

promotion of Osaka as a destination through high value-added tourism, and collaboration with local businesses through the ASEAN Business Promotion Platform.

Details of the plan can be found at:<https://o-bic.net/upload/pdf/file00001006>

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2. GIF OSAKA 2022 LIVE PITCH CONTEST WINNERS VISIT OSAKA FOR MEETINGS WITH JAPANESE COMPANIES

The four winners of the live pitch contest within GIF Osaka 2022, the nation's foremost forum for matching international start-ups with Japanese companies, visited Osaka recently at the OCCI's invitation to meet in person with local businesses.

On February 21, 2023, the four startups had a chance to showcase their state-of-the-art technologies to the Japanese business community at a special GIF Osaka booth at Startup Showcase 2023, which was held in conjunction with Hack Osaka, the city's largest international startup event. The yet-to-be-seen-in-Japan technologies drew great interest from many companies as well as media coverage.

Meetings with interested companies were held the next day (interpreters provided).The opportunity to hear directly from promising startups attracted companies from Osaka and throughout Japan, and resulted in eager discussions regarding investment and joint development. Feedback from participating Japanese companies was positive, with respondents happy at Osaka's proactive organization of business meetings and events with overseas startups, and pleased at the let's-get-down-to-details nature of the discussions, and hopeful for future collaboration.

Another GIF is scheduled for 2023.The four startups that visited Osaka this year were:

* 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.

* 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.

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

* 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.

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3. RCEP UPDATE

Just over a year has passed since the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) came into effect. The agreement began with ten countries including Japan, and has since expanded to 13: Japan, eight ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Laos), China, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. In this article, we look at how the agreement has affected trade in goods.

The RCEP is a mega EPA, covering about 30% of total world trade and 50% of total Japanese trade. It is Japan's first EPA that deregulates trade with China and the ROK. In terms of exports from Japan, the RCEP special certificates of origin issued by the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) allow for tariff reductions or exemptions in the destination country (not be available for some items). The number of these certificates issued in the last three months was approximately 2.6 times that in the first three months of the agreement. Meanwhile, approximately 89% of imports into Japan under RCEP come from China, and 9% from the ROK.

In addition to RCEP certificates, the Osaka Branch of the JCCI (located in the OCCI's International Division) issues 14 types of "third-party certification" special certificates of origin. The OCCI, meanwhile, not only provides advisory services regarding the self-certification required under arrangements such as the TPP11, but also offers business matching and other services to support the expansion of sales channels through RCEP.

For more information, contact Fukuda at the Osaka Branch of the JCCI/OCCI E-mail: intl@osaka.cci.or.jp

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4. OCCI AND O-BIC KANSAI INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM: TOUR OF UMEKITA PRECINCT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PHASE II

On March 8, 2023, O-BIC held the second instalment of the Kansai International Exchange Program, a tour of “Grand Green Osaka,” the second phase of the Umekita precinct development project, for consuls general and consulates in the Kansai region. The tour attracted 23 participants, including consuls general from five countries and officials from ten consulates general and consular offices. Proceedings started with an overview of the construction site from the PR Center in the Grand Front Osaka North Building, followed by a briefing on the status of the Grand Green Osaka development and future plans.

During the discussion and Q&A session, participants commented that they could sense Osaka's great potential, and expressed hope for collaborative initiatives and projects aimed at sparking innovation with companies from other countries who plan to visit Osaka in the run-up to World Expo 2025.

For more information, contact Shimizu at O-BIC/OCCI E-mail: intl@osaka.cci.or.jp

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5. SURVEY ON WAGE INCREASES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN 2023: 40% OF SMES TO RAISE WAGES AS A “DEFENSIVE MEASURE” TO FIND AND RETAIN WORKERS, ETC.

The OCCI conducted a survey of 1,429 of member SMEs (85 valid responses received) to gauge the on-the-ground conditions of SMEs and policies for raising wages in FY2023, ascertain the support they need, and collect basic data for requests to government, etc.

Fully 75.1% of respondents planned to raise wages in FY2023, while 25.9% did not. Of those that did plan to raise wages, more than half said the wage raises were a defensive measure, i.e., that they will raise wages

even though it will not result in bottom-line improvements.

The most commonly cited reasons for wage increases were “finding and retaining workers” and “in consideration of inflation,” with 16.5% of respondents planning to raise wages by 4% or more in line with the current rate of inflation.

The most commonly cited reasons for not increasing wages were “increased cost of resources and raw materials” and “uncertainty about the future.” Many respondents said they needed assistance to get themselves into a position where wage raises were feasible; the most commonly requested forms of assistance were economic stimulus packages, expansion of (and more user-friendly) subsidies, and support for passing on cost increases. Details of the survey can be found (in Japanese) at the OCCI website.

https://www.osaka.cci.or.jp/Chousa_Kenkyuu_Iken/press/20230217wage.pdf

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

(Republic of Panama) 3rd March Coordinator of the Tourism Policy Committee of the Conference of the Regional Councils

- His Excellency Mr. Carlos PERE, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Panama in Japan

(Italian Republic) 9th March

- Mr. Daniele D'Amario, Coordinator of the Tourism Policy Committee of the Conference of the Regional Councils

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INFORMATION FOR COVID-19

Osaka Prefecture Government

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

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- Global Innovation Forum 2023

Mr. NAGAO Kentaro, Mr. TAKEDA Yohei

- Chinese Business Support Office

Mr. SUN Kang-Chung, Ms. ASAKURA Mei

- ASEAN Business Promotion Platform

Mr. SHIMIZU Ryosuke, Mr. MAKI Ryomei, Ms. TAKAGI Mitsue

- Preferential country of origin / Certificate of origin

Mr. TANAKA Masatoshi, Mr. FUKUDA Taro

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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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Back Numbers of OCCI e-Magazine: <http://www.osaka.cci.or.jp/e/emagazine/>



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