



World Eye Reports

Singapore



www.worldeyereports.com

Asian dynamo keeps pole position

More than 40 years after establishing formal diplomatic relations, Japan and Singapore have formed one of Asia's strongest partnerships, with the two countries forecasting an even more prosperous long-term future.

Highlighting those strong ties and that optimistic outlook, the number of Japanese expatriates in Singapore rose to more than 26,000 in 2008.

"This is perhaps the largest number of expats in Singapore from all industrialized democracies," points out Japanese Ambassador Makoto Yamanaka.

Japanese companies have traditionally been heavy investors in Singapore, using the city-state initially as a manufacturing base. But the nature of those ties changed dramatically in the mid-1990s as labor and production costs grew with rising prosperity in Southeast Asia's first tiger economy.

Today, economic relations between them have become more a partnership of equals.

With the help of the Singapore-

can government, many Japanese companies have selected Singapore as a hub for regional operations. According to unofficial estimates, there are at least 1,000 Japanese companies with regional headquarters in Singapore.



Makoto Yamanaka, ambassador of Japan to Singapore

"The current investment trend from Japan is toward ASEAN nations. Singapore plays an important role for this and is widely con-

sidered a very competitive place for investment," says Yoshichika Terasawa, managing director of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in Singapore.

Despite trends in other parts of the world, the Japanese invested more in ASEAN nations than in China in 2006 and 2007.

"The business environment is good, the location is good and the infrastructure is good. But the key factor is the sense of security," says Yamanaka about Singapore's advantage over its neighbors.

Yasuhiko Kitagawa, president of the local Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and head of Mitsubishi Corp. in Singapore, agrees.

"Safety is a big issue for Japanese companies with regional headquarters functions here. Japanese staff are often traveling and they leave their families behind in Singapore. One can really concentrate on business and not worry about the safety of the family," Kitagawa says.

While Japan remains one of the

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In a clear display of its innovative thinking and strong organizational expertise, Singapore successfully staged the world's first Formula One night race and the region's first street race.

Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia Pte. Ltd. (MCFS) makes material-handling equipment that provides customers with superior solutions with the highest levels of customer service and responsiveness. It is part of a global group that includes Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. in Japan, Caterpillar Industrial Inc. in the U.S., Mitsubishi Corp. in Japan, Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift America in the U.S. and Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Europe in the Netherlands. www.mcfs.com.sg.

Companies looking to host a convention or trade fair in Singapore should contact the **Singex Group** of companies. Wholly owned by Temasek Holdings, Singex offers solutions in investment, exhibition venue management, trade fair and event management. www.singex.com

The "Uniquely Singapore" Web site run by the **Singapore Tourism Board** offer helpful tips on places to stay, where to eat, what to see, and how to get around. There is also a handy calendar of events available in order to plan your trip effectively. www.visitsingapore.com

For 50 years, **JETRO Singapore** has provided business advice to companies that want to import materials from Japan or export products to the Japanese market. It also works closely with International Enterprise Singapore (IES) and SPRING Singapore to promote more bilateral trade. www.jetro.go.jp/singapore

The **Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB)** provides services for MNCs, start-ups and even individuals looking to start a business in the city-state. www.edb.gov.sg

JVC Asia offers 'perfect experience'

Thousands of international companies, including many of the world's biggest multinationals, have set up their Southeast Asian bases in Singapore because of the government's continued commitment to create an open and efficient environment for business.

Growing alongside Singapore, Japanese electronics goods manufacturer JVC has seen its operations in the tiny city-state develop from a sales subsidiary in 1995 to huge regional operations today. In fact, the company's business has expanded beyond Southeast Asia in less than 15 years.

"We cover over 100 different countries, spanning from Africa and the

Middle East to Oceania," says JVC Asia Managing Director Naokazu Kurihara.

"We have a mission to greatly increase our brand awareness and turnover," adds Kurihara, whose market amounts to more than 3 billion people, the largest covered by any JVC subsidiary.

