

World Eye Reports

Singapore

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Lion City at the forefront of Asian economic resurgence

Just as the euro zone emerged from the recent global recession in 2009, it has had to bail out member nations Greece, Ireland and Portugal over the past six months, dampening the region's growth prospects for this year.

So, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted two-tiered growth for the global economy in 2011, with Asia greatly surpassing the performance of Europe.

In Asia, Singapore continues to impress global markets. Last year, its gross domestic product (GDP) surged 14.75 percent and is expected to grow a further 6 percent this year.

According to the IMF, Singapore, with its 5 million inhabitants, is the second-fastest growing economy in the world, after Qatar.

Singapore's biggest annual increase in output since its independence in 1965 was mainly due to a surge in manufacturing, which accounts for a quarter of its GDP and grew 28.2 percent last year. And the recent opening of Resorts



Japanese Ambassador to Singapore Yoichi Suzuki

World Sentosa and the Marina Bay Sands boosted the country's tourism sector, pushing up tourist arrivals by 20 percent.

Over the past few years, the World Bank has ranked Singapore as among the easiest places to do business. Clearly, its world-class infrastructure and stable political system have attracted multinational firms, including those from Japan, seeking an Asian base.

"Singapore is an attractive market for the Japanese to invest in because of its low corporate tax rate of 17 percent. The country provides a very favorable and open business climate. It really is the best in the region. You can move people, money and services in this country without any difficulty," says Japanese Ambassador Yoichi Suzuki.

"Aside from doing business within the country, several Japanese companies use Singapore as a base for their regional operations. Some companies' operations extend not only throughout Southeast Asia but also to the Persian Gulf, Australia, New Zealand and the Indian subcontinent. Singapore provides very good financial, logistical and legal infrastructure. It is very transparent, open and efficient," Suzuki adds.

Capitalizing on Singapore's economic success, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) have

stepped up their efforts in assisting companies, especially small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) that wish to establish their base in the country.

"Our strategy has shifted back to export promotion. Japanese SMEs are much more interested in starting up their business in Asia and we support them, especially here in Singapore," says JETRO Managing Director Shigeki Maeda.

"We are setting up a project with the Singapore EDB (Economic Development Board) to help Japanese SMEs that do not have the resources or knowhow to expand in the Singapore market," explains JCCI President Seiji Kino.

Japanese trading giants, such as Mitsubishi Corp., have played a vital role in assisting other companies that want to enter the Singaporean market.

"Japanese trading companies act as an integrator or facilitator of foreign business. They facilitate various kinds of projects, not

just with Singapore but also with a third country," says Maeda.

This year, Singapore and Japan mark the 45th anniversary of bilateral relations, which have grown robustly over the years especially in the field of trade and business.

"Japanese companies have been among the engines of economic development in Singapore. Singapore has appreciated the Japanese contribution in helping build its economy," says Suzuki.

The March 11 earthquake and tsunami that battered Japan's northeast further solidified that friendship. Immediately after the catastrophe, the Singaporean government pledged 500,000 Singapore dollars to the Singapore Red Cross Society to aid in the relief efforts in Japan.

Local organizations, such as the Singapore Ship-Chandlers Association (SSCA), also extended their support by collectively donating S\$139,700, with the largest donation of S\$50,000 coming from Gaylin International.

Singapore has clearly come a long way since it declared independence in 1965.

"Back then, the economy was very simple. Many multinational companies established their operations in Singapore to manufacture their products and export them. SMEs in Singapore only supplied (these multinational companies). The situation has changed today. Singapore constantly pushed itself up the ladder and kept asking what was next. There has been a constant drive to raise the skill level and adapt to change," says Phillip Overmyer, chief executive of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce.

"Today, you will see a lot of research and development companies in sectors such as biotechnology and electronics. At the same time, the economy is starting to diversify much more, and not just diversifying based on skill improvement but by diversifying in many areas," Overmyer adds.

For several companies, Singa-



Undisputedly Southeast Asia's financial capital, Singapore saw its gross domestic product jump 14.75 percent in 2010 and is predicting a further growth of 6 percent this year.

apore's successful development came because of a comprehensive long-term vision that was implemented properly and efficiently, and this surely complemented the Japanese mind-set.

"Singapore companies are very good at making master plans. Japanese have the discipline and the idea to make systems work. With Singapore's master plan, we can join forces through joint ventures. It is a clean, progressive city and it is not difficult to start a business

here," says Maeda of JETRO.

The Japanese ambassador agrees.

"We believe we can work with the Singaporean government in other areas. Singapore has this advantage with system design. Our companies have the edge because they have technology for urban development, urban solutions and infrastructure building. Combining these, we can work together and meet the needs of fast-growing Asia," says Suzuki. ♦

Tomorrow Today

Nurturing life today, but how about tomorrow?

