



JAPAN TOBACCO INC.
1-1, Toranomom 4-chome, Minato-ku
Tokyo 105-6927 JAPAN
Phone: 03-6636-2914

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HATENALABO Makes Its First International Appearance at Milan Design Week

Advancing Delightful Moment Research Through Dialogue with Society

HATENALABO, a research and design brand jointly established by D-LAB—the corporate R&D organization of Japan Tobacco Inc. (JT) (TSE: 2914)—and h concept Co., Ltd., presented its first international exhibition and sales event, “What’s HATENA?”, in the Brera district of Milan, Italy, during Milan Design Week from April 20 to 26, 2026.

Milan Design Week is one of the world’s largest design events, held in conjunction with Salone del Mobile.Milano. During this period, the entire city transforms into an exhibition venue, with design events known collectively as Fuorisalone taking place across various districts throughout Milan. HATENALABO established its exhibition base in the Brera district—one of the event’s central areas—for the first time.

HATENALABO was founded in 2022 through a collaboration between D-LAB and h concept. As part of D-LAB’s Delightful Moment Research, the initiative is based on the hypothesis that encounters with unfamiliar and inexplicable phenomena can trigger Delightful Moments in an increasingly accelerated and efficiency-driven society.

In this context, HATENALABO focuses on small questions that arise when encountering something unfamiliar—moments of wondering “What is this?”—which it refers to as everyday “HATENA.” These moments, often accompanied by surprise and wonder, are not necessarily useful and stand in contrast to efficiency and productivity; however, they can serve as a starting point for creativity.

HATENALABO operates through a continuous cycle: drawing questions about the future from research, giving tangible form to those questions through design, transforming them into products that invite reflection, and generating new questions through feedback. These products are not intended to fulfill specific functions or to solve problems, but rather to inspire people to think beyond passively given functions or meanings.

At the exhibition, all seven experimental devices released to date were showcased, alongside the debut of a new product, Punini. The exhibition attracted approximately 9,000 visitors over seven days, and one of the most popular products, Baiin!!, sold out completely.

Through the exhibition, visitors experienced the concept of “Beyond Function,” discovering value beyond conventional utility. Their responses suggest that Delightful Moments may represent an emerging dimension of value in society.

About D-LAB

D-LAB is JT Group’s corporate R&D organization established in 2020. The name stands for “Delightful Moment - Laboratory.” Guided by the JT Group Purpose, “Fulfilling Moments, Enriching Life,” D-LAB explores, researches, and creates future forms of well-being from a long-term perspective. With “well-being of the mind” as the starting point of its value creation, D-LAB continuously advances more than 100 projects through repeated trial and error.

D-LAB website: <https://www.jti.co.jp/dlab/index.html>

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Japan Tobacco Inc. (JT) is a global company headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. It is listed on the primary section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (ticker: 2914.T). JT Group has approximately 53,000 employees and 61 factories worldwide, operating in two business segments: tobacco and processed food. Within the tobacco business, the largest segment, products are sold in over 130 markets and its flagship brands include Winston, Camel, MEVIUS, and LD. The Group is committed to investing in Reduced-Risk Products and markets its Heated Products under its Ploom brand.

Consumers, shareholders, employees, and society are the four stakeholder groups (4S) at the heart of all of JT Group's activities. Inspired by its purpose “Fulfilling Moments, Enriching Life” purpose, the Group aims to ensure sustainable and valuable contributions to its stakeholders over the long term. In addition to its two business segments, this goal is also supported by D-LAB, the JT Group’s corporate R&D initiative, dedicated to exploring and developing new value-added business opportunities. For more information, visit <https://www.jt.com/>.

Contact: Yunosuke Miyata, Director
Investor and Media Relations Division
Japan Tobacco Inc.
Tokyo: +81-3-6636-2914
E-mail: jt.media.relations@jt.com