Rising prosperity in Southeast Asia, coupled with the large populations of Africa, the Middle East and India, presents great opportunities for a company that has established a foothold in these regions.

"Using the strength of our products, we try to communicate our JVC message to the consumer," says the recently appointed head of JVC Asia.

Not resting on its world-renowned reputation for quality audio-video products, JVC Asia continues to develop the perfect experience for its customers.

"From there, we can leverage our strengths with variety. We are one of the very few companies that can provide a full audio-video solution. The most important thing is not to be mediocre," he says.

Kurihara stresses that JVC's competitive edge lies also in the company's unique niche products. This year, JVC was the first in the world to introduce the Super Slim full HD LCD TV, which has its own built-in tuner.

As he oversees a vast territory, Kurihara points out that JVC's location in Singapore complements the company's activities.

"Our region's uniqueness is that the majority of the production facilities worldwide are located in this area. Our unique situation is that we can work closely with them. The importance of strategy in having the regional headquarters in Singapore is how to combine the total strength from production to consumer sales," he explains.

Location, along with a solid marketing strategy adaptable for 100 different countries, will be vital to JVC's growth in Asia.

"We customize our strategies according to each country's market. In a market as large as this, we have to do both. We focus on local marketing, but we also provide support for regional marketing," he says.

"We have to be different and that's why we put emphasis on unique products. Always first and always new, that is what makes JVC what it is today to our consumers," he adds. ●

www.jvc-asia.com



JVC Asia Managing Director Naokazu Kurihara stands in front of the Super Slim LCD with built-in tuner.

Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia raises the industry stakes

Attracted by efficient and top-grade transport infrastructure, and a business-friendly administration, several multinationals have chosen Singapore as the base for their regional operations.

"Singapore is a country of good infrastructure, transparency and communication, and that has served us very well since we are a parts distribution center, and we are able to distribute our parts efficiently from Singapore to the rest of Asia and South Africa," says Jenson Ng, general manager for finance and administration of Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia.

A joint venture formed between Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd., Caterpillar Industrial Inc. and Mitsubishi Corporation in 1992, MCFS has remained a leader in its industry.

To capitalize on its growing brands and cater to the demands of its customers, MCFS recently opened a brand-new facility aimed at being the regional training and parts distribution center. It is equipped with state-of-the-art warehouse management systems and facilities for conducting seminars on all aspects of the forklift management business.

"It's been 16 years since we started our operations and we felt it was necessary to



In May 2008, Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia opened a 4,000-sq.-meter facility that serves as its head office, as well as a regional parts distribution and training center.

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Stories of Life
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Singapore gets DENSO's vote

Reaffirming Singapore's superiority as a regional base, DENSO International Asia has undergone a massive restructuring to oversee its activities in the city-state and the rest of Southeast Asia.

In April 2008, DENSO International Asia and DENSO International Singapore merged to form what is now called (DIAS).

Also, the Singapore office transferred to the recently created DENSO International Asia Thailand (DIAT) the functions of regional OEM sales, service, planning, legal, purchasing and human resources.



DENSO International Asia (Singapore) Vice President Tadahisa Yoshida

However, the Singaporean branch of the Japan-based company will continue handling regional finance, logistics, government affairs and after-market sales.

"Functions such as logistics and finance remain in Singapore because its infrastructure is much better than Thailand's," points out DIAS Vice President Tadahisa Yoshida.

Among Yoshida's responsibilities is heading the government affairs department, which researches government activities in Southeast Asia, India and Australia.

With the numerous free-trade agreements and economic partnership agreements that have been signed among many countries in the region, including Japan, DENSO expects tough challenges to its operations.

Those FTAs and EPAs will allow foreign competitors with factories in Southeast Asia to ship products across the region without any tariffs.

"DENSO has to utilize the FTAs more efficiently from ASEAN to China and from ASEAN to India," says Yoshida.

Another major function of DENSO's Singapore branch is managing the aftermarket sales department.

DIAS plans to aggressively expand aftermarket sales activities to complement its large original equipment manufacturer (OEM) parts operations.

