

Mascots and javelin carriers: Tokyo adds robots to Olympic roster

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A robotic version of Tokyo's mascot for the 2020 Olympics was unveiled at a ceremony marking one-year until the Games begin

A roster of Olympic robots that will do everything from welcoming visitors to transporting javelins has been unveiled as Tokyo works to showcase Japanese technology at next year's Summer Games.

Japan hopes the 2020 Olympics will be a chance to put its tech sector back on the map after years in which the country's reputation as an industry leader has flagged.

Auto giant Toyota has a roster of five robots with different roles to play, from cutesy renditions of the Olympic mascots to a staid transport bot.

Undoubtedly the most appealing are the toddler-sized versions of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic mascots, the futuristic Miritowa and Someity.

Blue- or pink-checked, with huge eyes and pointy ears, the mascot robots have multiple joints and

arms which can be remotely controlled.

And while the pint-sized pair can't move or talk, a camera inside their heads helps them interact with spectators and athletes, said Tomohisa Moiradaira, an official responsible for Tokyo 2020 robot development at Toyota.

"Thanks to the camera, the robots can recognise people's expressions and respond back," he told reporters.

"If a person moves away it will look sad."

The mascot's "feelings" are reflected in its eyes: they can display hearts or stars depending on emotions.



Robotic versions (C) of Tokyo's 2020 Olympic and Paralympic mascots—Miritowa (left) and Someity—will have cameras inside their head to help them interact with spectators and athletes

Toyota has suggested the mascot robots could welcome athletes and spectators, and possibly help engage children with the Games.

Significantly less cute—but slightly more practical—is the company's Field Support Robot, a suitcase-sized automaton on wheels that will help Olympic staff.

It is capable of following staff, while avoiding obstacles, and can be loaded with items like javelins or discuses, helping "reduce the amount of time needed to retrieve items as well as reduce the amount of staff labour for events", Toyota said.

Other offerings include robots designed to support people in wheelchairs or deliver food to spectators.

For those who can't attend the Games, there's the T-TR1, effectively a human-sized narrow screen on wheels equipped with a camera.



Other technological offerings at the 2020 Olympics will include robots designed to support people in wheelchairs

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