Report on my trip to Thailand to attend the 15th Southeast Asian Geotechnical Conference and to Japan to visit some research institutes and a university in Japan.

Scope and Purpose of the Conference

The conference was a venue for researchers from Southeast Asia, and other regions in the world to present their current/recent research results, to see results of recent researches in their research fields, and to attend keynote lectures for leading researchers and outstanding consultants about some engineering problems of common interest, in Southeast Asia, and the outcome of the conducted researches to address these problems. Most of the participants were from East and Southeast Asian countries, so the majority of the research works were about earthquake engineering, ground improvement, deep excavation and tunnelling, and foundation in difficult subsoil condition.

Usefulness of Conference & Technical Visit to Japan for myself

In the conference, I got some comments from other participants about my research results, and saw the results of the current research projects in areas that cover my current research project and research interests. I also attended the Keynote lectures in these areas. In my visit to Japanese research Labs that conduct advanced researches in my current research areas, I presented my current research work to the researchers in these Labs and got some feedback about my results and research methodology. In addition, I built/maintained relationships with the researchers/academic staff, who have similar research interests to mine. I am currently making use of the feedback about my research results that I got in the conference and during my visits to the Japanese research Labs, by improving both of the research methodology of my current work and the discussion of my results in manuscripts that I am intending to submit to international journals. I also invited Dr. Kitazume, the head of the Geotechnical Centrifuge and Soil Stabilization Division in PARI, Japan, to visit our Lab and to give us a lecture in the University of Dundee. He visited us in February, 2005, and gave us a lecture, titled as “Approach to Reliability Design of Deep Mixing Improved Ground”. During his visit, I discussed with Dr. Kitazume the chances for

applying for research grants from the Japanese government for future research that I take part in, and I think that there are chances to do so.

My Plan to Make Most of the Conference and to Deal with the Problem of Parallel Sessions

I made appointments for my visits to the Japanese research Labs and university, two months before travelling to Thailand and Japan. In order to make the most of the Conference, I attended all the Keynote and special lectures, located from the Proceedings and List of Participants, the presentations that I wanted to attend, and the researchers, to whom I wanted to talk. By reading the abstracts, results, discussions, and conclusions for the papers that aroused my interests and looking at their figures and tables, I could know, before hand, what the presenters of these papers were going to talk about. I moved between the two session halls to try to catch up with the presentations. However, I couldn't attend all of them. So, I talked to these presenters, during the coffee and lunch breaks. These breaks were good chances to talk to the famous professors and researchers in my current research fields, to build relationships with them, and to ask them about their presentations, and/or published papers.

How my Presentation was Received

In my paper, I compared the current design method in Japan (No code of practice for it), with the British Code of Practice for the design of different type of retaining walls (BS8002). I got questions about my experimental details, and comments from the Japanese researchers about the merits of their current design method, and a comment from a British designer (from Ove Arup) about the use of the BS code of practice for an earth retaining structure that is not in the scope of that code.

Benefiting from Observing the Experimental Techniques of the other researchers

Most of these benefits came from my visits to Centrifuge Labs in Japan. I visited 3 governmental research institutes [Public Works Research Institute (PWRI), Port and Airport Research Institute (PARI), and Industrial Safety Research Institute] and a university [Tokyo Institute of Technology (TIT)] that are involved in my research areas. Watching the research facilities (Centrifuge, Data Acquisition Systems, test setups …..etc.), model preparations, and the results of the current research projects,

were very useful for me. I discussed with the researchers in these labs some of the problems that I had in designing my test setup for a next test series.

Building Contacts with Other researchers & Discussions with Leaders in the fields of my research areas

I built contacts with some famous professors and researchers, as well as engineers in consulting firms, who have experiences in my current research problems, and/or share one or more of my research interest areas. These researchers included Dr. Kitazume from PARI, Mr. Ting Wen Hui, a Malasian Consulting Engineer, Prof. Fred Kulhawy from Cornell University, and Dr. Tarek Abdoun from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, among others.

The feedback that I got about my current research works, after my presentation in the conference, and from Dr. Kitazume at PARI, Dr. Takahashi at PWRI, as well as Prof. Jiro Takemura and Prof. Osamu Kusakabe at TIT, gave me the chance to look at my current research results in a different way. Dr. Kitazume mentioned to me that the problem of fault rupture in Alluvium, which I am currently studying, is similar to the trap door problem, which was a new topic for me, and subsequently, the height of the shear band in the model ground was dependent on the height of the model ground, as well as other parameters that I had been considering. He gave me copies of some papers, and invited some of the members of his Lab to talk to me about their research in the area of the Trap Door Problems. Prof. Takemura, commented on the range of values for the parameters that I used in our paper in the Conference, and discussed with me some needed amendments and additions, in the paper content, in order to publish it in an International Journal. Prof. Kusakabe, discussed with me some of his research projects, in the same area of my current research project.