Natural ecosystems are finite and irreplaceable. At Mitsubishi Corporation, we have been developing our Tropical Forest Regeneration Experimental Project, which strives to return ecosystems as close as possible to their natural states in Malaysia, Brazil, and Kenya.

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A rich coral reef is a thing of beauty, but throughout the world they are slowly disappearing. At Mitsubishi Corporation, we have been supporting research to save these marine ecosystems through our Global Coral Reef Conservation Project, which is under way in Okinawa, the Midway Atoll in Hawaii, and the Seychelles Islands.

Shaping tomorrow today

PHOTO: "Thousand Year Forest" in Aki City, Kochi Prefecture

www.mitsubishicorp.com

Mitsubishi Corporation

Developing business globally from world's global city

Engaged in practically every industry, Mitsubishi Corp. has experienced enviable success in Singapore, which emerged from the recent global economic recession virtually unscathed.

"Singapore quickly recovered from the economic crisis and now enjoys strong economic growth. Mitsubishi Corp. is reaping the benefits of this growth in every segment of our business," says Kenji Yasuno, who assumed the position of general manager in April last year.

Japan's largest general trading company is heavily invested in the chemical, metals, machinery, food, general merchandise, energy and transportation sectors, providing all kinds of services, including trading, sales and marketing, investment and consulting to customers in Singapore, the rest of the region, China and the Middle East.

Mitsubishi Singapore is ready to be even more aggressive in expanding its business coverage by investing actively and taking advantage of its strong funding capability, deep business knowledge and extensive global network.

"I want to put more emphasis on how we can entice companies from Japan and other countries to come to Singapore so that they can enjoy the benefits of the country's good infrastructure and system. With our knowledge and expertise in various fields and strong business network, Mitsubishi Corp. is in the best position to help not only major companies but also small to medium-size companies enter the Singapore market," says Yasuno.

The company has identified its four strategies to achieve this goal: develop industries that the govern-

ment identifies as potentially high growth (energy savings, smart community, environment, electric vehicle); use Singapore's strategic position and extensive and sophisticated air, sea and IT links as a bridge between East and West; use the country's world-class infrastructure, workforce and location as a center of logistics, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions) and finance; finally, it wants to take advantage of incentives offered by Singapore's government, such as investment allowances and tax holidays and concessions.

"Above and beyond bringing Japanese companies here, it's about putting businesses together and bringing them together. The next step is how we can help them become native Singaporean businesses while still incorporating Japanese elements. Once they have established themselves locally, we want to help them expand their business from Singapore and market and sell their products to the entire world," stresses Yasuno.

"I personally feel that Singapore has a nature similar to the trading company itself. We are equipped with the business intelligence and networking capabilities coupled with a good credit rating," he adds.

Singapore has solidified its reputation as Asia's most dynamic investment location and premier global city. It has become the region's best business hub for all industries by implementing excellent business infrastructure, financial centers, fair and clean trading platforms and global-standard legal systems.

"The country has reached the next level of prosperity. The government is stimulating the economy so much so



Mitsubishi Corp. Singapore General Manager Kenji Yasuno

that many foreign companies have already moved to Singapore," says Yasuno.

"There is an opportunity to combine Japan's fundamental strength in its technology development, the high-quality service product and highly efficient skilled labor together with Singapore's business and social infrastructure and innovative talent to entice, accommodate and grow the business globally," he says. ♦

www.mitsubishicorp.com

'The next step is how we can help Japanese companies become native Singaporean businesses while still incorporating Japanese elements.'

Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia gets back on track

Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia, a joint venture between Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. and Caterpillar Industrial, Inc. established its operations in Singapore in 1992 with the aim of expanding across the region. Nearly 20 years later, it now oversees the Asian region, Oceania and South Africa.

"We are the manufacturer of Mitsubishi and Caterpillar brand forklifts. We are very happy with these two brands as they serve different markets," says General Manager for Finance and Administration Jenson Ng.

Like many in its sector, Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia struggled through the global economic recession of 2009. However, the downturn did not diminish the company's determination to grow.

"We saw this as an opportunity to plan ahead for the future so that when the market started picking up again, we would be ready," recalls Managing Director Takashi Kubo.

"We invested heavily in training our people and acquired an ISO 9001 Quality Management System Certification. We spent wisely on things we believed would make us stronger. We also opened our fourth factory in Dalian, which focuses on developing another tier of forklifts," Kubo adds.

So the company emerged from the recession much stronger and growth-ready as Asia is seen to outperform Europe and the United States this year.