According to Yoshida, "DENSO mainly concentrates on OEM sales, which account for 80 percent to 90 percent of our total revenue. But at the same time, the general market is also very important to us. The demand for aftermarket parts is increasing, so we have to prepare and supply the parts the customer wants." ●

www.denso.com.sg

Nippon Paint Singapore boosts role in regional operations

Forty-five years since it first ventured into Southeast Asia through a local partnership, Nippon Paint Singapore has grown consistently to become a vital component of the Japan-based parent company's operations in the region.

"Singapore now plays a larger role as a stepping stone to other regions," stresses Managing Director Wang Chyang. Nippon Paint Singapore is a member of the Nipsea Group, the Japanese company's partnership setup for its Southeast Asian and Oceania activities.

While Nippon Paint Japan has achieved a dominant presence in a very broad spectrum of products in its local market, particularly in automotive coatings, Nippon Paint Singapore has developed a strong profile in Southeast Asia through its architectural paint.

"Singapore's paint market is unique, there is no automotive market here but we have established ourselves as a very strong household brand. Home buyers here perceive our brand as very innovative and technologically advanced," says Wang.

Nippon Paint Singapore strengthened its position through the localization of its products specifically for customers in Southeast Asia and Oceania.

"We do 'M&D' here – or modification and development. A lot of research can be done from here. Singapore is a mature market and we can be an effective test market for regional products," he explains.

All products introduced in the past – the 3-in-1, Medifresh, EasyWash with Teflon and Odour-less – have brought success for Nippon Paint in Singapore.

Its revolutionary "Nippon Paint Store," found in local do-it-yourself stores in Singapore over the past five years, offers a full color consultancy service for customers.

"We provide a total solution in a convenient place for the consumer's painting needs," says Wang. "Whereas we used to play a supporting role to the group's offices in the area, we are now taking on a more active role in our expansion," says Wang, who reveals that Australia is the next big target for the company.

"Australia has a very strong DIY market. We are looking forward to servicing this new market with our specialized products," he adds.

In Australia, the company has teamed up with Bunnings Warehouse to distribute its products nationwide.

Looking to the future, Wang predicts the Nippon Paint brand will continue to be a major



Nippon Paint Singapore Managing Director Wang Chyang

player in the DIY market.

"We will continue to generate market needs and 'wants' by creating new and innovative products," says Wang. ●

www.nipponpaint.com.sg

Isuzu finds vital hub in globalization game plan

Just six years after ceasing production of passenger vehicles, Japan-based Isuzu Motors has become one of the three largest producers of commercial vehicles in the ASEAN region this year.

When it left the passenger vehicle sector in 2002, Isuzu stepped up overseas expansion efforts as Japan was a small market with little room for growth.

With its stable economy and transparent government, Singapore has served as an ideal base for Isuzu's globalization program. The city-state has also outranked its neighbors in terms of quality of logistics, finance and administration infrastructure.

"We are growing in Southeast Asia and this is a very important market for Isuzu," says Isuzu Motors Asia Managing Director Toru Nakai, who also points out that ASEAN is the fastest growing region for Isuzu, accounting for 28



Isuzu Motors Asia Managing Director Toru Nakai

percent of global sales.

In the last year, Isuzu has restructured op-

erations in Indonesia and Malaysia to improve production, quality control and profitability.

"We are focusing on the Indonesian and Malaysian markets because they are big countries with big populations," points out Nakai.

Isuzu's extensive investments in R&D have allowed it to produce smaller, lighter engines with higher fuel efficiency and excellent performance.

Committed to further improving the quality of its vehicles, Isuzu regularly seeks customers' opinions and suggestions about design modifications. In fact, the company directly contacts end-users – the truck drivers – as part of product development.

"We look at the market and talk to our customers because they are the ones who really know our products as professionals who use commercial vehicles," says Nakai. ●

www.isuzu.co.jp

FujiXerox — a trusted partner



FujiXerox Singapore President and Managing Director Bert Wong

In recent years, FujiXerox Singapore has experienced tremendous growth and undergone a massive transformation from merely a device manufacturer to a provider of document management solutions.

