

■ JAPAN BUSINESS REPORT ■

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ASAHI TEC SERVES GLOBAL CLIENTS WITH ONE-STOP WHEEL SOLUTION

Before it became one of the 10 leading aluminium wheel manufacturers in the world, Asahi Tec honed its expertise in iron casting and forging over 100 years.

Founded in 1916 at the beginning of Japan's industrial expansion, the company advanced in the field of light alloys to become a global name in the production of aluminium wheels and cast parts for Japan, Southeast Asia and China – in an era of rising vehicle ownership and vehicle manufacturing across Asia-Pacific.

"Our strength lies in our high Japanese quality," says Hideki Aoyama, president and CEO. "Our competitiveness and customer relationships also drive our success. We have strong links with Japanese original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and participate

in the early stages of research and development."

Apart from aluminium wheels, Asahi Tec provides a wide variety of essential industry components – ranging from construction machinery parts to vehicle parts such as intake manifolds, rear arms, steering members and body frames for trucks, cars and motorcycles.

Manufactured using in-house technologies in surface treating, furnace heat treating and casting, Asahi Tec's innovative and cost-efficient products meet market needs, such as its 22- to 23-inch aluminium wheels for Europe. The company also offers painting solutions and is the major supplier in two-wheeler red liner painting for BMW Germany and Honda Japan. It seeks to further expand its technologies to serve clients as a one-stop provider.

Aiming to grow its annual

manufacturing capacity in aluminium wheels from 6.6 million to 10 million units and to start serving more global markets, Asahi Tec is planning to establish a plant in the Middle East as a strategic manufacturing and export hub. It welcomes joint ventures and partnerships as it looks to attract more foreign OEMs and tier 1 players.

"Asahi Tec has good technologies and people," Aoyama says. "We want to export our manufacturing policies globally and retain our high made-in-Japan product standards."

Hideki Aoyama, president and CEO



NAGASE KENKO SETS WHOLE NEW BALL GAME WITH HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORTS EQUIPMENT

Choosing the right equipment is vital in any sport. For Nagase Kenko, every detail matters – down to the last fibre of the sports ball, whether that ball is made of rubber to be used in a round of catch or crafted from leather for a professional baseball game.

The 84-year-old, world-renowned pioneer in the field of sports goods specialises in sports balls, including rubber baseballs, soft tennis balls, soft baseballs and leather baseballs.

With products known globally as "Kenko Ball", Nagase Kenko maintains its local top market share, covering more than 60 per cent of Japan's rubber baseball industry.

Highly regarded by major international baseball federations, Nagase Kenko's sports equipment is used throughout the world. Its sports floor mats – badminton court mats in particular – are used in various official

events such as the Olympic Games. Without a doubt, Nagase Kenko has hit the home-run of success, holding a number of intellectual properties including patents to its name. Its dominance in the rubber baseball industry is the direct result of the company's unrelenting research and development and innovation.

Dedicated to providing the safest and most premium products for young and old alike, Nagase Kenko emphasises the important advantages of using its low-bounce rubber baseballs.

They are weather-resistant, more durable, less prone to causing injury than leather baseballs, and reasonably priced – all the while performing nearly as well as their leather counterparts.

"Many countries put importance on using leather baseballs, but that is changing," says Shosaku Yanagida, president and CEO of Nagase Kenko.



Shosaku Yanagida, president and CEO

The company looks forward to forming more partnerships with distributors and sports federations worldwide. It particularly eyes Asia, Europe, Central and South America and the United States, aiming to promote "Kenko Ball" further, while fostering a vision to spread the Japanese culture of baseball and keeping it safe and fun to play.

"In Japanese, 'Kenko' has the same pronunciation as 'good health'," Yanagida says. "By delivering the high quality and safe enjoyment of sport goods, we deliver Kenko to the world."

JM ENERGY POWERS A GREEN, AFFORDABLE FUTURE

Mikio Yamachika, president



As technology progresses, machines are getting smaller yet more efficient, while requiring more dynamic and potent power resources to reach peak performance. For overall better performance and safety, lithium-ion capacitors have proven themselves an ideal option. As the supplier of the most premium-quality lithium-ion capacitors, JM Energy specialises in innovating customised lithium-ion capacitor solutions for various industries.

JM Energy pioneered the renowned lithium-ion capacitor (LIC) a year after it was founded as a subsidiary of JSR in 2007. Leveraged by the global network and support of JSR, JM Energy has perfected its electrode

coating system and increased its cell creation capacity to 3 million cells a year, expanding its manufacturing base in Hokuto city, Yamanashi – a prefecture known for its environmental conservation involvement. Abiding by stringent, environmentally sound manufacturing systems and quality management, JM Energy is certified ISO 14001 and ISO 9001-compliant.

"It is for the environment," says JM Energy president Mikio Yamachika. "When our clients use our lithium-ion capacitors, they have the potential to reduce their oil usage or carbon footprint, preserving our beautiful earth."

Under the brand Ultimo, JM Energy's lithium-ion capacitors come in laminated and prismatic cells, surpassing other energy storage devices such as the lithium-ion battery

and the electric double-layer capacitor, with longer cycle life, quick charge rates, lower self-discharge, higher energy and power densities, and lower chances for thermal runaway reactions. Because the lithium-ion capacitor offers these superior characteristics, its uses are limitless; from powering heavy machinery and generating energy for transportation systems, to energy storage for emergency medical purposes.

Geared towards creating more accessible and customised LIC solutions, JM Energy is dedicating its research and development to manufacturing more affordable cells for wider industrial consumption. It welcomes research collaborations and partnerships with module developers from China, Europe, India, South Asia and the United States.