"We are extremely glad that we finished 2010 strongly, higher than our initial forecast. Prior to the financial crisis, we prepared our distribution well and capitalized on the eventuality of recovery," says Sales Director Lim Sim Beng.

As of 2010, Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia sold a total of 53,000 forklifts. It has also set even higher goals this year as it approaches its 20th anniversary next year.

"We are in it for the long haul. Not only do we want to be a leader in the industry, we are continuously trying to enhance our customers' satisfaction through our high-quality products and solutions. We are always listening to our customers and offering business solutions through our dealerships. We train our dealers in all aspects of the business, including sales and technical training. We leverage our technique to help grow the business," says Ng.

"We want to be a leader in the forklift industry and to deliver the highest customer satisfaction. We are moving forward to becoming more profitable. We are in the middle of a growing market. The infrastructure helps us a lot to coordinate well from here," he adds.

Kubo strongly believes that the company's future success will depend on developing stronger and deeper lines of communication within the firm.

"Ever since I arrived, I've been instilling in my employees the need to share information. We need to learn from each other and work collectively to grow our company and have good communication both internally and externally with our dealers and business partners," Kubo emphasizes.

"Our long-term target is to increase sales and gain a 20 percent market share. We like to see ourselves as a global company with factories worldwide. Our objective is to achieve the highest quality with the best price in the market place," he says. ♦

www.mcf.com.sg



From left, Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia General Manager for Finance and Administration Jenson Ng, Managing Director Takashi Kubo and Sales Director Lim Sim Beng



Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift offers environmentally friendly products like its Electric Counterbalance Trucks shown above.



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- Seat belt Warning
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Mitsubishi Grendia's Integrated Presence System (IPS) an innovative safety feature that enhances the safety and efficiency in forklift operations

Visit our website for more information on Mitsubishi Forklift Trucks at www.mitforklift.com.sg

Leading-edge technology for expanding markets

As global parent the Hitachi Group celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2010, direct parent Hitachi High-Technologies group reflected back with pride on over 60 years of client service and technological innovation.

Hitachi High-Technologies (Singapore) Pte. was set up in 1972 to offer innovative and leading-edge technologies to local companies requiring electronic devices, information systems, components and other high-tech industrial products. In these four decades, the company has expanded what started out as a local office to a full range of regional supplies and service bases across Southeast Asia and beyond.

"Since our foundation, Hitachi High-Technologies has expanded. The countries we have been focusing on are Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Vietnam and Singapore. We're intensively looking into Indonesia, India and Vietnam as emerging markets," says Managing Director Osamu Nakamura.

The company is involved in the leading-edge sectors that produce electronic device systems, life science technology, information systems, electronic components and advanced industrial products. Recently, it has intensified its focus

on the electronics, automotive and solar energy fields.

"We had done business in these areas before but will be reinforcing these areas more and more in the coming years, because I see great potential for significant growth for the company," Nakamura adds.

The company is also expanding geographically within its fields of expertise. In October of this year, Hitachi High-Technologies (Singapore) plans to convert the representative office to a company in Indonesia to expand its business in solar power, automotive and electronics field in collaboration with local partners.

"Regarding the solar power project, Indonesia has thousands of islands, many of which have no electricity. With this collaboration and government support, we will supply an independent solar power system for hundreds of houses so they can have power for lighting, telecommunications and even water supply purposes," Nakamura explains.

Hitachi High-Technologies also intends to initiate new tieups with local automotive companies in India, Thailand and Vietnam, where there is great potential for growth in these countries.



Hitachi High-Technologies (Singapore) Managing Director Osamu Nakamura

Back in Singapore, the emphasis will be on further localization of the company's management base.

"We are a Japan-based company in Singapore. However, we want to focus on localizing management because our success is based on continuity. The people living here can continue the network locally, which is very important. We need to emphasize, organize and adapt to this kind of direction," says Nakamura. ♦

www.hitachi-hitec.com.sg

Waste – a good resource in the wrong place

"Waste is a good resource, like new gold, in the wrong place," says ecoWise Executive Chairman Lee Thiam Seng. "If you have the right process and technology you can turn it into a useful product."

Next year, an upcoming iconic development in Singapore will showcase another waste-to-energy application, thanks to ecoWise's Design, Build and Operate contract with National Parks of Singapore. This is a prime example of a local company that is starting to make a global impression.

The ecoWise Group is a Singapore-based integrated environmental technology specialist. Its work in the Gardens by the Bay — Marina South development will be one more sign of its growing prominence in this rapidly innovating renewable energy sector.

In 2007, ecoWise became the first company in Singapore to qualify for the United Nations' Clean Development Mechanism. ecoWise secured the carbon credits through the use of the waste steam, generated from its biomass co-generation plant, to convert waste spent grains into animal feed using its proprietary process.

