

Best Books of 2023: Newsweek Staff Picks

Newsweek[®]

INTERNATIONAL



BREAKDOWN

**WHAT ISRAEL'S
HIGH-TECH SECURITY FAILURE
MEANS FOR THE U.S.**

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Building a better future

In line with its sustainable development goals, So Kikaku Sekkei is supporting better buildings throughout Asia.



Soma Civic Hall, a symbol of earthquake reconstruction

Established in 1992, So Kikaku Sekkei (SKS) is an architectural design and engineering firm with a well-established business in Japan and a growing presence in Southeast Asia.

"Despite having a relatively short history of 31 years and limited achievements compared to other major design firms, we are still a rapidly growing company, driven by a spirit of challenge," says SKS president Sumio Hara.

In the unique context of Japan's construction industry, where large projects require a track record and credentials, SKS's business strategy focuses on accumulating experience through numerous smaller projects, which subsequently enables the company to secure larger contracts – as explained by Mr. Hara.



Future Education Hall,
Aichi University of Education

Presently, SKS boasts 26 branches nationwide, along with subsidiary companies specializing in facility

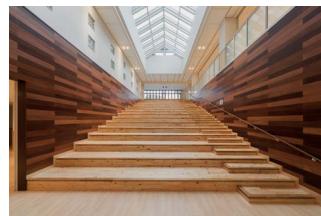


Duyen Ha Resort in Vietnam

design, environmental surveys, civil engineering design, and overseas design. The company is actively involved in various projects spanning different fields, particularly excelling in educational facilities and renovation projects. "As part of our pursuit of further development, we aim to become a comprehensive consultant and have set our sights on expanding our group and venturing into the international market," adds the president.

When it comes to the international market, SKS has placed its focus on fast-growing Southeast Asia. The Japanese firm has established a base in Vietnam to serve as its hub for the region, where it has stationed top Japanese engineers to work alongside local staff. "With nearly 20 staff members in Vietnam, we can oversee all aspects of projects, from planning and design to construction supervision, ensuring consistent quality," Mr. Hara explains. "This approach garners positive feedback from clients and effectively maintains the quality of our services."

With environmental conservation, climate change and natural disaster mitigation top concerns for SKS, the company is supporting the construction of flood-resistant buildings in Bangladesh based on its experience on developing earthquake-resilient technology in Japan,



Stage for expression in
elementary school

while in Vietnam, it has a project involving a waste incinerator that processes 4,000 tons of garbage daily, contributing to waste reduction and clean energy generation.

"Our expansion into new territories like Vietnam, Myanmar, and China, and our efforts to help address environmental concerns in those countries, align well with



"Our design philosophy is harmony with people. People are at the heart of everything, and we aim to create designs that appeal to people's five senses, promoting ease of use, livability, comfort, and kindness. Even in today's advanced high-tech world, the design that truly touches people's hearts depends on the sensibilities of each individual designer."

Sumio Hara, President,
So Kikaku Sekkei, Ltd.



Kusatsu City Arena (YMIT Arena)
our commitment to SDGs (sustainable development goals)," says the SKS president.

At home in Japan, SKS specializes in educational facilities and renovation projects and will continue to do so, as Japan's changing learning methods demand new types of school buildings, and while the issue of upgrading Japan's aging public facilities and infrastructure remains a priority challenge for the country.

"We have a five-year medium-term plan in place, setting annual targets based on metrics such as revenue, brand strength, technology adoption, societal contributions, and employee development," adds Mr. Hara. "We aim to consistently achieve 10% profit growth annually, sustaining our growth momentum. Recognizing the value of fresh talent, we emphasize bringing new energy to our company's management."