

# UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

bridges BY SYNERGY MEDIA SPECIALISTS

www.sms-bridges.com

## Japan and the UAE: Advancing cooperation

Japanese ambassador Akio Isomata speaks with Bridges about cultural and strategic ties with the UAE in the wake of COP28

**Bridges:** How would you describe Japan-UAE economic relations today?

**Isomata:** Having celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations last year, Japan and the UAE are now at the outset of a promising 50 more years of a robust and ever-developing relationship.

Rather than enumerating achievements in the past and present cooperative relations, starting from oil and gas, to infrastructure, outer space, food, health care, retail business, and to creative industries, tourism, etc., I would like to highlight two recent examples that will help develop our relations further.

With the establishment of the implementation mechanism last year of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative launched earlier between our governments, all of the five sub-committees, which include one dedicated to economic, trade, energy and industry cooperation, as well as a ministerial plenary session, have been successfully held this year.

With the mechanism set in motion and to be utilized every year, our countries are now better equipped to discuss wide-ranging cooperation in a concrete manner and on a project basis.

I would also like to mention a new cooperation scheme involving Japanese start-up companies. Earlier this year, our countries launched the JU-CAT (Japan-UAE Coordination scheme for Advanced Technology) to enable Japanese startups with advanced technologies to collaborate with UAE partners in fields such as hydrogen and ammonia, among others. As the world makes rapid strides on the path to decarbonization, Japan and the UAE can together accelerate their efforts, including those of the UAE regarding the hosting of COP28 (the 28th U.N. climate conference), making the best use of this scheme.

**Youth exchanges bring countries closer together. How important is this for Japan-UAE relations?**

People-to-people exchanges, especially among youths, form the base of solid bilateral relations between countries, and this is an area where Japan has great strength.

As the UAE puts further efforts in diversifying its economy and in sending skilled Emiratis into the private-sector workforce, there are so many things both countries can do together.

As an example of such cooperation, the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)



Akio Isomata, Ambassador of Japan to the United Arab Emirates

provides an internship program for UAE university students at Japanese companies, in which UAE students are offered an opportunity to learn and work at Japanese firms for eight weeks in total, either in Japan, in the UAE or in both.

On the front of educational exchanges, the Youth Ambassadors Program, launched in 2022 by the UAE government and JICE, invites UAE undergraduate students to counseling sessions, Japanese language and

For that purpose, we will continue to use all the mechanisms, programs and projects at hand, including those mentioned above, and will also make every effort to find new avenues for further cooperation.

Here, I would like to proudly refer to the trust existing between our countries, which constitutes the foundation of our relations and which makes us such strong partners as we are today. Trust between individuals is not easily earned, nor is trust between countries. We have had a history of excellent cooperation for more than 50 years, and by focusing on people-to-people exchanges and human resource development cooperation continuously through all these years, we built up unwavering trust in each other.

We really appreciate the people of the UAE put a great trust in such values as diligence and discipline that Japanese people cherish and uphold, because this really made our relations rock-solid. Let me say that the mutual trust is also exemplified in the introduction of full visa exemption toward the Emirati ordinary passport holders, making the UAE the first country to enjoy such privilege in the Gulf

**“With commitment, ambition, technology and resources made available by the two countries to the maximum extent, I believe Japan and the UAE can be together at the forefront of leading the global efforts in tackling climate change issues.”**

Akio Isomata, Ambassador of Japan to the United Arab Emirates

culture courses and a study trip to Japan with the aim of facilitating the participants’ enrollment in degree programs at graduate schools in Japan.

At a younger level, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has started a high school student exchange program with the UAE, and a group of around 20 students from Tokyo visited the UAE this year and last, and it is expected to continue every year. These are just a few examples, but through these efforts, I believe we can further consolidate our bilateral relations toward the future.

**How is the embassy ensuring Japan and the UAE remain close friends and economic partners?**

The central role of our embassy is to be a catalyst for promotion of friendly and cooperative relations between our countries.