Recently, the company embarked on a policy of dynamic expansion into new environmental fields and overseas markets. Last

year, it entered a new sector: rubber specialty compounds, tire retreading and management through the acquisition of a majority stake in Malaysia's Sunrich Integrated Group of Companies. This is in line with ecoWise's commitment to offer products and services that conserve the use of scarce resources, such as oil and rubber.

From the beginning, innovation has been the prime mover of ecoWise.

"We started as a resource recovery company working with copper slags originating from Japan," says Deputy CEO Low Kian Beng. "We invented a process that basically reprocessed the used copper slags from shipyards into a reusable material and used it as a new 'green' material in ready mixed concrete, dubbed as 'eco-concrete'."

"We take pride in being the innovator of many systems and processes that convert various types of waste into useful eco-products. Having accumulated valuable experiences, we look forward to duplicating these businesses and knowhow elsewhere in the region," he comments.

ecoWise focuses on renewable energy and resource recovery, particularly on industrial and urban waste recycling, as well as developing, operating and managing biomass power plants.



ecoWise Executive Chairman and CEO Lee Thiam Seng (left) with Executive Director and Deputy CEO Low Kian Beng

It is targeting as clients all companies who want to pay more than lip service to the goal of building a sustainable, low-carbon development and economy. "We are willing to put our money where our mouth is as your ideal outsource integrated environment partner," says Low.

"We have a great competitive advantage because of our sound business model, innovative and cost-effective solutions, total services and co-investment in the fields of industrial waste and energy," he says. ♦

www.ecowise.com.sg

From five brothers to 'Enterprise 50' – family roots of entrepreneurship

The story of Gaylin International (formerly Gaylin Trading) begins in 1974 with five brothers working late into the evening selling steel wire ropes out of a tiny 50-sq-meter office in Singapore. The saga is far from ending, but today the company has become a world leader in the steel wire rope, rigging gears and ship chandelling business for the offshore oil and gas, shipping and construction industries.

Group Managing Director and CEO Desmond Teo, one of those original five brothers, took over the company in 1999. He had always kept uppermost in mind the strong family bonds that had allowed Gaylin to surmount initial challenges for the company as it grew and found its footing.

Teo expanded his company aggressively from this point. With Singapore still reeling from the Asian financial crisis that started in 1997, he invested in undervalued property and modernized equipment.

His persistence and acumen paid off in 2004 when sales soared 35 percent and continued to grow consistently over the next four years.

"My greatest achievement has been to internationalize the company," says Teo.

Gaylin now serves clients in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. It has a branch in Vietnam and has also acquired a company in New Orleans. The company has achieved remarkable growth and heralds the company's expansion to China and India.

Committed to safety in the shipping industry, Gaylin provides customers with after-sales services, such as round-the-clock ship marine steel services offshore.

In 2009, Gaylin received the Enterprise 50 Award, which recognizes the 50 most enterprising privately held Singaporean companies. A year later, Teo received a public service medal from the president of Singapore.

Public service remains a cornerstone of the company's ethos. For two years, it has operated a project to deliver food and milk to the impoverished and elderly in Singapore.

"Our customers tell us that they feel more comfortable working with a socially responsible partner," explains Teo.

And following the earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan earlier this year, Gaylin led in fundraising efforts for disaster relief organized by the Singapore Ship-Chandlers Association (SSCA).

"That was the biggest fund we have ever raised for charity," says Teo, who serves as honorary president and president of SSCA.

Looking ahead, Teo plans to diversify the company's activities in engineering and offshore installation.

"My son, daughter and nephews are already getting into the business," says Teo, who intends to keep Gaylin a family-run enterprise that will continue to be driven by innovation and industry knowhow and committed to world-class services for niche markets in the offshore, construction and shipping industries. ♦

www.gaylin.com



Gaylin International Group Managing Director and CEO Desmond Teo

A law cooperative breaks the mold

"None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."

— Mother Teresa

It is difficult distinguishing one lawyer from another if we base our judgement on the widespread perception about the profession.

The legendary American lawyer Clarence Darrow once said that, whenever he took on a case, the only ones he strived to satisfy were himself, his family and God.

For lawyers who love what they do, it is more than the money that motivates them. They assume a host of roles: counselor, expert, friend, advocate and confidant. But, sometimes, these roles and attitudes do not coincide with the reality of economics.

Large multinational law firms might dismiss the notion of operating a practice based on such idealism as they prioritize "billable hours" and "mega-deals." In many countries, lawyers are portrayed as money-focused and predatory.

