

mid-scale companies to spread word from Osaka around the world about new products and services. As part of that, the OCCI will run a zone for SMEs and startups within the Osaka Healthcare Pavilion.

Yet we are conscious that the socioeconomic outlook remains unclear, and that many companies will look first to find steady ground. This year, as always, we will harness all the capabilities and knowledge of our five branches, as well as the Osaka SME Revitalization Council*, the Osaka Business Ownership Succession Support Center*, to offer advice and support for SMEs and mid-scale companies.

Beyond that, we aim to help businesses establish a solid foundation for future prosperity, for instance by organizing matching-and-meeting events that promote the opening of new trade channels within Japan, and by leveraging the OSAKA-ASEAN Business Promotion Platform to seek new channels overseas, and seeking vital new entrants in developing industries such as the wellness sector. Speaking of wellness, we will continue our support for that sector this year through our Medical Device Business Support Platform* and Sports Hub Kansai to help drum up new business.

In 2023, as in every year, we at the OCCI will derive inspiration from Osaka business pioneers (many of whom are immortalized in the must-visit Entrepreneurial Museum of Challenge and Innovation), and support local enterprises with a spirit of "yatte minahare" (ambition to dream big, take challenges, and never give up), and generally help get the Osaka and Kansai regional economies on the path to growth.

On behalf of everyone at the OCCI, I look forward to your ongoing support and cooperation in 2023.

See the full text (in Japanese) at:

https://www.osaka.cci.or.jp/Chousa_Kenkyuu_Iken/Comment/20230101.html

* No official English translation could be reliably confirmed for this term. This is our own unofficial translation.

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2. BUILDING UP TO THE 2025 WORLD EXPO IN OSAKA

- (1) Direct proposal to PM on Proactive Project Support by Government OCCI Vice-Chair Kazuhiro Higashi, together with a team including Osaka Prefectural Governor Hirofumi Yoshimura, submitted a proposal to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on December 16, 2022, on projects relating to World Expo 2025 ("Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan").

In December 2021, the government indicated its intention to set forth initiatives aimed at crystallizing the 2025 expo's concept- "People's Living Lab"- in a plan, the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan Action Plan (ver. 1), which it would update at half-yearly intervals. Version 2 of the plan was released in June 2022. The OCCI's proposal focused on core points for the government to consider when undertaking the December 2022 update of the plan, which were based on project progress and the state of talks with the government to date. To wit, the OCCI stressed that preparations needed to be stepped up if the People's Living Lab were to be properly established and word spread successfully abroad, and demanded that the government respond with proactive project support, technical and financial assistance, and regulation reform.

- (2) OCCI & Nikkei Co-host Symposium "Toward the Future Beyond the 2025 Expo" On December 2, 2022, the OCCI teamed up with the Osaka headquarters of Nikkei Inc. to hold a symposium titled "Toward the Future Beyond the 2025 Expo" a live-streamed online symposium. The event attracted an audience of around 400.

In the opening address, OCCI Chairperson Shingo Torii outlined the importance of ensuring diversity of participants in the expo if it was to live up to its objective of creating a better future, and said the chamber would strive in particular to incorporate SMEs and younger participants. The keynote address was made by Hiroyuki Ishige, secretary general of the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, who said that the expo should contribute to the reconnection of a world divided by Covid-19 and the geopolitical tensions.

Dr. Felix Moesner, the Swiss consul and CEO of Swissnex in Osaka, who served as a panelist at the symposium, insisted that we must not wait for the opening of the expo to engage in cross-border communication and search for mutual solutions to international challenges.

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3. GIF OSAKA 2022 LIVE PITCH CONTEST WINNERS INVITED TO JAPAN FOR BUSINESS MATCHING

The four winners of the live pitch contest within Global Innovation Forum (GIF) Osaka 2022, the nation's foremost forum for matching international start-ups with Japanese companies have been announced. One winning startup was selected from each of the four regions into which GIF Osaka is divided, and is invited to Japan to participate in matching sessions with local businesses.

While in Osaka, the four startups have a chance to exhibit at Startup Showcase 2023 on February 21, 2023. The showcase is held in conjunction with Hack Osaka, the city's largest global startup event. One-on-one meetings with local businesses are scheduled for the following day (interpreters will be available).