The tallest structure in the world, the **Burj Khalifa**, soars 829.8 meters (just over half a mile) over Dubai and is a symbolic beacon of progress.

region. I hope the existing trust will be further strengthened by welcoming a deluge of Emiratis visiting Japan.

**The UAE hosted COP28. How do you see Japan and the UAE coming together to address global challenges?**

As the world forges ahead on the path for decarbonization, Japan is of the view that: We should advance cooperation toward the goal of carbon neutrality/net-zero emissions while ensuring energy security; we should recognize there are various and practical pathways toward that goal depending on the circumstances of each country.

Japan, as the chair of the G7 (group of seven leading industrial nations) this year, led the group’s discussion having these in mind, and believes that we can cooperate with the UAE as the host of the COP28 for its success and can make a substantial contribution together to the global efforts in tackling climate change.

In July, when Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited the UAE, we launched a vision to establish the Middle East as a hub for clean energy and decarbonization under the Global Green Energy Hub initiative, and both governments have already started to work on it.

Prior to this, both countries agreed to establish the Joint Crediting Mechanism to contribute to the greenhouse gas reduction targets through joint projects. Japanese companies also showcased their innovative technologies at the venue of COP28. With commitment, ambition, technology and resources made available by the two countries to the maximum extent, I believe Japan and the UAE can be together at the forefront of leading the global efforts in tackling climate change issues. ♦

www.uae.emb-japan.go.jp

## Niterra: A spark of imagination

Founded as a manufacturer of spark plugs in 1936, the Niterra Group (formerly NGK Spark Plug) is one of the world’s leading technical ceramics and automotive suppliers.

Headquartered in Nagoya, Niterra delivers solutions to original equipment and after-market suppliers and industrial customers. The group has an international presence and over 16,240 employees across three business groups:

- Automotive components — the company’s core competence in the automotive field today accounts for 78.6% of the group’s business activities.
- Technical ceramics — NTK Technical Ceramics contributes almost 20% of Niterra’s business and includes

semiconductor products, fine ceramics and medical products.

- New business — Nittoku BX is Niterra’s 2030 long-term management plan that aims to transform its business portfolio and develop innovative solutions and new business.

### The Niterra brand

The rebranding to Niterra this year represents a shift toward environmentally sustainable business fields. Niterra leads the automotive landscape and stands at the forefront of driving progress in the industry.

“The name Niterra combines the Latin words niteo, meaning ‘shine,’ and terra for ‘earth,” said Yoshihiro Goto,

managing director of Niterra Middle East.

“It is not until people are happy that the Earth starts to shine and the name represents our desire to contribute to a sustainable society and make the Earth shine.”

### Social and sustainable

Niterra’s commitment to research and development is delivering innovative solutions for the social challenges of the future. The company’s sustainability targets focus on expanding environmentally friendly products, conserving water resources, and waste management.

### Driving UAE innovation

“Having lived in the UAE for over four years, I have



Yoshihiro Goto, Managing Director of Niterra Middle East

noticed that while people love the sound of internal combustion engines on streets and circuits, electric vehicles are silently and steadily gaining popularity,” Goto said.

“Our NGK spark plugs play a vital role in gasoline engines that move people and are loved by motorsport enthusiasts. We will provide NGK spark plugs to the very ‘last man’ as part of our last-man-standing strategy.”

“Today our challenge is not only related to mobility, and Niterra Middle East is active in the medical sector across the Gulf Cooperation Council region to address challenges related to cardiovascular disease, hypertension and obesity. We want to contribute to people’s quality of life and those of their precious family members. Our efforts will put a smile on people’s faces and make the Earth shine that little brighter, just as we do at Niterra.” ♦

www.ngkntk.com

**Niterra**

## Al Gharbia: Partnerships, progress and pipe solutions

Success is in the pipeline at Al Gharbia Pipe Co. The company is a joint venture involving JFE Steel, the eighth-largest global steel manufacturer, Marubeni Itochu Steel, a provider of commercial and logistics support to some of the world’s largest oil and gas companies, and ADQ, an Abu Dhabi-based investment and holding company.