However, there are law firms that do not fit

into that mold, among them Singapore-based Intelleigen Legal, which brings together specialists in intellectual property, building and construction law, general litigation, arbitration, corporate law, commercial law, property and family law.

By coming together as a collective, Intelleigen provides comprehensive expertise, specialist service and personalized service to clients. It thus becomes more approachable to small and medium-size enterprises and to the man on the street.

Also, its lawyers are essentially their own bosses and free to make their own decisions, which benefit clients through flexible fee terms and direct contact with their lawyers.

While it may still be too early to tell whether this is the future of the profession, Intelleigen has definitely redefined the profession.

Now, Founder and Managing Director Chee Chun Woei is taking the idea overseas, confident that it suits the current needs of clients everywhere. ♦

www.intelleigen.com



Intelleigen Legal Founder and Managing Director Chee Chun Woei

Fighting spirit characterizes a rise from humble beginnings



Hi-P International Executive Chairman and CEO Yao Hsiao Tung

In 1985, Yao Hsiao Tung, a Taiwanese immigrant who headed a small tooling shop in which he had first invested all his savings and later had taken over its reins, received a troubling phone call during a client meeting.

"It was my wife," he recalls. "She told me the power was going to be shut off in our office because we couldn't pay our electric bills."

Hi-P Tool and Die was losing money in a recessive economy, and the young businessman had almost run out of funds to keep it running.

The circumstances challenged him as never before. That day, Yao vowed he would not close the company himself nor resort to even more drastic action such as taking his life, but instead work even harder to keep it going.

During that time, he had begun to sleep only three hours a night taking in more work. He had his back against a wall and had nowhere to go but forward.

"I had a tough childhood in Taiwan," he explains. "My father changed jobs many times to support the family and we were constantly moving. I remember sometimes going to school barefoot."

"I think that's when I developed a strong will and fighting spirit," Yao continues. "I kept that spirit alive in myself and in our employ-

ees during my company's struggles in the belief that with hard work, eventually things would get better."

Yao continued to follow his gut. In 1991, through a chance contact with a Shanghai-based university professor, he took the company into the mold components sector, and then set up a factory in China in 1993.

That initial foothold abroad expanded into a footprint across the world from Singapore to China, Thailand, Mexico, the U.S. and Poland as a valued partner and supplier for the global telecommunications, consumer electronics, computing and peripherals, as well as medical and automotive industries.

The company's name was changed to Hi-P International and listed on the Singapore Exchange (SGX) in 2003. That day was a proud one for Yao. Tiny Hi-P Tool and Die, with a staff of six, had expanded beyond what anyone could have expected back in 1985.

Today, the company employs over 17,000 people worldwide. But Yao is not taking it easy yet.

With the same determination that reversed his company's fortunes at the start, Yao has set his sights on Japan in 2011. ♦

www.hi-p.com

Teijin Polycarbonate Singapore supplies the world

Japanese chemical and pharmaceutical conglomerate Teijin Group established its polycarbonate subsidiary in Singapore in 1997, attracted by the city-state's excellent infrastructure, efficient business environment and English speakers.

Several years since, Teijin Polycarbonate Singapore (TPS) has expanded its territorial responsibility to include not just the Southeast Asian region, but also India, Australia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the United States.

"We are connected with the entire world!" boasts TPS Managing Director Keiichi Iwata, who arrived in the country last year to take over the top position. "Our group's standing market position is ranked among the top three chemical companies globally."

"Currently, we have three polycarbonate polymerization plants in the world: one in mainland China, one in Japan and one in Singapore. Our Singapore plant is the biggest in the Teijin Group, and it manufactures for all our markets," adds Iwata.

Located on Jurong Island, TPS's polym-

erization plant has an output capacity of 225,000 tons of polycarbonate resin, which are used in electronics, automotive parts and business machine enclosures, among others.

Teijin first produced polycarbonates in 1960 and was the very first company in Japan to industrialize its production. It is currently one of the world's largest manufacturers of polycarbonates and PC alloys, a particular type of thermoplastic polymer whose strength and high heat resistance give them a wide range of applications.

Despite the massive earthquake and tsunami that devastated Tohoku in northeastern Japan in March, TPS expects to have a productive year and is confident that the Japanese economy will pull through in a few years.

"Our company was fortunate enough not to be severely affected. We are very sorry for the events that happened and have been doing all that we can to help out. We always stay updated on the situation that is going on in Japan. We're confident and understand that Japan will recover as soon as possible," Iwata says.