DSPG BANKS ON HERITAGE TO CREATE ORIGINAL NEW PRODUCTS

With its comforting warmth and complex layering of flavours, ramen noodles, whether freshly cooked or instant, have earned a prominent spot in Japanese cuisine. Many instant ramen manufacturers have their own blends of seasoning to capture a variety of tastes. This is only one of the areas in which DSP Gokyo Food & Chemical (DSPG) lends its expertise.

"We focus on helping society by adding greater value in the supply of our products. We continually improve well-being and lifestyles," says president and CEO Dr Tetsuya Oida.

Established in 2010, DSPG is backed by more than a century's worth of expertise as it is a product of the merger of the food and speciality products division of the 121-year-old Sumitomo Dainippon Pharma and 71-year-old Gokyo Trading. Its extensive history and focus on research and development provide a stable foundation for DSPG to serve many industries.



Dr Tetsuya Oida, president and CEO

With growing demand for Japanese personal care products from around the globe, this is the fastest-growing segment of DSPG.

Pharmaceutical excipients also represent a high-growth market as many companies locally and internationally have come to rely on DSPG's high-quality products.

DSPG also serves the electronics industry, providing coating technology and surface treatments. Apart from that, DSPG also supplies semiconductor manufacturers some electronic materials for synthesis and purification.

Looking to broaden its clientele, DSPG established a joint-venture partnership in Thailand, and has also partnered with a United States-based company. DSPG is open to more partnerships that can help it develop new original products and serve new markets.

"We seek long-term relationships. DSPG is a trustworthy company that cares much for quality," Oida says.

Food additives are only one of DSPG's main businesses. Aside from seasonings, DSPG also specialises in polysaccharide thickeners such as tamarind seed gum, xanthan gum and gellan gum, and functional ingredients used in products such as neotame sweetener.

DSPG is also a supplier of raw materials for personal care companies.

We aim to add greater value in the supply of food and chemical products.

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- Personal Care Products
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DSP GOKYO FOOD & CHEMICAL

DSP GOKYO FOOD & CHEMICAL Co., Ltd.
2-5-25 Minami, Kita-ku, Osaka 538-0201, Japan
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LIST SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY MAXIMISES POTENTIAL OF CROSS-BORDER INVESTMENTS

Cross-border investments are raising property values across Asia, where increasing affluence is redefining the scope of real estate with international appeal.

Japan-based LIST Group noticed this trend in 2010, prompting its founder and president Hisashi Kitami to respond to the market need by bringing the Sotheby's International Realty brand to Japan. This bold move opened up an exclusive channel to international real estate, including direct access to property listings in more than 70 countries.

Today, LIST Sotheby's International Realty serves its globe-trotting clientele from its offices in Hawaii, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand and Hong Kong.

These overseas locations combine with 10 offices in Japan, where LIST is renowned for its seamless brokerage services, expertise in investment management and development.

"We want to remove any barrier in the brokerage business internationally in order to activate cross-border property investments, especially across Asia-Pacific," says Kitami, president and CEO of LIST Sotheby's International Realty.

With the reach of its global network, LIST Sotheby's International Realty is able to provide clients with access to real estate and investment opportunities from across the globe, through a single service platform. This is key to its affluent clientele, whose property acquisitions are driven by



Hisashi Kitami, president and CEO

investment returns. LIST's recent focus includes new developments in Southeast Asia, particularly in resort and luxury residential properties.

"We know what buyers' needs are, and their preferences are reflected in the projects that we pursue as an investor, broker or developer," Kitami says.

"Investors and homebuyers can expect the same level of ease and service wherever the property listing, or the LIST agent, is located – we are able to serve their international real estate needs within the same platform."

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NAKATA FOODS BRINGS UME TO GLOBAL STAGE

Since ancient times, the Japanese ume – a sour relative of the apricot and plum – has played an important role in traditional medicine in Japan and China for its various health benefits. Its soft, plump and antioxidant-rich meat has been known to help protect against the flu, promote better blood circulation and resolve gastrointestinal illnesses.

Hailing from Japan's largest ume-producing region Wakayama, Nakata Foods has been shining the spotlight on the health properties of ume for over a century through the

lush flavours of its fruit liqueur umeshu, pickled and flavoured umeboshi and other ume products.

Over the course of its history, Nakata Foods has harnessed its ume expertise to satisfy the discerning palates of the Japanese people who can be considered as connoisseurs of the highly nutritious fruit.

"A very important part of Japanese food culture, ume invigorates, improves health and increases longevity. Umeboshi is used as a garnish in the middle of the Hinomaru bento to avoid rice spoilage,



Yoshiaki Nakata, president

even in hot weather. Umeshu is a healthy and delicious liqueur rich in ume juice," says president Yoshiaki Nakata.

Outside Japan, Nakata Foods distributes its products in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, London, Paris, Canada, Australia and other markets. Nakata Foods sees great growth potential in Southeast Asia and India.

Aiming to make ume a staple in cupboards worldwide, Nakata Foods seeks to expand its product line, and is developing fresh ume products for application outside Japanese cuisine. Nakata hopes that ume can be the next big flavour in the culinary world, following Japanese yuzu, sansho pepper and matcha.

"We want to uphold the ume tradition for the next generation to make sure it retains popularity and importance. We look forward to bringing ume to more markets to introduce a traditionally Japanese flavour that can be adapted to suit different tastes," Nakata says.

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Website: www.mishima.co.jp

Mipox Corporation

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