

Expo 2025 Special

Charting the Future of Global Innovation at
Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan



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BETTER CO-BEING

Better Co-Being: Three stages to greater unity

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Hiroaki Miyata, professor, Keio University School of Medicine © BETTER CO-BEING

Digital technology combines with art and nature in a collaborative space at Osaka's Expo 2025 where experts from diverse fields work together to help us envision a future beyond individual differences.

Better Co-Being, one of Expo 2025's signature pavilions, "explores the potential for creating new connections by encouraging individuals ... to interact with others and the natural environment" under the theme "Resonance of Lives," said pavilion producer Hiroaki Miyata, a professor of medicine at Keio University.

Miyata said the world faces a turning point as digital technology transforms society in



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ways that accelerate division and inequity. "But technology is a tool. Whether it brings about good things or not depends on how we use it," he continued. "We are asked how to depict a future where we live together by embracing our differences."

Better Co-Being integrates various fields — technology, art, architecture, philosophy and music. "In other words, it is a composite art form," Miyata said in a recent interview with The Japan Times.

The open-air pavilion in a corner of the Forest of Tranquility has a silver layered open-grid canopy that looks like clouds in the sky. The structure and its associated technologies and art objects amid an environment of trees, grass and trails encourage visitors to feel a resonance with each other.

"The open sky" is another keyword for the pavilion, as the sky signifies a world without boundaries. In the surrounding forest, there are five art installations designed by artists from abroad.

The pavilion is divided into three sequences, each with a specific theme. Visitors form groups with others arriving at the same time. "There are a variety of artworks and related mechanisms, letting visitors pause for a while or stop to read about the artworks presented at the site," Miyata said.

They start in a pavilion offering each of them a stone-like "echorb" to carry around, innovations from Murata Manufacturing Co. that use 3D haptic technology to shine, make sounds and vibrate in response to being held in ways that seemingly lead visitors through the pavilion and make it possible for them to feel their own heartbeat in their hands.

A special app provided by Obayashi Corp. can show an explanation of each art installation. In addition, it can analyze and express "the experiences of visitors gathered at that moment based on the seven themes of the expo," according to the pavilion's website.

This can generate "an inner landscape shaped by the feelings of those who spend time



The view of the sky through the iconic canopy connects people to the world and the future. © BETTER CO-BEING

together, reflecting what they sympathize with and find as values in themselves," Miyata said.

Part of Sequence 1, whose theme is "Resonance between people," is an installation by artist Chiharu Shiota on a small hill. The "Hill of Language" has red threads stretched in multiple layers with floating letters conveying phrases in various languages, including "breath of the earth" and "invisible link," floating among them, representing invisible connections across different cultures.

The theme of Sequence 2 is "Resonance between people and the world." Walking down the hill, visitors hear "Counter Voice Network" by artist Tatsuo Miyajima, in which overlapping voices count down in multiple languages, though never reaching zero. As visitors approach the source of each voice, their apps show the person's name and language, plus related stories.

Sequence 3 has the theme "Resonance between people and the future." With the idea

of "the greatest well-being with diversity and inclusion," a key principle of the pavilion, Miyata and his art group EiM designed an installation of about 400 varied suncatchers, suspended on wires, that refract sunlight into rainbow colors.

At the end of their trip, visitors' behavior and reactions, as well as weather conditions, are combined to reflect a vision of their future as visual art on the surface of a huge orb.

If one looks up, the pavilion's canopy features an open space at the center, indicating the sky. "It means we will create a future together by resonating with each other under an open sky," Miyata said

For more information on Better Co-Being, please scan.



Sponsored by the Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB)

Bahrain offers financial opportunity to Japanese businesses

From cutting-edge manufacturing to tech-enabled finance, the Middle East is transforming at pace. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and wider Middle Eastern and North African region are undergoing rapid economic diversification fueled by digital innovation, strategic investment and young, growing and digitally fluent populations.

For Japanese companies, the opportunity is clear. The GCC region is projected to grow by 3.2% in 2025 and 4.5% in 2026, with non-oil sectors such as tourism, finance and technology expanding at 3.7%. Japan-GCC trade already totals around \$100 billion annually.