Teijin Polycarbonate Singapore Managing Director Keiichi Iwata

"We appreciate the Singapore government's actions. It responded very quickly after the earthquake and tsunami. We thank them for aiding Japan in our time of need," he adds. ♦

www.teijin.co.jp

eBOX

Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Asia Pte Ltd (MCFS) provides material handling equipment and offers customers superior solutions with the highest levels of customer service and responsiveness. MCFS is part of the global conglomerate Mitsubishi Group, which includes Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. in Japan, Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift America Inc in the U.S. and Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift Europe B.V. in the Netherlands. www.mcfs.com.sg

Intelleigen Legal LLC provides a one-stop high-quality legal service to its clients in the international arena. It is committed to understanding its clients' needs and in doing so, provides unique, innovative, creative and practical solutions, while maintaining a progressive and viable business with the highest reputation. www.intelleigen.com

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), established in 2001, plays a prominent role in strengthening trade and investment between Singapore and Japan. In Singapore, the agency runs the JETRO Business Support Center, which offers information and consultation services free of charge to small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) that want to set up operations in the city-state. www.jetro.go.jp/singapore

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Singapore

www.worldeyereports.com

Innovation from East to West, led from Singapore

Vivek Sharma, managing director of both Yamazaki Mazak Singapore and Yamazaki Mazak India, usually meets his visitors above the company showroom, filled with gleaming machines with its trademark orange stripes, and shows off a model of a bright red Vodafone McLaren Mercedes Formula One racing car that uses Mazak components. If machine tools can be sexy, this is the proof.

A native of Delhi, Sharma has taken over the reins of the Singapore subsidiary of Yamazaki Mazak, the world's largest machine tools company. He looks content to be in Singapore. "This is the only country I know where the government is more efficient than the private sector," he remarks.

Yamazaki Mazak Singapore is in charge of what is now (with the exception of China) the world's most dynamic economic region: Southeast Asia and India. Like the rest of the world, these countries suffered initially when the global financial crisis hit in late 2008. Together, they now lead the recovery.

"We used our time quite well during the recession," says Sharma. "If our production relaxed a bit, our R&D (research and development) department worked overtime. In 2010,

Mazak introduced about 40 new highly innovative products." The launches proved to be prescient as the Southeast Asian and Indian economies rebounded to pre-crisis levels the following year.

"The world's growth driver now is the Asian economy. And our immediate goal for the next two or three years is to cash in on this growth with our new products and reliable brand," he explains.

Mazak Singapore itself is ushering in a year of change in 2011 with its move to produce a second category of entry-level products in its Jurong factory: the vertical milling machine, which will augment its CNC turning systems. It's a major step for the Singapore subsidiary but one that is necessary given its markets' demand for these machines, especially in India.

Sharma sees India as the jewel in Mazak Singapore's market roster.

"We inaugurated our newest Technology Center near our Indian headquarters in Pune on April 6. We are making a huge investment in India. From this center we will provide our Indian clients with the technical solutions they need, right then and there," he says. Singapore, for Sharma, is the ideal base for

Southeast Asia and India, not only because of its ideal geographical location.

"Furthermore, its brand equity is as strong as that of Japan," he says.

One machine in the showroom below Sharma's office is not yet for sale: a robot-controlled 3-D laser machine that will carve out machine tools for any application in seconds. Its planned release date remains a top secret, but it will surely be sooner than any of Mazak's competitors would want. ♦

www.mazak.com.sg



Yamazaki Mazak's recently inaugurated technology center in Pune, India

Singapore Kobe consolidates presence in growth-led economy

Since setting up operations in Singapore 35 years ago, Kobe Steel's subsidiary in the city-state has become a trusted supplier of leadframes in the semiconductor business and copper alloy in the connector business, responsible not only for the Southeast Asian region but also for China and India.

"We are one of the pioneers of new copper applications for the electrical, electronic and semiconductor industries," says Managing Director Yutaka Goto, whose immediate goal is to further consolidate the company's business across Asia.

"Singapore is a very dynamic country that is strategically located in Southeast Asia. You can feel that there is an eagerness to grow here. Also, it is an ideal logistics hub. We knew it would be easy to import raw materials from Japan and export our product without any delay, so we established a facility in Singapore to follow our customers who grow in Southeast Asia," Goto says.

The company chief views Singapore as the ideal springboard to Asia and is determined

to take advantage of the country's excellent infrastructure and highly skilled manpower.

"We will establish, maintain and continually improve our quality products and services to meet the needs and expectations of our customers. We established our second facility in 2007, so we will be ready to answer the demands of the market," he says.

"Last April, we started our *kaizen* (continuous improvement) project, and we are trying to also develop more environmentally friendly products," he adds.

"Our strength also lies in our ability to perform all processing internally, from dual gauge to plating and stamping. We are the only company in the world with these three capabilities all in one place. We are now manufacturing 200 million pieces a month," says Goto.