Headed by President and Managing Director Bert Wong, FujiXerox Singapore experienced robust growth when it widened its focus from selling devices to forming long-term partnerships with companies and organizations that use its solutions and services.

To better represent the new directions of its changing business, FujiXerox launched a new logo in April 2008.

The new vibrant logo combined with a sphere-shaped symbol called "sphere of connectivity" embodies partnerships with customers and society as well as a global brand image. The new logo is designed with soft, curved lines to emphasize close relations, and affinity with customers and society.

According to Wong, the new logo represents innovative changes, enterprising spirit, vigor and dynamism, and shows that FujiXerox has gone beyond the document arena.

"It relates back to closeness to the customers and closeness to the partners that help us deliver solutions," he says.

The most notable recent achievement has been a

much-coveted Singapore government award.

FujiXerox consolidated its status as a lead partner in the One Meridian Consortium that won the \$1 billion Standard ICT Operating Environment (SOEasy) project, which involves standardizing a governmentwide operating environment on a similar platform.

"FujiXerox has the ability to transform the whole government from a device-based organization to a service-based organization in terms of document output through managed print services," Wong points out proudly.

Wong hopes to use the Singaporean government project as a showcase for other governments around the world.

"We will enable government staff to concentrate on being productive and on what they need to do instead of handling thousands of different devices from different brands," he says.

FujiXerox Singapore's innovative approach to create and deliver value has paid off. It has gained market leadership in all of its main business areas, including digital devices, color devices, solutions and services.

"In five years, I want to have a FujiXerox document management device, solution or service in 100 percent of the offices in Singapore. Every single one," Wong comments on his company's future plans. ●

www.fujixerox.com.sg



FujiXerox Singapore oversees its operations from the FujiXerox Towers, which is also a well-known architectural landmark in the city-state.

Singaporean PM lauds relations with Japan

In the 43 years since Singapore was founded, it has had very strong economic ties with Japan, which is among the three largest investors in the country.

In 2007, bilateral relations reached another milestone as the two nations revised the original Japan-Singapore Economic Partnership Agreement (JSEPA) signed in 2002.

World Eye Reports interviewed Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong recently to get his perspective on relations between the two countries and the benefits of the revised JSEPA.



Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

WER: How would you describe business relations between Singapore and Japan?

Lee: Singapore and Japan enjoy a long-standing economic relationship, with robust trade and investment ties. In 2007, Japan was Singapore's sixth-largest trading partner while Singapore was Japan's eighth-largest trading partner in Asia. As of the end of 2006, Japan was also Singapore's top Asian investor, with cumulative direct investment of 44 billion Singapore dollars.

Japanese investments in Singapore have steadily grown in sophistication. Increasingly, Japanese firms use Singapore as a platform to create new solutions and globalize their business. They also take advantage of Singapore's multiracial environment to modernize their management by attracting, training, and deploying managers of Japanese and non-Japanese backgrounds.

What effects has the JSEPA revision had on trade relations between the two countries since it went into force last September?

The Japan-Singapore Economic Partnership Agreement (JSEPA) came into force Nov. 30, 2002. This was a key milestone in our bilateral relations with Japan. It was Japan's first bilateral economic partnership agreement and one of Singapore's earliest with a major trading partner. The agreement has greatly benefited Japan and Singapore.

The second JSEPA review further improved market access for goods and services. Approximately 92 percent of Singapore products now enter Japan free of tariffs, compared to 77 percent previously. Singapore has also recently awarded Mizuho Corporate Bank a Full Bank Licence as the result of the revised JSEPA agreement.

Since the revisions took effect in September 2007, total trade between our two countries has seen a 10 percent increase.

What makes Singapore such an attractive place for Japanese companies to do business?

Foreign companies are drawn to our robust infrastructure, talented workforce and good intellectual property protection. We have an open economy, a flexible labor market and a minimum of red tape. We have comprehensive air, sea and telecommunications links, and a thriving financial center. We have an extensive network of free-trade agreements and investment guarantee agreements.