Bahrain: Regional gateway

Situated at the heart of the Middle East, Bahrain offers direct access to the \$4 trillion GCC capital market. Its open economy, state-of-the-art infrastructure and business-friendly regulatory environment make it an ideal launchpad for Japanese businesses.

Bahrain's Industrial Sector Strategy 2022-26 aims to raise the industrial sector's GDP contribution to \$6.6 billion and increase industrial exports to 80%. And the kingdom's ongoing diversification strategy reinforces its position as a dynamic destination at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and

Europe that is ripe for further investment.

Industrial transformation

Bahrain is at the forefront of "Industry 4.0" and advanced manufacturing in the region, with government and private sector investment in automation, AI and the Internet of Things reshaping traditional manufacturing.

Japanese manufacturers are already playing a pivotal role in this evolution. Yokogawa Electric Corp., a global leader in industrial automation and control solutions, has operated its regional headquarters in Bahrain since 1990. "For over three decades, Bahrain has been the ideal base," said Yokogawa President and CEO Norinao Sato. "The ease of doing business, access to skilled talent and exceptional quality of life have enabled us to innovate and grow."

Daiki Aluminium Industry Co., Japan's leading manufacturer of aluminum products, recently partnered with Aluminium Bahrain (ALBA), one of the world's largest aluminum smelters, to establish a business for sustainably processing aluminum dross in the kingdom. "Working with ALBA and establishing in Bahrain was a smooth transition," said Daiki President and Representative Director Shigenori Hayashi. "The supportive business environment, comfortable lifestyle and cultural similarities made it easy for our team to adapt and succeed right from the start."

Regional financial powerhouse

Bahrain's financial sector is the largest contributor to its economy, accounting for 17.2% of GDP in 2024. Agile regulation and a forward-looking approach have helped position the country as a financial innovation hub for the region.

The Central Bank of Bahrain offers a single, streamlined regulatory framework and was one of the first in the region to launch an onshore crypto-asset framework. Its fintech sandbox provides innovative banking and



Innovation and opportunity blend at Bahrain Bay at the heart of Manama's evolving waterfront. ISHAQ MADAN, 2023

financial solutions, and there are currently around 63 fintech companies in Bahrain.

Initiatives such as the Golden License Program offer investors fast-track approvals and bespoke support, reinforcing Bahrain's appeal. Leading institutions such as the Japanese financial services group Mizuho are already in the kingdom.

Digital infrastructure

Bahrain's digital infrastructure and forward-thinking policies have made it a springboard for technology companies expanding across the region.

As the first gulf nation to implement a nationwide cloud-first policy and comprehensive data jurisdiction law, Bahrain has attracted global technology leaders including Amazon Web Services Inc., which established its first Middle East hyperscale data center in the kingdom. Information and computer technology businesses enjoy an annual cost advantage of up to 28% compared to other gulf markets,

and women account for 50% of enrollments for STEM degree in higher education, underscoring Bahrain's commitment to inclusion and innovation.

People and partnerships

Indeed, Bahrain's highly skilled, multilingual workforce is another key factor in its appeal to global companies. The University of Bahrain is training the next generation of digital workers through degrees in artificial intelligence and cloud computing. The kingdom's workforce upskilling and business incentives are supported by its Labour Fund (Tamkeen) and the #TeamBahrain initiative — a national strategy in which government agencies and the private sector collaborate to attract and accelerate investment — ensuring companies have access to the talent they need.

With established Japanese success stories and a government committed to enabling business, Bahrain stands ready to help Japanese companies thrive.



MATT WARDLE, 2022

ITALIAN TRADE AGENCY

(Sponsored content)

Using unique strengths to build sustainable growth

The ITA plays a critical role fostering bilateral investment focused on medical, digital and sustainability tech

The Italian Trade Agency believes its mission is not only to open doors but to build lasting bridges of trust and innovation.

It has been more than 150 years since relations between Japan and Italy officially began, and for Trade Commissioner to Japan Gianpaolo Bruno, this relationship is only moving forward.

“Our mission in Japan is twofold,” he said. It is “to expand the presence of Italian enterprises in the Japanese market and to attract Japanese investments and strategic partnerships into Italy.”

