have an opportunity to work and live in Japan for more than 10 years. When I pursued my Master of Engineering Studies at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, I was lucky enough to meet my Japanese professor, who was God's angel to change the course of my life to a better direction until today.

After I completed my PhD in the University of Tokyo under my Japanese professor, I joined Pacific Consultants International (PCI) in 1989. After working in PCI for one year as an Association of Overseas Training (AOTS) trainee, I worked as a post-doctoral researcher at North Carolina State University, U.S.A for two and half years and then returned back to Japan in November 1992.

Since then, I have been working in PCI for more than 10 years and I have been involved in various international irrigation and agricultural development projects in Brazil, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Paraguay, and Sultanate of Oman. While I improved my 'field application and practical knowledge' through my international consultancy work, I have been really fortunate to work in countries of different environments including desert areas of Oman, Brazilian Amazon rainforest and to work with people of different culture.

All of these project/study works have been carried out by the assistance of Government of Japan. In these projects, I was one of the members of the project/study team, which not only involved in the implementation of the studies/projects, but were also engaged in the technical transfer to the counterparts of the recipient countries. Apart from the technology transfer, the Japanese engineers are always excellent examples for their sincerity and hard work.

When I first came to Japan in 1985, everything looked completely new and 'sayonara' was the only Japanese word I knew at that time. Like most of the foreign students at that time, the first year stay in Japan was the most difficult period including language difficulty, finding an apartment, etc. But, my Japanese professor and others gave me

strong encouragement and from second year onwards, I could be involved more deeply in my study and research works.

For the past 10 years, I live in a beautiful apartment in the Tokyo suburb, surrounded by a garden with fruit trees on both sides. I wake up everyday looking at the greenery before my apartment and you cannot ask for anything more. It can be called a 'dream comes true'.

C. Murugaboopathi  
(Pacific Consultants International Ltd.)

## New E-Friend Registration System

The new e-friend system is not limited to current JSCE members but is open to those who are living abroad and to international students studying in Japan. This system allows us to send out useful and timely information that does not limit itself to JSCE news. Please find more details on our website at: (<http://www.jsce.or.jp/english/>)

As we recruit new e-friends, we are also asking them to participate in a survey in order to reflect their opinions in the future of the e-friend system. Currently, we have received a relatively large number of responses showing interests in the information on civil engineering projects in Japan and in Asia, international conference information, and JSCE publication information. Some e-friends are willing to provide current topics from their countries and we intend to examine the possibility of asking them to contribute articles in our Newsletter in the future

## Publications

### ARTICLES (From June to August 2003)

Design and Construction of Long Span Concrete Arch Bridges – the 600m class span- (in Japanese), JSCE, August 2003, Page 273, JPY3,000.-, [ISBN4-8106-0447-0](#)

International Information Forum 2003(in Japanese), JSCE, June 2003, CD-ROM, JPY2,500.-, [ISBN4-8106-0393-8](#)

Concrete Library International No.41, JSCE, June 2003, CD-ROM, Price: JPY3,150.-, [ISSN 1347-2119](#)

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