With the Asian economy expected to lead the world, Singapore Kobe is focused on growing robustly this year. Currently, its facilities are already at 90 percent capacity.

"In 2007, we were manufacturing between 175 million and 180 million pieces of lead-



Singapore Kobe Managing Director Yutaka Goto frames per month. Now, we are producing 200 million. My goal is to increase this by 20 percent within two years and continue to expand in other areas. We are committed to continue improving productivity and the quality of our products," he says. ♦ www.kobelcoskpl.com

For Japanese in Singapore, an ideal logistics partner

While Singapore's position as a global logistics hub can be partly explained by its ideal infrastructure and geographical location, a major part of the equation is the top-notch service offered by Singaporean logistics companies. This has allowed multinational and Japanese companies with regional headquarters here to do business efficiently and to thrive.

Mac-Nels, a privately funded, family-owned company established in 1975, is one such logistics player. From the start it has been a pioneer in non-vessel operating common carriers (NVOCC), as well as in doing business with the Japanese.

"We were the first local logistics company to work with Japanese counterparts in the early 1980s," recalls Mac-Nels CEO Nicholas Er, a second-generation descendent of one of the company's founders. "We focused primarily on the LCL (less than container load) groupage FAK (freight all kinds) container business, given our expertise in this niche."

The core strength of Mac-Nels lies in its NVOCC business. Its system allows for a more efficient use of container space and value-added customer service for both multinational corporations and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with overflowing shipments from its own FCL (full container load) transport.

Since Er became CEO of the company in 2005, Mac-Nels has consistently been recognized as one of Singapore's Top 1,000 companies and Top 500 SMEs. In six years, he has pushed for a customer-centric approach to doing business, as well as a pro rata incentives scheme for local management in the group's overseas offices.

"Our people make everything work. We employ 'local heroes' in our offices abroad because they know the local market and provide our customers with the best possible service," Er says, explaining his strengthening of the Mac-Nels network in Asia, India and the Middle East.

A continuing focus on business with Japanese companies is also part of his strategy in the coming years.

"We've always enjoyed doing business with the Japanese and are eager to be working with more of them who are looking for an alternative LCL player in the industry, since this is our specialty," he says.

While its logistics competitors' mind-sets may not always mesh with Japanese clients' needs, Mac-Nels strives to provide the best alternatives in NVOCC sailing schedules for its demanding customers.

"Part of our value system and business practices, based on samurai Bushido philosophy, was adopted from Japan. We can accommodate Japanese clients in the efficient manner to which they are accustomed," Er says. ♦ www.macncls.com



Inside Mac-Nels' HQ in Singapore lies a dynamic logistics expert for Japan's global business.

Japanese icon and deeply rooted values in Singapore

Every morning at 7:30, a unique cleaning team starts work in Kikkoman's production center in Singapore. It consists of one man: Yoshiyuki Nogi, who is the company's managing director.

"Our 61-person workforce gathers everyday at 8:00 for our morning workout. I arrive early to show that everyone must do their part, no matter their title nor their task," says Nogi, who follows the Japanese tradition of 'team work first' and applies this ethic in all phases of the business.

Singapore's geographical position, located almost directly on the equator, has proven to be the ideal place to produce Kikkoman's trademark seasonings.

"Kikkoman enjoys a tremendous climate here. The conditions provide us with a great platform for growing the microorganisms we need to make our products. However, we have to keep hygienic conditions by cleaning up the equipment and machineries completely every day. Otherwise, unwanted microbes grow rapidly," adds Nogi, an ex-president of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Singapore.

The Singapore subsidiary started exports in 1985, marking 25 years of consolidation and growth last year. And the company continues to give back to Singapore through its many corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

To mark its silver anniversary in 2010, Kikkoman Singapore donated 1 million Singaporean dollars to the innovative Gardens By The Bay project.

It also has a strong relationship with the top-ranked



Kikkoman Singapore Managing Director Yoshiyuki Nogi

National University of Singapore. Kikkoman conducts its research and development operations at their facilities, constantly developing new products and flavors for such key growth markets like China and India.

"Entering the Indian market is my dream. We are currently developing new products that will serve the Indian market. We want them to enjoy our range of sauce options," explains Nogi.

"When I was a young man, I would enjoy curry and I remember putting soy sauce on it every time. We are confident that we can successfully introduce our flavors to India. In time, we hope they will enjoy adding Kikkoman sauces to their foods as much as I have," he says. ♦ www.kikkoman.com.sg

Singapore-Japan synergies make for a tight seal

Since establishing its first overseas subsidiary in Singapore over 35 years ago, NOK — Japan's longest established oil seal manufacturer — has looked upon the island nation as its second home.