The four winners are: North and South America region: Human Bionics (Colombia), for their pitch of augmented reality glasses to help people with walking difficulties as a result of Parkinson's disease.

<https://gif.osaka.cci.or.jp/en/company/index.php?mode=show&seq=5>

Middle East & Southwest Asia region: Wanka Tanka (Israel), for their pitch of wearable technology (i.e., a bracelet) that enables transdermal absorption of dietary supplements.

<https://gif.osaka.cci.or.jp/en/company/index.php?mode=show&seq=14>

Europe region: Tokamak Energy (UK) for their pitch of commercial fusion energy based on spherical tokamaks with high temperature superconducting magnets.

<https://gif.osaka.cci.or.jp/en/company/index.php?mode=show&seq=20>

East & Southeast Asia region: LLVISION (China) for their pitch of augmented reality glasses with AI capabilities that turn speech into text, helping communication overseas and for people with hearing disabilities.

<https://gif.osaka.cci.or.jp/en/company/index.php?mode=show&seq=27>

GIF Osaka seeks to generate new business opportunities by bringing together startups from around the world with outstanding technologies and Japanese businesses. The OCCI is getting ready for GIF Osaka 2023, and looks forward to welcoming lots of startups eager to team up with businesses from Osaka and throughout Japan.

Find out more about GIF Osaka 2022 here :

<https://gif.osaka.cci.or.jp/en/>

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4. KANSAI STARTUPS EXHIBIT AT CES, THE WORLD'S LARGEST TRADE SHOW, AND GET A VISIT FROM JAPANESE TRADE MINISTER

Ten Japanese startups exhibited at the Japan Tech pavilion co-hosted by the OCCI in the startup-focused Eureka Park area of the 2023 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), the world's largest tradeshow, between January 5 and 8, 2023. In a break with Japan Tech pavilion tradition, the OCCI Area provided more modestly sized, cheaper exhibition spaces than typical booths to lower the barrier to entry. Exhibitors included Science, an Osaka-based manufacturer of microbubble-generating showerheads; Direct RF, a Hyogo-based manufacturer of compact defrosting devices that keep the freshness in the food; and Lu-Nao, an Osaka-based company that produces silica and biomass graphene from rice husks. Participating exhibitors were pleasantly surprised to receive more offers of investment and collaboration from overseas than expected, and encouraged others to consider exhibiting at CES, saying that few other tradeshows could offer opportunities on this scale.

See a list of Japan Tech pavilion exhibitors and reports on their experience here:

<https://ces-japantech.jp/>

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5. BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC TRENDS SURVEY SHOWS TENTATIVE RECOVERY OF CONFIDENCE

The OCCI and the Kansai Economic Federation have released the results of their 88th quarterly Business and Economic Trend Survey.

The Business Survey Index (BSI) score (calculated as "up" responses minus "down" responses) for the Japanese economy in the October-December quarter was up 10.4 points, and the BSI score for respondents' own business situation was up 13.6 points. Both were up for the first time in four surveys. The BSI for the employment outlook was down 29.0 points, the largest deficit since the Covid pandemic began. In the section of the survey on respondents' own business situation, the most commonly cited positive factor was domestic demand and the most commonly cited negative factor was the cost of resources, materials, and parts.

Regarding the passing of the increased portion of costs on to customers, the number of respondents who said that passed on 25-74% of the increased portion of costs was lower than in the previous survey (September), but the number who said the passed on 0-24% and 75-100% increased, indicating increased polarity in ability to pass on costs.

The survey was conducted from November 11 through 25; questionnaires were sent to 1,545 companies and 280 responses were received (VRR 18.1%).

Details of the survey can be found (in Japanese) at the OCCI website.

https://www.osaka.cci.or.jp/Chousa_Kenkyuu_Iken/Bsi/bsi_88.pdf

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<COURTESY VISIT (1ST-31ST JANUARY)>

(Republic of Korea) 20th January

-Mr. KIM Hyeongjun, Consul-General, Consulate-General of the Republic of Korea

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INFORMATION FOR COVID-19

Osaka Prefecture Government

<https://covid19-osaka.info/en/>

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[O-BIC as one-stop service center for creating a foothold in Osaka]

<http://o-bic.net/>

[Information about scheduled events (in Japanese only)]

<https://intl.osaka.cci.or.jp/>



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