

# ‘Dubai is well-known as a gateway to the Middle East’

► **Hisashi Michigami**, Consul General of Japan in Dubai, shares his thoughts with **Suchitra Steven Samuel**



KT photo Dhes Handumon

**Hisashi Michigami**  
Consul General of Japan in Dubai

A postgraduate from Harvard, **Hisashi Michigami**, Consul General of Japan in Dubai, has been in the Foreign Service for 31 years. He served in Korea and China and is an author of three books. He had lectures in universities of Korea and China over 100 times to enhance mutual understanding. He shares his thoughts in an interview with *Khaleej Times*. Excerpts:

## **What is your message to Dubai and the Japanese community?**

I feel very happy and motivated to be in the UAE. It's been just three weeks in Dubai. I served in East Asia for a long time and this is my first posting in the Middle East. Dubai is well known to the Japanese as a gateway to the whole of the Middle East and Gulf countries. On my first day I saw many Japanese cars on the road. I took the Dubai Metro that was constructed mainly by Japanese companies. Besides, Sushi, Yoku Moku, and Hello Kitty are so popular here. I will make my best effort to enhance the already existing good relations between the people of Japan and Dubai and to support the business community here and Japanese children living in Dubai.

## **What was your first impression of Dubai?**

I was quite interested in Dubai. After coming here, I've been more impressed and have a positive image of the city. It has dynamism, stability and security.

## **What are your views on Dubai winning the Expo 2020?**

I strongly believe that the Expo will be a great success. I expect more and more tourists and business between

the two countries. In 2020 Japan will host the summer Olympic games. So in that year, both the UAE and Japan can be the focus of the international community.

## **What are your views about Japan's neighbours?**

Neighbouring countries including China and Korea are very important to Japan. Sometimes we have different views but we have many shared interests. I was happy to work in Beijing and Seoul, and luckily I've had so many good friends there.

## **Your views on Japanese cars and Hello Kitty brands?**

We feel happy to see them. But, to be honest, high quality of Japanese products is not just represented by cars. We have so many good quality products. I hope Dubai gets to know more about the different products and our culture. Dubai has the largest population of Japanese people in the whole Middle East and Africa. This shows how much importance we put on Dubai and the UAE.

## **Are there any specific sectors that you would like to mention?**

Japan has high-quality, safe, and natural food, including fruits. They have very good taste and are good for health.

## **What is your secret to a successful career and life?**

I don't know whether I am successful or not (smiles). I try to meet many people other than government officials like businessmen, journalists, students, professors, or cultural figures. This was a big help to understand people in China and Korea where I served. I would like to do that in Dubai as well.

## **What are the basic factors that motivate you?**

In this 21st century, the information age, I still see huge misunderstandings everywhere in the world. We can pick up all the information but we still have prejudices to overcome. It is a never-ending story, but we, diplomats and journalists, need to make more efforts to narrow misunderstandings.



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## **What advice would you give the younger generation?**

I have two sons and I tell them to go into the world, go to different countries. This helps understand different nationalities, thoughts, ideas and religions. This will be the necessary process for mutual understanding.

## **What else do you want to say about Japan?**

Japan has one of the longest life expectancies in the world. It is the combination of good medical services to rich and poor, insurance, health-oriented education, sports, and a mutually-supporting community. We are proud of that.

## **What do you do during leisure time?**

Sport has been my passion since I was very young. I play golf, ski, jog, swim, and ride the bicycle. I also love calligraphy, music and singing.

— suchitra@khaleejtimes.com