Established in May 2015, Al Gharbia Pipe Co is one of the first large companies to embrace Industry 4.0 as a technologically advanced longitudinally submerged arc welded (LSAW) pipe manufacturer.

Highly advanced artificial intelligence technology ensures AGPC pipes meet the highest standards for quality.

From day one, AGPC was founded on quality, operational



Noritsugu Mifune, CEO of Al Gharbia Pipe Co.

excellence, innovation and above all, safety. Today the company’s ongoing project-based

solutions are exceeding customer expectations.

“When I came to Abu Dhabi for the first time in 2015, the planned construction site was wide-open desert,” said Noritsugu Mifune, AGPC’s CEO.

“We successfully started pipe production in 2019 and today we have a state-of-the-art LSAW pipe mill.”

While discipline, diligence and determination continue to be key drivers for AGPC, the company is also contributing to communities in the United Arab Emirates and beyond through corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Mifune remains proud of AGPC’s contributions to the UAE, the company’s advanced technologies and its outstanding workforce.

“Our LSAW mill focuses on the mass production of onshore and offshore sour service pipes — a type of pipeline filled with substances that contain hydrogen sulphide — and various construction pipes,” Mifune said.

“Our success lies in our technologies, JFE Steel’s experience of LSAW pipe production, Marubeni Itochu Steel’s global network and our experienced engineers, skillful operators and excellent office staff.”

AGPC will continue to deliver industry-leading products, services and solutions as one of the most technologically advanced LSAW pipe manufacturers in the Gulf Cooperation Council region.

“Through our commitment to quality, operational excellence, innovation and above all,

safety, we aim to become the most technically advanced pipe mill in the region,” Mifune said.

“By maintaining the highest levels of diligence, discipline and determination, we are in a strong position to grow our business and play our role in contributing to the further development of the UAE.” ♦

www.algharbiapipe.com



## Kobelco: Contributing to industry, economies and society

Kobelco, the unified brand name of the Kobe Steel Group, contributes to society through three core business areas: materials, machinery and electric power.

Having done business in the dynamic Middle East region for decades, the company continues to strengthen its regional partnerships.

From its regional hub in Dubai, the company began operating as a division of Kobe Steel, eventually establishing Kobelco Construction Machinery Middle East and Africa in 2016.

“We have fostered excellent relations with our business partners across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates,” said KCMMEA Managing Director Kentaro Nezaki.

“The UAE and Saudi Arabia are home to our largest customer bases. We deliver crawler cranes, crawler excavators, spare parts

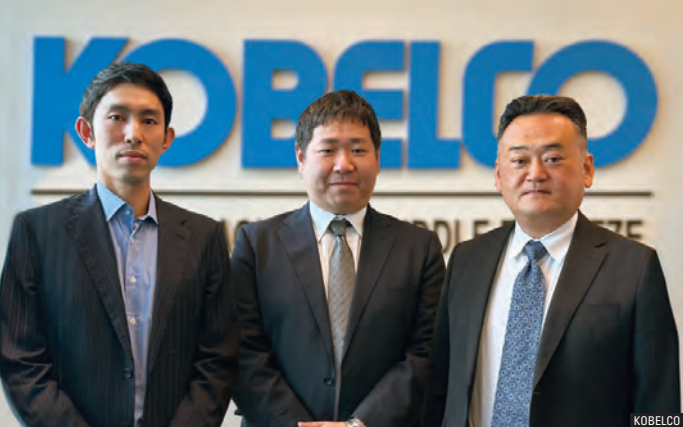
and also provide after-market services.”

The UAE has planned large oil and gas-related projects, and Saudi Arabia is continuing its diversification journey from oil and gas and inspiring new ways of living and working.

“Through Kobelco Construction Machinery Co., our parent company, and our group company, Shinsho Corp., our vision is to promote sustainable growth, deliver exceptional customer satisfaction and promote Kobelco’s products, services and solutions to the region,” Nezaki said.