"Singapore has long been a top choice for regional headquarters for Japanese companies because of its geographical position and Singaporeans' understanding of both Japanese technology and Western culture," says NOK Asia Managing Director Cheng Kam Yin. "This is our special trait as Singaporeans. It also helps that we are multilingual, thus enabling us to communicate effectively across the region."

Singapore-based NOK Asia is NOK's regional headquarters for Southeast Asia and Oceania in marketing, sales and logistics. It oversees NOK's nearby network of sales offices, as well as the group's manufacturing facilities.

"In recent years we have been streamlining our operations in areas such as engineering, logistics, sales and marketing so that we are able to provide our customers, particularly from the automotive sector, with the best possible, environmentally friendly products and services," says Cheng.

NOK's products — functional components such as oil seals, gaskets and o-rings used in the automotive industry — are produced through advanced seal technology from processed synthetic rubbers. The majority of its clients come from the auto industry.

With the emerging market in Asia, Cheng expects sales turnover to grow significantly within the next



NOK Asia Managing Director Cheng Kam Yin

five years. "We intend to capitalize on the growth of this region by trying our best to support each and every one of our customers. With our streamlining objectives in place, I have full confidence that the company is moving forward in the right direction," Cheng declares. ♦ www.nok.com.sg

Straits Asia holds the key to Japanese clients' needs

"The key to being a recognized supplier in the energy market in Asia is reliability and product quality. I'm pleased to say that as we approach 15 years of operations, we have not let down a single customer with any shipment," boasts Martin Purvis, CEO of coal producer Straits Asia Resources.

Straits Asia's Sebuku mine, which produces single burn thermal coal, has built its brand on core relationships with some of Japan's leading power utilities since 1997. The Sebuku mine, seen to have total resources of 1 billion tons, recently got approval from the Indonesian government to greatly increase production over the next three years, with Japan seen as the natural buyer of the additional output.

In Japan, Straits Asia's marketing arm recently reinforced the growth message and opened leads for shipments with new buyers for the high-value product.

Meanwhile, Straits Asia's Jembayan mine continues its strong growth path toward its production target of 12 tons a year. Jembayan coal is low ash coal with moderate sulfur content and is available for Japan but also well-suited for boilers in China and India.

Straits Asia Resources is the only listed coal company in Singapore. Its fully owned mines in Indonesia are expected to produce a total of over 11 million tons this year.

Aside from production successes, Straits Asia has a proud history of safety, community development and environmental protection, having won many awards from the Indonesian government for its work in those areas.

The group has done pioneering work to give back to the communities that surround the mines, which has resulted in a major improvement in local health care and lifestyles through its education and medical pro-

grams. Straits Asia, which has about 60 percent local employment in its mines, placed environmental protection and community development among its core performance indexes.

The group will be dedicating a lot of time to building even closer ties with Japan.

"We have much to offer and we will continue to focus on our relationships with Japanese customers. The country will remain one of the great manufacturing bases and will continue to require reliable raw materials. Straits Asia will do its part in providing them," Purvis explains. ♦ www.straitsasia.com



Straits Asia's Sebuku mine, located on Sebuku island in southeast Kalimantan in Indonesia

Global technology for local solutions

"When this company was started, we had only 1.6 million Singapore dollars as capital," says Makino Asia CEO Dr. Moh Chong Tau. That clearly was a humble start for a subsidiary that has since become the Asian headquarters of Tokyo-based machine tool maker Makino.

Makino Asia — a global specialist in machine parts production and services — oversees a vast territory that spans China, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines and Malaysia, and markets itself as a one-stop shop for customers.

Singapore has been particularly fertile ground for the company.

"We have a very pro-business government. The intention is to be the 'queen bee' that supports industry. With Japan's technology and Singapore's development incentive, both parties win," explains Moh.

In the machinery parts industry, Makino has distinguished itself from other global players by focusing especially on three key sectors: aerospace, high-volume production and die molds for the semiconductor, power production and automotive industries. Makino Asia also has plans to venture into the medical and green energy sectors, which offer promising growth opportunities. "Our products are tailored to our customers' niche requirements. Our network is also very different from our competitors. While they use a distribution network, we established our direct distribution channels all over the region. We deal directly with our customers," Moh says.

This competitive advantage has attracted global brands such as Apple, Foxconn, Caterpillar, GM, Toyota, Tata and BYD.

"Our products are very much solution-based. Our catchphrase is 'global technology, local solutions.' While the concept of our machine design and application are global, our people are local," he says. ♦ www.makino.com.sg



Makino Asia CEO Dr. Moh Chong Tau



Makino Asia's headquarters in Singapore

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