To most people in Japan, the mention of Italy conjures up images of travel, fashion and, above all, food. While these are important aspects of trade, there is much more to the relationship. “We are also a global leader in sectors like precision engineering, medical technologies, robotics, fintech and green mobility,” Bruno said. “Italy hosts one of the most dynamic startup ecosystems in Europe, with strong government support for innovation and internationalization.”

Forging new partnerships

One goal of the ITA is to diversify Italy’s portfolio of exports into Japan, and to enable Japanese partners to discover this innovative and forward-looking “other Italy.” The agency is also working to develop long-term collaborative partnerships with Japan, such as industrial joint ventures and cooperative research and development, particularly in decarbonization, digital transformation and similar fields.

Entering a new overseas market can be a daunting challenge for businesses in any industry, navigating complex legal codes and industry standards, stringent expectations of new business partners, unfamiliar workplace practices and unique consumer preferences, to say nothing of language and culture barriers. This works in both directions, Bruno said.

“Japan is a market that rewards patience, cultural sensitivity, and long-term commitment,” he said. “Italian companies must adapt to high standards of quality, punctuality and after-sales service.

“On the other hand, Japanese companies venturing into Italy should embrace the importance of creativity, design thinking and the value of building trust-based relationships.”

To help Italian firms entering the Japanese market, the agency provides services such as detailed market intelligence, regulatory and legal guidance, sector-specific reports, tailored business-to-business matchmaking, participation in trade shows and innovation forums, and long-term promotional campaigns. “We have supported Italian firms across a wide spectrum of industries,” Bruno said.



Gianpaolo Bruno, trade commissioner to Japan ITA

“For instance, several Italian medical technology companies have successfully entered into distribution agreements and joint development projects with Japanese counterparts, particularly in areas such as diagnostic devices and surgical robotics. In the fashion and lifestyle sectors, Italian brands have launched flagship stores and e-commerce platforms tailored to the preferences of Japanese consumers, often with our assistance in navigating local marketing channels and building brand awareness.”

The ITA also assists in establishing R&D partnerships that have produced innovative new breakthroughs.

‘Mutual benefits emerge when Italian creativity and excellence meet Japanese precision and long-term vision.’

“Italian startups in AI (artificial intelligence), smart mobility and blockchain have secured partnerships with Japanese incubators, universities and corporate venture funds as part of our acceleration programs. These success stories demonstrate the effectiveness of a collaborative, well-informed approach – and the mutual benefits that

emerge when Italian creativity and excellence meet Japanese precision and long-term vision,” Bruno explained.

The ITA’s bridge-building work also goes in the opposite direction, with their Foreign Direct Investment Desk in Tokyo advising Japanese firms looking for partnerships and investment opportunities in Europe and guiding them through the entire process.

Acting as a gateway to the European single market, the agency seeks out Japanese companies whose profiles align with Italy’s priority sectors, including robotics, mobility, energy transition, life sciences and advanced materials, and assists in arranging joint business ventures as well as corporate-academic R&D collaborations.



Above: Attendees at the Japan International Aerospace Exhibition check out the Italia Pavilion in October 2024. Left: Students attend a lecture about using virtual reality at the University of Tourism in Osaka as part of an event the ITA organized to promote the Marche region. ITA; OSAKA UNIVERSITY OF TOURISM

Italian ideas inspire expo

Currently, Bruno and the ITA are busy with Expo 2025, which is being held in Osaka until October. Described as “a laboratory for future society,” the event features over 50 official participant pavilions, where nations showcase their commitment to answering global challenges. In addition to promoting efforts to fulfill the U.N.’s 17 strategic development goals, the expo is an opportunity for Japan to promote its “Society 5.0” national strategy to develop a human-centered society that grows sustainably and resolves social issues through technology.

The Italy Pavilion at the expo “offers an immersive and visionary expression of Italy’s identity, rooted in creativity, innovation and sustainability,” Bruno said. Featuring multimedia installations, immersive experiences and interactive exhibits, the pavilion takes visitors “on a journey through Italy’s most significant contributions to global challenges, from the energy transition and circular economy to advanced technologies in health care, mobility and smart cities.”

The pavilion also features a comprehensive program of seminars, conferences and cultural events, including a special focus on Italy’s many varied regions.