The government tries its best to tackle business concerns, such as cost pressures and resource needs. The unions too work closely with the government and employers so as to create good jobs for workers.

Today, over 26,000 international companies operate here and 60 percent of the foreign MNCs here use Singapore as a regional center. Singapore is an emerging leader in the biomedical sector and a global manufacturing leader in many industries, such as jack-up rigs, disk drives and hearing aids. ●

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Casting a wide net for top-notch employees

As founder and chairman of one of the Asia-Pacific's largest employee recruitment and placement firms, industry veteran Peter Sim has found the formula to succeed amid cutthroat competition.

"The most important thing in our business is effective delivery of service," stresses Sim, who founded HRnet One in 1992 and has overseen its rapid expansion across Southeast Asia and further in the region as demand for high-caliber employees rose.

"As we grew more international, we made sure to move into cities that had a need for our services and the volume for us to operate," he recalls.

The company has consultants in nine different cities in the Asia-Pacific region, including Tokyo and Sydney.

"I see much potential with our operations in Tokyo. We will be dedicating more resources in Japan and people can expect us to move in bigger ways there," he says.

The company also recently added a new of-

fice in Beijing and will open an office in Shenzhen early next year.

According to Sim, the key to growth is using its existing customer base in various HRnet One locations as a lead to find new clients.

"It's never a 'cold, cold' call. For example, for our new Beijing office, we reference customers that we have in Singapore or in Tokyo and tell them that their sister company is using our services," he explains.

HRnet One attributes its success also to the wide range of services, all related to the HR field.

"Our 'Recruit Express' subsidiary operates temp contract and general placement services. We can respond to a need within one hour. Our consultants in 'PeopleSearch' find the managers for the client first, before sending the final bill. And finally, 'HRnet One' does the retained business. We search for the appropriate executive candidate based on our clients' needs," he says.

"We are very proactive in our headhunting.



HRnet One Chairman and Founder Peter Sim as depicted in a portrait by a Chinese artist

When we want you, we get you. We are very effective in accomplishing our mission," he adds.

Sim firmly believes that the HRnet One's effectiveness stems from the company's strong value system.

"We want to cultivate human value. We want to make a positive difference to the candidates that come to see us – to give them a better job. We want to make a positive difference to our clients. We are not just here to send a bill. We want to give good, reliable information and introduce suitable candidates that make a difference to their organizations," he says. ●

www.hrnetone.com/japan

"We want to cultivate human value. We want to make a positive difference to the candidates that come to see us – to give them a better job. We want to make a positive difference to our clients."

ObTech Asia Pacific carries out aggressive growth in territory

In the late 1990s, NEC Corporation Japan bought out its American partner in the technology and consultancy group joint venture ObTech Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. to bolster the Japanese subsidiary's position in the Asia-Pacific region.

In 2000, then-NEC President Akinobu Kanasugi implemented a series of changes in the ObTech organization and laid out clear goals for the company.

"We changed our system from a technical base to a consulting base," says ObTech Asia Pacific COO Michael Lim.

Today, ObTech Asia Pacific has asserted its presence in Southeast Asia where, as a technology specialist, it helps clients adapt the best IT solutions to improve their businesses.

"We provide end-to-end services – from consulting, solutions and technology implementation to infrastructure support, IT recruitment and training," says Lim.

The company has also expanded operations in the region, moving out of the traditional centers, and into secondary and tertiary cities in each country.

For the past two years, ObTech Asia Pacific has reported year-on-year growth of 200 percent, attributed mostly to aggressive regional growth and the shift in focus from the Legacy systems to SAP.

"We have since become the first in Southeast Asia to be awarded the SAP Channel Partner Gold Level. We remain the only company to offer the full range of SAP solutions to our clients, right from the big enterprise solutions to the smallest ones," says Lim.

One reason the company has succeeded in growing rapidly, explains Lim, is its ability to understand both the Japanese and Western methods of doing business.

