

Press Release

Expo City Dubai expands global innovation network and advances sustainable urban development with Korean collaboration

DUBAI, 7 February 2025 - Expo City Dubai has signed a partnership agreement with two Korean entities - the Korea International Trade Association (KITA) and the Korea IT Cooperation Centre (KICC) - to advance sustainable urban development by fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and international collaboration.

Formalised on the sidelines of the Cities in Action Forum at Expo City Dubai, the partnership will enhance knowledge exchange and support technological solutions to urban development challenges by providing Korean startups and companies access to Expo City's dynamic economic free zone and its Urban Lab - an advanced city-wide testbed for trialling new technologies.

Under the agreement, KITA - Korea's largest business organisation with 73,000-plus members - and KICC - which has supported more than 200 Korean technology companies to date - will introduce Korean innovators to Expo City Dubai as a place to set up their business and a platform for sharing expertise and supporting proof-of-concept (PoC) projects.

Korean startups will gain preferential access to conduct trials at Expo City Dubai's Urban Lab, leveraging more than 200,000 live data points from advanced IoT systems, cameras and sensors around the city to obtain real-time data and insights into a technology's performance in a dynamic urban setting and regulatory-compliant sandbox environment.

Manal AlBayat, Chief Engagement Officer of Expo City Dubai, said: "As the premier destination in the region for innovation and entrepreneurship, this tripartite agreement enables us to leverage global expertise to nurture solutions to the challenges of urban life. Together with KITA and KICC, we will facilitate the testing, scaling and commercialisation of near-market-ready technologies, attracting new innovators to Expo City and reaffirming our position as a global hub for innovation, where like-minded entities can shape a brighter future."

PhilJae Park, President of KITA MENA, said: "As a leader in promoting PoC projects in Korea and around the world, KITA will leverage its decades of international experience to work with Expo City Dubai for our mutual benefit and success. We are committed to providing comprehensive support to enable Korean conglomerates, medium-sized companies, and startups to form a unified team and participate in upcoming collaborative projects."

Junbai Yoon, Director of KICC UAE, said: "Collaborating with Expo City Dubai reflects our commitment to fostering innovation and advancing technological solutions on a global scale. By integrating Korean expertise in AI and ICT with Expo City's advanced, city-wide Urban Lab testbed, we aim to empower startups to develop impactful solutions that address real-world challenges and create sustainable urban environments. This partnership is a vital step towards building a robust cross-border innovation network that will benefit cities around the world."

Expo City's business hub and free zone offers incentives for company establishment, expedited licensing and shared corporate services, while the city's Urban Lab environment can be tailored to each solution's requirements, creating a favourable environment for innovation and empowering entrepreneurs and startups to bring their products and technologies to market. The collaboration also aims to build a robust cross-border startup ecosystem with support from public agencies and funding for PoC programmes.



Expo City's prime location and world-class connectivity put it at the centre of Dubai's future - a hub connecting Dubai Exhibition Centre, Al Maktoum International Airport and Jebel Ali Port, and a key driver of Dubai's Economic Agenda (D33), attracting industries and organisations from around the world that support the growth of innovation and the knowledge-based economy.

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About Expo City Dubai

Expo City Dubai, the legacy city of Expo 2020 Dubai, is an innovation-driven, people-centric community rooted in the belief that collaboration can propel sustainable progress. Its prime location and world-class connectivity place it at the centre of Dubai's future - the lynchpin between Dubai Exhibition Centre, Al Maktoum International Airport and Jebel Ali Port and a key driver of Dubai's Economic Agenda (D33)

- A world-class free zone, it is home to a thriving business community that supports cross-sector collaboration and provides a springboard for businesses of all sizes to scale and grow, enhancing Dubai's position as a global centre of trade and reinforcing the UAE's development and diversification ambitions
- Its residential communities redefine urban living, exemplifying best practice in innovative, environment-friendly design with a focus on wellbeing and happiness
- An incubator for innovation, it is a testbed for solutions and a platform for groundbreaking ideas that benefit both people and the planet
- Packed with educational, cultural and entertainment offerings, with more than 30 indoor and outdoor venues attracting globally significant events, it celebrates human creativity and ingenuity and inspires future generations
- Designed as a blueprint for sustainable urban living and one of five hubs on the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, its roadmap to achieving net zero by 2050 and its broader decarbonisation targets raise the bar on responsible urban development

About Korea International Trade Association (KITA)

- KITA (Korea International Trade Association) was established in 1946 with the objective of advancing the Korean economy through trade. It is the largest business organisation in Korea, with over 70,000 member companies, and has played a critical role in Korea's transformation into one of the world's top trading nations.
 - The representative association organising various types of delegations including large corporations and SMEs to promote inbound and outbound investment
 - The host of NextRise, the largest startup innovation fair in Asia, connecting 250+ Global MNCs/VCs and 2,000+ startups through business meetings, conferences and pitching events
 - The bridge between the global corporations and Korean startups operating the Fortune 500 Connect program. Since 2018, KITA has successfully matched over 210 global companies including LVMH, BMW, with prominent startups
 - A leading business organization with a network of 13 regional centres and 12 overseas centres in major cities. The MENA region is covered by KITA MENA Headquarters, located in Dubai, UAE

About Korea IT Cooperation Centre (KICC) UAE

- Korea IT Cooperation Centre (KICC) UAE is a strategic business hub dedicated to promoting and supporting Korean ICT and AI companies in expanding into the UAE and MENA markets. Operated under the Ministry of Science and ICT of Korea, KICC UAE provides comprehensive market entry support, fostering opportunities for Korean technology firms to establish a strong regional presence



- A strategic bridge for technology exchange, KICC UAE connects Korean ICT companies with key public and private sector stakeholders in the UAE, facilitating investment, partnerships, and market entry
- A platform for growth, it offers a full spectrum of business support services, including market insights, networking opportunities, and tailored assistance to help companies scale in the region
- A collaborative ecosystem, it partners with government entities, accelerators, and industry leaders to drive digital innovation, supporting Korea's global tech ambitions and the UAE's digital transformation goals
- A centre for knowledge and innovation, it hosts business forums, delegation visits, and technology showcases, fostering dialogue and cross-sector cooperation in emerging fields such as AI, fintech, and smart cities
- Aligned with the UAE's long-term vision for economic diversification and technological advancement, KICC UAE continues to play a key role in shaping a mutually beneficial tech-driven future



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