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ASIA EDITION

Japan explores use of robotic technology to help people with disabilities

November 10, 2022 | News

Development of robots for the welfare sector is an area in which investment is difficult to come by because the market is not large enough



The Global Innovation Challenge (GIC) Executive Committee, based in Tokyo, has announced that the "Global Innovation Challenge 2023 Living Assistance Robot Contest" will be held next year at the "GIC Tsukuba Innovation Center" in Tsukuba City, Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan, providing total prize money of $1,000,000.

The contest will be held in May-June 2023 to support researchers and developers from all over the world with the aim of bringing innovative tools that enable people living in wheelchairs with disabilities such as paralysis to "walk independently" without the assistance of a caregiver, and to make use of their residual functions.

Tatsufumi Kamimura, Chairman, GIC Executive Committee said, "This will be the second time for the contest to be held. In 2021, the contest had to be held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the next contest in spring 2023 will be held at the GIC Tsukuba Innovation Center, in a contest field that will resemble an ordinary house. The committee members are looking forward to seeing what new technologies will be created this time as well. We look forward to receiving many entries from many countries."

The development of public infrastructure and the promotion of barrier-free accessibility have made it possible for people with limited mobility to live their daily lives alone if they have a wheelchair, but they still face limitations in their activities outside of a well-developed environment. The organizer believes that a walking support robot that can be used both indoors and outdoors without worrying about barrier-free accessibility would enable people with disabilities to enjoy their lives to a greater extent.