“Visitors will be invited to explore the richness and diversity of Italy’s territories, discovering how local identities contribute to national excellence,” Bruno said. These included the Calabria region during April, with a focus on urban development and investment from Japanese food companies, followed by the Lazio region in May, which focused on investment opportunities in aerospace, culture (including the movie industry), medical technology and tourism. Regional initiatives from the Veneto and Toscana regions have also been featured at the expo.

Business and trade promotion

But the expo is far from the only thing on the agency’s plate. One initiative it is strongly

promoting is the Acceleration Program for Sardinia Start-up in Japan, a six-month program designed to “bring a select group of innovative startups from the Sardinia region into the Japanese market, with the goal of creating sustainable, cross-border innovation pipelines between Italy and Japan.” The program, which focuses on six high-potential startups in agricultural technology, blockchain, AI and cleantech, includes tailored mentoring, business matching, legal and regulatory advisement and participation in tech fairs and investor events in Japan.

The ITA is also taking an active role in promoting Italian science, technology, engineering and math ventures. At Tokyo Innovation Base in May, they organized a large-scale display for the Lazio region that featured over 50 companies. In June, 17 Italian firms in health care and medical technology were represented at the Japan Health exhibition in Osaka.

The ITA is also participating in a wide range of trade events and Japan-based initiatives, he said. In September, 14 Italian game companies will be showcasing their work at the Tokyo Game Show with the assistance of the ITA and the Italian Interactive Digital Entertainment Association. Earlier this year, the ITA worked with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Emilia-Romagna Regional Government by helping Italian firms from the region participate in SusHi-Tech Tokyo, where firms working in digital transformation, the Internet of Things, AI and other fields shared their solutions to Tokyo’s urban sustainability challenges. The ITA will also be working with the region’s exhibit during Smart Factory Week in September.

Bruno said, “Each of these companies brought forward cutting-edge solutions, further strengthening the image of Italy as a hub for innovation and high-value-added expertise.”

This article is sponsored by the Italian Trade Agency.



A delegation from Italy’s Emilia-Romagna region poses at the ITA’s office during SusHiTech Tokyo in May. ITA

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The Eight Theme Weeks of EXPO 2025 OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN

Overview

Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan is built around eight Theme Weeks, each addressing a major global challenge. Over the course of the six-month expo, these weeks offer opportunities for governments, international organizations, businesses, researchers and citizens to come together, share knowledge and collaborate on solutions. With nearly 400 programs, many of them held in the dedicated Theme Weeks Studio, Theme Weeks foster dialogue, drive practical action and connect ideas across borders and sectors. In order to expand their reach and lasting impact, many sessions are livestreamed and archived online, accompanied by reflections from speakers and organizers.

Themes already explored

- Co-creating Cultures for the Future, April 10–21
- The Future of Community and Mobility, April 24–May 5
- Necessities of Life: Food, Clothing and Shelter, May 8–19
- Health and Well-being, May 29–June 9
- Learning and Playing, June 12–23

What's coming up

- Total scheduled programs: 205
(of which 103 will be hosted in the studio)

Archives of past sessions are being released regularly, along with reflections and comments from program organizers. You can find them on the official Expo 2025 Theme Weeks website and revisit the conversations at any time.

More than 100 upcoming sessions at Theme Weeks Studio will be also accessible via official livestream, ensuring broad international reach, so be sure to check the official Theme Weeks website for the most up-to-date information.



Upcoming Theme Weeks

Dates	Theme	Central Question	Key Focus Areas
Aug. 1–12	Peace, Human Security and Dignity Week	How do we create a world free from discrimination, where people respect one another?	Poverty, inequality, human rights violations, child/forced labor, human trafficking, disability inclusion, gender equality, LGBTQ rights, women’s empowerment, immigration, human security
Sept. 17–28	The Future of Earth and Biodiversity Week	How do we preserve the Earth and its diverse life for future generations?	Climate change, decarbonization, biodiversity, circular economy, renewable energy, hydrogen society, nature positive, deforestation, marine pollution, forest/mountain regeneration, freshwater resources
Oct. 2–12	SDGs + Beyond Future Society for Life Week	Can we achieve the SDGs? What lies beyond them?	SDGs, post-SDGs, future society, ‘Society 5.0,’ the value of life