"There's a lot of trust and communication between us and Tokyo. We pick up the strength of each culture and combine them to make them ours," he says.

The company has also been able to move beyond the tradi-

tional Japanese customer, and has enlisted a growing number of multinational and local clients, which account for about 70 percent of its customers.

Lim is optimistic about ObTech's future in the region as the company maps out its aggressive expansion without losing focus on its existing clients.

"It's a long-term relationship with customers, and we like to have them follow us wherever we go. We will not walk away from them," he says. ●

www.ObTechGlobal.com



ObTech Asia Pacific Chief Operating Officer Michael Lim

"We have since become the first in Southeast Asia to be awarded the SAP Channel Partner Gold Level. We remain the only company to offer the full range of SAP solutions to our clients, right from the big enterprise solutions to the smallest ones"

Experience the grandeur of Orchard Parksuites

Sanctuary designed to pamper, Orchard Parksuites, with its private and charming residences, and highly personalized service, has served as a complete haven for guests seeking the comforts of stylish living in the heart of the city.

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The popular one-bedroom loft suites offer the private and cozy comfort of a home way from home, and make an ideal address for singles and couples.

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Orchard Parksuites also has a fully equipped business center where guests can conduct and complete their work without having to leave the comforts of home.

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Far East Organization, owner of Orchard Parksuites, is the largest private real estate developer in Singapore, and the largest owner-operator of residences and corporate housing, with over 2,000 apartments available for lease island-wide. ●

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Orchard Parksuites has 222 luxuriously furnished lofts and two- or three-bedroom residences and penthouses.

TempStaff taps Singapore for further growth

TempStaff, the second-largest staffing and placement agency in Japan, is looking to its subsidiary in Singapore for increased business as part of a companywide initiative to increase overseas revenue and strengthen its global position in the industry.

TempStaff's Singapore branch generates around 70 percent of its business from Japanese clients. But over the next few years, it hopes to increase the number of its local and multinational clients.

"We would still like to focus on Japanese clients, but gradually we would like to penetrate into the new market of foreign companies," says Managing Director Seki Tomomichi about the company's strategy.

As TempStaff prepares to enlist a wider range of customers beyond its traditional clients in the trading and finance industries, the staffing company reaffirms its objective to create jobs, add value to the individual and contribute to society.

In line with those goals, TempStaff Singapore will add educational seminars to its repertoire of services. These new seminars include cross-cultural training for Japanese candidates, NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) sessions, as well as a seminar by a renowned Japanese instructor based on the famous "7 Habits of Highly Effective People."

Another goal of TempStaff Singapore is to double the number of Japanese candidates in positions in Singapore. To achieve this, the company hopes that its Japan headquarters can enlist more middle-level native Japanese-speaking candidates as well as Asian university students in Japan.

"We can give the candidates better services and we also introduce them to many good companies since we have a very good relationship with Japanese companies in Japan. So we believe that we can introduce candidates to very



TempStaff Singapore Managing Director Seki Tomomichi

good, established companies here in Singapore," he says. ●

www.tempstaff.com.sg/e_index.htm

"We can give the candidates better services and we also introduce them to many good companies since we have a very good relationship with Japanese companies in Japan.... We can introduce candidates to very good, established companies here in Singapore"

Traditional values bring success

When it began in 1987, N.P. Foods Singapore served only the neighboring markets of Malaysia and Indonesia. Since then, the company has expanded into South Asia, the Middle East, China, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam.

N.P. Foods attributes this strong growth to a unique business model anchored on a mission to serve its customers with integrity. The company prides itself on services that distinguish it from the competition.

"We are able to provide full-line snack processing technical knowledge and set-up for customers. Normally, flavor houses will develop only the taste. But we found that customers also need new ideas or innovation in finished products. So we cooperate with our sister company that manufactures snack processing machines and using their machines, we develop new types of snacks with our seasoning," Managing Director Osamu Nagai explains.

Another major competitive advantage of N.P. Foods is its ability to customize seasonings to each of its customer's requirements and market needs. In addition, it reserves the copyright for

the customer and will not sell an identical seasoning to other customers in the same market.

