



BUSINESS BEYOND BORDERS

With more than a century of expertise in Japan's chemical trading industry, **Iwata & Co.** is now charting new frontiers in Malaysia.



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INTERNATIONAL TRADE IS THE DRIVER BEHIND NOT ONLY THE movement of goods but also the exchange of technology, ideas, and innovation. For centuries, Japan's isolation shaped a distinct culture and economy. Today, its firms are global leaders, driving innovation and international trade. Japanese investment in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations nearly doubled during AEC 2025, reaching \$20 billion. Trading and logistics hubs such as Singapore and Penang have thrived, attracting investors with their prime locations. In Malaysia, nearly one-half of Japanese firms plan to expand within two years, driven by rising demand and export potential. One company driving this trend is Iwata & Co., a longtime player in Japan's chemical industry. Founded in Nagoya in 1902, it began by supplying chemicals to the booming

textile sector that also birthed Toyota's predecessor. As Takuya Iwata explains, "Companies such as Toyota first found success in these early industries and then applied and refined their expertise in other areas, particularly in automotive. The same can be said for several sectors, including ceramics and metalworking." Iwata has steadily evolved with the chemical industry, offering everything from construction materials to high-performance resins.

As global semiconductor demand rises, it supplies key materials such as silicon wafers and electric chemicals, backed by strong supplier ties. Tapping into Malaysia's booming chip sector, now 7.5% of its gross domestic product, Iwata launched EQX IWATA Sdn Bhd. in Penang to support its global growth. "The reason behind our move to Penang is due to the growing semiconductor industry there, with Malaysia serving as a hub for the Asian area," says Iwata. "The local government has built a fantastic science park there. Especially in the chemicals field, ensuring that import and export channels are smooth is vital. The Malaysian government has ensured that goods can efficiently leave and enter the country, with less tax barriers compared to other countries. The country is also full of highly motivated, young talent." ■

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