Kobe Steel Group is recognized as a world-leading manufacturer of nonstandard reciprocating, screw and centrifugal compressors, with the company manufacturing its first high-pressure reciprocating compressor in Japan in 1915.

Kobelco Machinery Middle East was founded in Dubai in 2012 and has established strong ties with end-users.



From left: **Keitaro Nakai**, General Manager of Shinsho Corp.’s Middle East Representative Office, **Takuya Kadosaka**, General Manager of Kobelco Machinery Middle East, and **Kentaro ‘Kent’ Nezaki**, Managing Director of Kobelco Construction Machinery Middle East and Africa

“We have developed our business in line with oil and gas field projects in the UAE and the Middle East,” said KMMME General Manager Takuya Kadosaka.

Kobelco is contributing to the development of new energy

sources to push carbon neutrality across the energy industry. The company’s compressors, heat exchangers and vaporizers also play an important role in achieving society’s carbon-neutrality targets.

“Kobelco compressors can handle hydrogen, ammonia and carbon dioxide, and our reliable technology and wealth of experience enable us to support modern industrial developments and deliver compressors which boost productivity and contribute to (reaching) carbon-neutrality targets,” Kadosaka said.

“The Middle East region is an important market for us and we expect the UAE to become a green business leader if carbon neutrality leads to a reduction of oil and gas production,” Kadosaka said. “We are in a strong position to contribute to the existing oil and gas industry and future carbon-neutral economies.” ♦

www.kobelco.co.jp/english  
www.kobelco-mea.com  
www.shinsho.co.jp/english

**KOBELCO**

## Tomini Group: A trusted partner in shipping

A leading dry-bulk shipowner and manager, Tomini Group is wholly owned by the Shaikh family and has owned and managed commercial vessels since its founding in 1950.

The family has always valued operating with honor and ethics at the forefront of business, along with the spirit of partnership and collaboration to face new challenges within the industry. Chief among these challenges is decarbonization.

Numair Shaikh, a fourth-generation member of the family and CEO of Tomini Group since 2021, is intent on providing leading dry-bulk solutions to all stakeholders.

“With a modern and efficient fleet, our vision is to be a leading private dry-bulk owner with an unwavering commitment to clients and best-in-class,



Numair Shaikh, CEO of Tomini Group

all-inclusive ship management services,” Shaikh said.

Offering a comprehensive

in-house management approach, Tomini Group offers commercial, technical and crew management services. Its headquarters in Dubai manages two crewing offices in Mumbai and Karachi, ensuring a close relationship with crews aboard their 25 owned vessels. These include handysize, ultramax, kamsarmax and cape-size vessels with a combined deadweight capacity of over 2 million tons and an average age of just six years.

### Connecting Japan

In line with this modern approach, Tomini Group has been partnering with Japanese owners to operate ultramodern and efficient vessels. As owners themselves, they pride themselves on having expert teams ready to work at the highest levels.

Japanese partners are therefore able to access a reliable and flexible operator in Tomini, with a few major owners already committing vessels.

### Tomini tomorrow

“We achieved unprecedented growth in recent years and doubled the size of our fleet, now reaching into all major dry bulk segments,” Shaikh said.

“We intend to continue on our growth path at a steady and conservative pace, ensuring that the high level of quality we’ve come to represent is always present.”

Having recently won the prestigious Sustainable Shipping Award at the 2023 Maritime Standard Awards, Tomini continues to prioritize being safe, secure and sustainable when operating its worldwide

trading fleet. This has been advanced by Tomini’s suite of technological upgrades (hardware and software), which are expected to improve existing vessel emissions by 10% to 14%. This has been developed in-house by Tomini’s expert technical team, and is expected to be rolled out to the entire owned fleet by 2026 with a few vessels already receiving this new performance package.

The recent partnership with vessel performance and energy-efficiency experts Enerva Marine Solutions aims to reduce emissions as part of Tomini Group’s future decarbonization strategy. ♦

www.tominigroup.com  
www.tominishipping.com