While it took time to gain the trust of its customers, N.P. Foods' dedication to sincerity and honesty has paid off.

"It took time and money before our customers began to understand our policy. Eventually, with great endurance, we won their trust and faith in our business policy, and further strengthened our position in the snack industry," Nagai says.

N.P. Foods readily established its headquarters in Singapore due to the often-cited political stability, business-friendly atmosphere and excellent infrastructure, despite the small size of the local market.

Nagai also pointed out that government transparency, especially the Singapore Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority, and the favorable tax system has allowed the company to focus entirely on its business.

"The IRAS (Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore) is always so efficient and transparent. Its company tax is relatively low compared to others, and all business-related tax and reg-



N.P. Foods Singapore Managing Director Osamu Nagai

ulations are clearly documented and straightforward," he says. ●

www.npsin.com

"It took time and money before our customers began to understand our policy. Eventually, with great endurance, we won their trust and faith in our business policy, and further strengthened our position in the snack industry"

Mitsubishi Caterpillar raises the stakes

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build our own facility to train our people in the best possible manner," explains Yasuo Kubota, manager of corporate planning and controller.

"We provide support to our dealers so that they may give the best recommendations to their clients. Our training facility is meant to improve the quality of our service since the forklift business is increasingly getting competitive," he continues.



The Cat Lift Trucks model GP25T has a lifting capacity of 2,500 kg and is equipped with an LPG system.

driving company growth through its commitment to customer satisfaction.

"By optimizing our training facility, and improving our parts and logistics systems, we are expected to accelerate growing our business," said Ng.

With its brand new facility, highly trained dealers, two established brands and a number of new brands to be launched by the end of the year, Ng reaffirms the company's commitment to satisfy existing and new customers and consolidate its position in the market.

"We are committed towards our objective of total customer satisfaction and we will continue to search for new ways to affirm our brand positioning in the market for our customers as well as our non-customers," he says. ●

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Asian dynamo keeps pole position

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top three foreign investors in Singapore, Singaporean investments in Japan have also increased dramatically over the last few years.

According to the JETRO head, Singapore is the second-largest direct investor in Japan, with investments exceeding \$1 trillion in 2008 alone.

Such strong bilateral relations encouraged Singapore to sign the region's first economic partnership agreement with Japan.

Healthy economic partnership

The EPA, first signed in 2002 and amended in 2007, was originally intended to facilitate a freer flow of goods, people, services, capital and information between the two countries, as well as harmonize frameworks in trade and other fields.

Since the signing of the original agreement, Singapore and Japan have seen high-level diplomatic events in recent years.

During the 40th anniversary of Singapore-Japan relations, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko made an official visit to Singapore. Last year, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong paid a reciprocal visit to Japan.

"We are at a point where Singapore-Japan relations are at their strongest in history," says Yamanaka.

Setting the bar higher

As Singapore evolves to accommodate a growing number of

foreign companies using the city-state as a regional headquarters, the government has found more ways to offer value-added services to potential investors.

Tan Choon Shian, the Singapore Economic Development Board's assistant managing director for the Asia-Pacific, says that Singapore offers unique opportunities for Japanese companies looking to globalize.

"We offer a mixture of West and East, so it makes it easy for Japanese companies to expose their Japanese employees and managers, and their future leaders to the global way of doing business. Here, we are harmonious but not homogenous," he says.

That atmosphere, according to Tan, allows Japanese companies to get a "crash course into a microcosm of a globalized world."

Chua Taik Him, deputy CEO of International Enterprise Singapore, agrees.

"Singapore can be a closer partner to Japan in terms of this next phase of growth. We can play a major role in Japanese companies looking to take on international partners," Chua says.

The next phase of the Singapore-Japan relationship will rely heavily on the characteristic strengths of the two nations and their companies.

"Japanese companies and Singaporean companies now have much more opportunity to collaborate because Singaporean companies are internationalized and Japanese companies continue to be very advanced," says Chua. ●